
THE

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(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, July 9, 2008

9.00 a.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is resumed.

It would be appreciated if the Honourable Members would make, beforehand, copies of documents which they intend to make documents of the House, or walk with copies for presentation to the Clerk's Table. This, of course, is to facilitate the smooth entering of these documents into the record. We would appreciate your cooperation in that regard. Thank you.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure I want to say a very good morning to the viewers on CBC television, whom I cannot see and who are watching this televised debate. I want to bring you greetings from the Most High, King of Kings, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and Lord of Lords. This is my first acknowledgment.

Sir, I have dedicated the three days of this Budgetary Presentation to a young Rasta man, who in my view, disappeared from life in mysterious circumstances. His name was l'Akobi Maloney. This is why today you would see that I am wearing the traditional Rastafarian scarf and garb to acknowledge the passing of this intellectual.

Mr. Speaker, my presentation is basically based on taking a different view. I want to say that from the outset. I also want to say from the outset, Sir, that I am supporting all of the social programmes as outlined by the Prime Minister in his first Budget.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: In so doing, I am also endorsing the wishes of my conscience and also letting my conscience be my practical philosophical guide. I am doing that against a background of a community practitioner and a social practitioner. Sir, some might want to accuse me at this particular juncture of pandering to the Government.

Mr. Speaker, I would have to be mad to object to the social relief programmes brought to this Honourable Chamber by the Government.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, this begs the important question. Am I to go against my conscience? Sir, the No. 1 principal in social policy development is for the provision of the necessary safety nets for the poor, the elderly and the disabled, in addition, to the marginalised and disadvantaged groups, who constitute the most vulnerable constituency in Barbados.

Sir, this morning, I have been sent to this Chamber, not on my own accord but by the members of the St. Michael South East Constituency Council who are represented in this Chamber this morning, who have asked me to express on their behalf, the views that I would enunciate this morning, in this Honourable Chamber. Sir, I want to also say that these safety nets must cushion the impact of external shocks on the most vulnerable.

In order for all of these measures to be implemented, I have always maintained in this Honourable Chamber that we must unshackle the current lethargic bureaucratic system that retards a faster delivery of services to the poor, the under-privileged and the disabled in our midst, hence, Sir, this Budget presented that protective matrix and framework.

Sir, Barbadians and Honourable Members who have been here previously would have always heard me enunciate an international policy, where Barbados and

other countries across the world, 156 of them in the year 1995, signed the Copenhagen Accord, which speaks primarily to the principle of the eradication of poverty.

The leaders in this hemispheric region, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Grenada, all of them met in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, in the following year, 1996, and determined that they are going to enact poor/poor policies, to cushion the impact of any external shocks pertaining to the poor. This was the Port-of-Spain Declaration, which also featured an important document, I believe, that all Members of this Honourable Chamber should have, and is a document called, "Pathways out of Poverty."

Then, in the year 2000, the same 156 world leaders that went up to Copenhagen, Denmark, came over to the United Nations and signed the famous document called the "Millennium Development Goals", which is a very serious document dealing with the complete obliteration of poverty.

Mr. Speaker, we have to seriously safeguard our country against becoming a victim of the new global poverty arrangement. We do not want to turn back on the gains achieved, particularly with the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Speaker, the lives of millions of poor people across the world are seriously in danger, due to the impact of the continuous rising cost of energy and high food prices. All of the social gains that we have made in this Region and, in Barbados, are in danger of being eroded because of this dangerous new global phenomenon. Sir, it is against that background that the spirit of Nationalism must prevail, instead of the spirit of political tribalism. Therefore, this particular debate, more than any point in our junction, or history, needs a non partisan approach.

The issues in the Budget are not D's issues or B's issues. The issues that are in this Budget are ones that we must deal with as a nation, or we would perish as a nation of fools.

Mr. Speaker, my conscience would not allow me to ignore that school children will be travelling free on the Government buses.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: My conscience, Sir, would not allow me to ignore that more than 400 persons residing between the Pine, Wildey and Parkinson Field, no longer have to pay for their Units and hence, they are saving practically \$400 every month.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: My conscience, Sir, would not allow me to ignore that more than 300 children less than 16 years, and more than 16 years, will be getting \$35 every single week.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: My conscience would not allow me to ignore that persons with minimum disabilities will now receive \$36 a week, Sir, and that the severely disabled persons will now be receiving \$116 weekly.

Mr. Speaker, I am simply letting my conscience be my guide. A man or a woman has to reside in this world with himself. When we leave this Honourable Chamber and we go home and we look into the mirror, we have to ask ourselves what kind of mirror image we have of ourselves. *Asides.*

10.14 p.m.

Sir, if we continue to play strict blind party politics, we would lead those persons who elected us to this Honourable Chamber down a blind narrow path that could only lead to destruction.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot ignore the fact that the poor farmers across Barbados are getting a whole plantation to plant vegetables. Sir, no one should say that Hamilton Lashley came into this Chamber enunciating a policy to favour the Government, I am not. I am enunciating a policy that I have been talking about for years and years in this Chamber which is now being enacted by the Other Side. Sir, there is no greater force than a people and time and ideas. Sir, that time has come.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give further emotional background to why I feel this way this morning. Mr. Speaker, the reason I feel so strongly about this issue is because I, Hamilton Lashley, have lived almost all of my life in poverty and some of my formative years, in abject poverty. Sir, I know what it is like to live in poverty. Sir, some Honourable Members in here might have had my same experiences, but they might be ashamed to speak of it, but not me.

Sir, I know what it is to go into Queen's Park during the Vestry system and line up in a long line to receive food for me and my family. Sir, I also know what it is to be ostracised. On travelling back to the housing area I had to sit in the back in the bus and the people would say: "Look, the Park food people sitting in the back of the bus." Sir, that was as a result of poverty. That was the dehumanisation and the assassination of people by people who should know better, but do not know better because they, themselves, have been residing in poverty. Mr. Speaker, I know what it is to go into an outhouse in the

middle of the night with rain falling in torrents and having to withstand vermin, cockroaches, ants, et cetera, on your rear end. Sir, it is not a comfortable thing. Sir, those who would have escaped that system, are very lucky. Mr. Speaker, when I get in this Chamber and talk about poverty, I am not jesting. I am talking about an experience that I lived.

Mr. Speaker, I also know what it is to survive on sweet water and biscuits. When you come home from school for lunch, you would put some sugar in some water and stir it and have a few Eclipse or Soda biscuits with it and then you go back to school.

Mr. Speaker, I also know what it is to live in the National Housing Corporation Unit with your mother who is unable to pay the rent because she has to support six children on her own as a single mother, and having officials from the National Housing Corporation placing a sign on the house and the neighbours coming saying: "Why she ain't pay the Government rent?"

Sir, I also know what it is having to face the indignity of a National Housing Corporation truck coming at your house and removing your furniture in the middle of the day.

Sir, I do not fear death. I fear the ills that poverty brings. Mr. Speaker, when I see a Government bring a Budget that provides a vital source of relief and a protective safety net for the poor, the disadvantaged and the marginalised, I would be the biggest hypocrite on God Almighty earth not to support it. Mr. Speaker, I have to live with my conscience. Those who do not have a conscience, that is a problem for them. They would ultimately answer to God.

Mr. Speaker, I am not simply pandering to anything. I am fighting, as the Rastamen always say, against "ism" and "schism". Mr. Speaker, when you say fighting against ism and schism, you are talking about a belief.

Sir, it is critically necessary that we change the old order of how we orchestrate things in this country and how we usher in a new order. The entire world has fallen victim for not ushering in a new world order to counter the environmental problems we are facing, which have led to shortages of specific food items and energy. Mr. Speaker, we have in Barbados to now re-establish ourselves into a new national order. The spirit of nationalism must thrive.

Sir, the time has come now where we are going to have to revisit the Petro-Caribe initiative. Sir, I am going to make this Petro-Caribe document a document of this House at some point because I believe that every single member of this Honourable Chamber should have a copy of it. Sir, Petro-Caribe basically offers alternative solutions to the

current prices. In simple words, you trust the oil now and pay for it later, not generally in cash, but in any resource that you have.

Mr. Speaker, let us ask ourselves a fair question: What has Barbados gained from Trinidad and Tobago recently or ever? Mr. Speaker, I am going to put it even more bluntly. Trinidad and Tobago has been getting the dollars and Barbados the cents.

Mr. Speaker, I want to charge in this Honourable Chamber today that the oil coming out of Trinidad and Tobago is of an inferior quality in comparison to what you would get out of Venezuela. Mr. Speaker, I am looking at pathways out of poverty.

Mr. Speaker, when the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow was Prime Minister of this country, he had a vision. At that time, he talked about the new world order and about buying local. Sir, the "Buy Local Campaign" was launched way back in the early 1970s. At the time, some people scoffed at it. Sir, three decades and a half later, the relevance of a local programme called "Buy Local" is critical now because it is one of the mechanisms that should be used for persons buying their household food items.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most standout and significant aspects of the recently held Barbados Manufacturers' Association BIMEX Exhibition was a special booth for products made in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, ignorance is bliss depending on the environment that you are in. Sir, if you take that same programme and you carry it into the communities across Barbados, our householders, our housewives and those single women would know what items to buy. Sir, in most instances, the cost of those items made here are cheaper than the ones that are imported.

Mr. Speaker, Barbadians have a strange inferiority complex at times. They sometimes feel that goods coming from overseas are better than the ones that are made here. For years, I heard Mr. Paul enunciating an agriculture policy of buy local and grow local. Sir, we have to carry that programme into the schools.

Sir, sometimes it is difficult to get old heads like myself to change. In ushering in a new order, we now have to think about doing things differently.

Mr. Speaker, under a new national order, there should be community-based tourism. The Minister of Tourism spoke about a community-based tourism programme. Those of us who have been in here over a period of time would have heard the Honourable Member

for St. Lucy also enunciating this policy about community tourism.

9.20 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Minister of Tourism speaking to it yesterday. It is time now, as part of this new order, that we start taking these tourists who virtually are placed in a physical reservation on the South and West Coasts of Barbados and have these persons come into these communities. Sir, North Stars and Pinelands are two communities that have all of the basic infrastructure. Therefore, why do we want the vital pounds, Euros, Canadian and American dollars to stay specifically on the West Coast and South Coast of Barbados, preferably in the hands of the rich?

Mr. Speaker, I coined this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, in a sense, into one sentence. In this Budget, Government has taken from the rich and has given to the poor. Let me repeat that again. This Government has taken from the rich and has given to the poor.

Sir, some people have a problem with this Budget, but when we were growing up, our mothers used to let us buy the book, "The Adventures of Robin Hood". At that time, everybody had liked Robin Hood. They did not question him about taking from the rich and giving to the poor but now that it is practically being endorsed and happening, there is a problem with it. Mr. Speaker, my time in politics is not long, but I know that whenever I leave politics, I have to have a good mirror image of myself. I would have to be talking about ushering in a new national order.

Sir, if we are seriously and realistically going to channel and challenge the impact of the high energy costs people pay, we have to revisit the Cuban Light Bulb Project. They might have gone haywire in Jamaica, but it does not mean that it would go haywire here in Barbados. Sir, the bulbs themselves save a considerable amount of wattage to the ordinary poor man. We cannot let America and President Bush determine always what we in Barbados should do.

The Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow once said: "We are friends of all but satellite of none." Therefore, if we are to move forward in a positive way as proud Barbadians, as is inscribed in our National Anthem, we cannot continue to do the same old things and believe that America has all the answers.

Mr. Speaker, the United States of America deals with Petro-Caribe. President Chavez went into the southern States of America and offered them free oil. America did not say: "No". They accepted it and they are still getting it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to come closer home. Sir, if we are talking about nationalism, I believe that every monopoly in Barbados should be nationalised, because what I am seeing is the ushering in of a new social order. I believe the Barbados Light & Power Co. Ltd. and the Barbados Telephone Co. should be nationalised. This would redound to the benefit of the ordinary poor man and poor woman, who are at the mercy, most of the times, of these large conglomerates.

Mr. Speaker, I noticed that Government has moved towards a process of identifying persons within the communities and are naming schools and roads after these persons. Sir, I think this is a wonderful policy. Sir, I live in the Pine Housing Area and every gap is named after a tree. There is Regents Road, Birch Gap, Oakway Lane, Maple Lane, et cetera. These roads are named after trees and not after people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to propose today that the Parkinson Community Centre be renamed after Granville Foster, an old community practitioner, and Mr. Michael Newton. Mr. Speaker, if you understand the history of the community in which I live, you would understand that the Parkinson Secondary School, Parkinson Field and Parkinson Centre are all named after Rawle Parkinson. He has done great things, but let us divest somewhat and recognise our own community heroes.

Sir, it is absolutely critical, if we are talking about the spirit of nationalism, that we identify the icons we have in Barbados and not take the hypocritical path when these people die, to speak good things about them.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to Victor "Gas" Clarke, who was one of the greatest and best footballers ever produced in Barbados. "Gas" Clarke died a month ago and I bet the whole of Barbados has forgotten him already, maybe except for the people in Wildey and Carrington Village. The same thing could be said about Anthony "Mango" Phillips. Sir, when these great icons die, people simply forget them.

Mr. Speaker, as politicians in this Honourable Chamber, we must now chart a new national order where we recognise these persons. Sir, "Red Plastic Bag" said it well. This country was not built by our leaders alone, there are so many heroes out there in the communities who are unknown and their stories untold.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes in which to conclude.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am bringing two Private Members' Resolutions to this Honourable Chamber:

1. To rename the Secondary Schools' League after Victor "Gas" Clarke;
2. That January 1, formerly known as Civic Day, has no special attachment to it, other than it being known as New Year's Day. There are different New Year's Days all over the world. The Chinese and everybody else have their own New Year's Day.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that in recognition of the national icons, we should revisit and have January 1 be named Civic Day, where over 45 000 people in Barbados, during the early 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, were part of an organisation that is the forerunner of the modern Co-operative Credit Union system and also our National Insurance. Mr. Speaker, we have forgotten E. D. Mottley, C. B. Layne, and the number of black persons who started this organisation.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical that in the new order of a national programme we have to start erecting mini stadia across communities of Barbados. Sir, I was in agreement with the Honourable Minister of Transport, when the Honourable Member said that some of the money spent on Kensington Oval should have been spent in other areas across Barbados, in developing other stadia.

Mr. Speaker, this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals is too critical to all Barbadians. We are now a small island, which is up against the developed and developing world, and more than at any other time in our history, we have to unite as one. There is no room on this issue of social mobilisation and nationalism for a partisan approach. There is absolutely no room.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I do not care what anybody says about me, I have got to the point where I have stopped caring about politics and have started caring more about people.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have absolutely no problem in supporting the social programmes of this document that was brought to this Honourable Chamber. Mr. Speaker, I am not doing it against the background of Hamilton Lashley. I have consulted with the members of the St. Michael South East Constituency.

Sir, it would be a travesty of social and natural justice, if, at the end of this debate, in relation to the enactment of all of the social programmes that have been brought to this Honourable Chamber, we do not support them. Sir, there should be no social divide on the issues that have been brought to this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, never before in the history of Barbados have I ever heard of school children riding on buses freely. There are a large number of school children living in St. Michael North East. Sir, all I would do, would be to tell the Honourable Minister of Transport to make sure that he puts a large number of buses on the Pine, so that those school children could get to school, free of cost.

9.30 a.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you need to conclude in one minute.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the Honourable Attorney General is not here as yet but you see the death of I'Akobi Maloney, it is one, Sir, at this point, in my view, of what I call police profiling. If Hamilton Lashley would start to grow back his locks and I am seen in the wrong place, you know what would happen? I might be a victim of the system against which I am resisting, philosophically. Sir, we will all be asked to stand up and be counted. Again, Sir, as I said, I am supporting the social programmes in this document.

Mr. Speaker, as I close and take my seat, I want to urge everyone to speak from their consciences, speak clear, speak loud and, finally, Sir, let no obstacle be greater than the cause.

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

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals presented by the Honourable David Thompson, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. Sir, these Proposals come at a time when nation States need to reassert themselves and their national identity and recognise the fact that they owe no allegiance to any international institutions or constructs of international institutions, but Governments owe allegiance to the people who have elected them to put in place development models that would benefit ordinary people. Therefore, I would want to say that when I listened to the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, I was disappointed.

Mr. Speaker, taking into consideration the circumstances that Barbados faces regionally and on the world stage, where we had an opportunity upon recognising those circumstances, that we should all come together as Barbadians to assist each other, we had naked and crass politics being played out in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that Government is making a concerted attempt to reposition the Barbadian economy to provide more stability and resilience against the vagaries of the future. The Government has to be commended for the new initiatives in dealing with these difficult economic circumstances and, in essence, this Budget has to be labelled as a people's Budget, not just a Democratic Labour Party Budget, because it seeks to provide for the disadvantaged in this society. It calls for sacrifice but sacrifice on the part of those who have, and we are attempting to distribute society's wealth to assist those who are in need of assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the presentation by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday was an untidy and inept effort to reposition blame for the current and likely difficulties that this country will face as we go into the future. Sir, there seems to be an attempt to scare the public of Barbados and make them believe that the Democratic Labour Party is solely responsible for the current events which are taking place in our society.

It has been only six months and instead of recognising and admitting that the inability of this country to effectively channel resources to deal with the current challenges is due largely in part to the squandermania that existed under 14 years of Barbados Labour Party rule. Sir, the fact that this was done at the expense of the people does not make the Leader of the Opposition shudder because these are the kinds of things; the kinds of approaches we had to the management of the affairs of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to refer to the section where the Honourable Member for the Opposition spoke to the question of the Economic Partnership Agreement and mentioned the fact that the Government is not preparing the private sector and businesses, generally, for its onslaught. Sir, they are talking about this when as a Government the Barbados Labour Party leadership negotiated away the sovereign right of the citizens of this country to a construct that we know and that is called the Economic Partnership Agreement.

Sir, one of these is the right to determine the policies that would further this country's development and yet they come in here giving the impression that they are the most socialist in orientation and, Sir, that is far from the truth. Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party has always had socialist orientation. They are still steeped in it and when you look at the measures that are being introduced in these Budgetary Proposals, it speaks to the fact that the Party has been socialist in its orientation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the issue of land. It not the Democratic Labour Party that said that land should be sold to the highest bidder. It is not the Democratic Labour Party that said it should go to the highest economic

value and then proceeded to watch a situation where this country's precious land resources and land space has been put on the world wide web that we are up for sale without any commensurate safeguard, despite the warnings and, Sir, we are trying to do something different in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to give support to the Prime Minister with respect to the position he has taken on SSS Inc. Sir, you only have to drive along this Highway and observe the new arrangements and we wonder, whether or not, they ever recognised the role of consulting with people. When you bring such a large investment into a country, you seek to ensure that you consult with the people. Sir, we seem to think that once you go to university and have a degree that you have all the sense in the world but it is from ordinary people that wisdom comes and, Sir, they failed to listen to them. Mr. Speaker, we have agreed that we have to proceed in the direction that we are going.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak in terms of the St. Michael West Central Constituency. We have a situation of neglect in the St. Michael West Central constituency and I want to refer to one. Sir, I want to invite you to visit Seclusion Gardens in the St. Michael West Central constituency. Sir, there is a road that if you walk along that road you would think you were living in Barbados 40 years or 50 years ago.

We have a situation that after 14 years of Barbados Labour Party Government that you have a road like that existing in an urban community and, Sir, it is disgraceful. Yet we had the situation where this Government was spending enormous sums of money trying to fulfill the fanciful dreams of technocrats and their well-wishers.

9.40 a.m.

Sir, we need to recognise that we have started to return to people-centred initiatives in this country. Sir, we need to recognise that when we take action in Barbados, our first question should be, how does the ordinary man benefit from those measures we are trying to implement? Those are the questions we need to ask.

Sir, in that regard, I wish to applaud the initiative in relation to education this Government has taken. Mr. Speaker, the decline in the standard of discipline in schools is noticeable, and support must be given to the decision to place children on their way to their respective schools in a more disciplined environment. I would like to encourage the Prime Minister to further ensure that the standard of behaviour on the PSVs are addressed. We need to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we have a large element in our society that is creating rampage on the minds of our young people. I also want to say that this Government is going to proceed to make a considerable investment in the Transport Board.

We also need to introduce regulations to ensure that the services of the Transport Board will be utilised in a manner that will be there for successive generations. We need to applaud the Government when they take initiatives such as these. Do not ask how can we afford them. If you look at the proposals in the Budget, it is clearly shown how we will be able to afford it.

Sir, sometimes I do not think that we understand what free transport means for the ordinary family. We have families in St. Michael West Central whose children, sometimes through no fault of their own, cannot go to school on particular days. We need to talk to the teachers in the schools to understand what is happening.

Sir, there are situations where some days those children do not have lunch money or bus fare, especially when the schools are far away. We should not be making any excuses, because we are going to take money from the public purse to finance children going to school. We have to make no apologies about that.

Sir, look at whom we are taking it from. We have an endemic problem in this society when it comes to gambling. It is wrecking the lives of families in this country. It is amazing, the previous Government bragged about how they have to introduce these new gaming machines. Mr. Speaker, when these have increased, what are the consequences in terms of the disposable income of individuals that go into these gambling areas and dens and spend their money? We do not think about these things.

Sir, when we see the rise in alcohol consumption in Barbados, do we think about the fact that there are some people who are steeped in alcoholism and its impact, the casualties along the way in terms of families, and we are making noise about putting up some charges in relation to the use of these particular services. We need to recognise our priorities. Sir, we need to save our children.

Sir, when I look at the Constituency of St. Michael West Central, I can see adequate justification for the measures that are being undertaken by this Government. We are about people. We are not about making businesses rich.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to identify some other measures that are being taken that are worthy of support. When we talk about improvement in the physical plant at schools - The Lawrence T. Gay Primary School in St. Michael West Central. I want to invite you to visit that school and look at the physical facilities there.

I am saying that we cannot be happy, as a modern society that is supposed to be going into a developed age, with the physical facilities at that school. Sir, to the extent that we have committed to fixing the physical plant in

schools, what is wrong with that? We need resources to do it, and if we have to take those resources from some sectors of the society, we should do just that. That is what we need to do.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just let me interrupt you for just a short minute, please.

Asides.

(Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair.)

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you may now continue.

Mr. J.D. PAUL: Thank you, Sir.

Sir, I want to make a broader point. Every year around the time of the Common Entrance Examination, we have parents bombarding politicians saying that they want their son or daughter, as the case may be, to get to Harrison's College, Queen's College or Foundation, but they do not want to get their sons and daughters into Deighton Griffith School, or Parkinson Memorial School. Do you know why? It is because of the fact we are spending money on certain schools, and the other schools are being left out.

Sir, when we talk about upgrading that physical plant, we are talking about those schools that have been unable to get their share of Government resources for upgrading. The answer in this society is not to create some elite schools that the privileged few can attend, because they know a politician or a civil servant in authority. We need to create educational institutions that are comparable to each other.

We do not understand why these people have to traverse across the country to attend certain schools, because there is a perception in some people's minds, that some schools are better than others. We need to fix that. The answer is not encouraging elitism in this society. The answer is not to let people brag about how they went to Combermere or Harrison College. Sir, I brag that I went to St. Leonard's.

Sir, under the last Administration we saw the destruction of a legacy for St. Leonard's Boys' School where a modern computer lab was torn down because of vindictiveness on the part of that Administration over there. Sir, these are the issues we need to address in this society. That is what it is about, people.

Sir, the provision of special teachers for special children is another initiative. I walk through St. Michael West Central, and one in every 10 households you hear:

“My son has a learning difficulty”. We have parents thinking that if their children cannot learn, they have a learning difficulty. We are categorising children today.

Sir, when Government decides that we need more special teachers in school, what is wrong with that? What is wrong with helping parents to have a better image of their children? There is no excuse. We need to provide resources to deal with that. There are too many children slipping through the cracks of the educational system in this country.

Sir, if you go into communities, masons and carpenters are scarce, and sometimes you have to work hard to get them, that is why the Guyanese are coming in, because we are not training our people to be skilled, and encouraging the right attitudes.

Sir, the loan limit for the Student Revolving Loan Fund which I applaud - I am going to give an example of what I am talking about.

9.50 a.m.

Sir, I have a situation in St. Michael West Central where I have a young man who has gotten a partial football scholarship, and has difficulty finding the rest of money to help him to go overseas to get that scholarship. I am saying that a critical aspect of the Student Revolving Loan Fund, when it comes to the area of sureties, we are removing that requirement for young people, in order to get scholarships.

Sir, do you understand what is happening? There are people in those poor neighbourhoods who are nobody's son or daughter, so when they go and they ask them to give a surety, they ask them who are their parents, so when they go they are frightened and they ask what to do. Sir, if Government proceeds to remove the requirement for sureties, in respect of getting a loan from the Student Revolving Loan Fund, what is wrong with that?

Sir, these are the people-centred initiatives that we are doing in this country and we should be applauded for them.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, when we note the fact that they have extended surety provisions in terms of the length of repayment for these loans, we have to be applauded for that too, because sometimes when we have these people from poor families, when they come back, they have the people relying on them.

Sir, these are the issues that the Government is tackling that touch the ordinary people. Do you know what happens? Sir, if we had a situation where we were giving

incentives to some rich businessman coming from the United States of America to set up something, we would be the best Government in the world for the people over there, but we are dealing with issues that are impacting on poor people and trying to take them up to another level.

Sir, in this day and age of rising fuel prices, you have a situation where the Government has decided that they would not increase bus fares. Sir, people must be saying that must be economic madness that they are not increasing bus fares. Sir, do you understand that in a situation where the price of oil is rising above \$140 a barrel and likely to even go further, and we made the bold decision not to increase the price of bus fares at this time?

Sir, is that not a Government wishing to cushion the impact of the current circumstances impacting upon our poor people? I know that those who drive the Mercedes Benz and the BMW's do not use the bus, but ordinary people use it, and to the extent we could cushion that impact to them, Sir, we are going to try to do that to the best of our ability.

Sir, we have a situation where 3 000 children are going to get increased welfare grants, going from \$25 to \$35. Sir, in St. Michael West Central, some of the residents are not aware that we have disabled persons in that community. Let me tell you something. There are caregivers who look after them and they perform a labour of love. In some cases they sacrifice their own futures in order to look after those people.

I know parents who had to give up their vocations in order to stay home because they do not want their children to suffer the indignity of being left out there with an inadequate system of State support. Sir, they are the fundamental issues that we are trying to take care of. What did we do? We have made a step. We have increased the benefits to \$116 a week, Sir, and you want to tell me that we are not a people-centred Government that is recognising what is happening in the communities?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to also deal with the whole question of the pensions. We have carried through on our campaign promises to review pensions. Sir, the Minimum Contributory Pension has gone up from \$109 to \$142 a week from September 1, 2008. Sir, non contributory old aged pensions increased to \$116 per week. Sir, what is wrong with that?

Sir, this is visible evidence that this Democratic Labour Party Administration is a people-centred Government.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party is providing summer camps for the children during vacations from school. Sir, we have a situation during the vacations when

children run rampant in this community, unsupervised. Why? Because the parents would like to supervise them but they have to go out and work. Therefore, if we are going to provide an environment in which they could be looked after, what is wrong with that?

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: At least, we do not leave them to the devices of the drug pushers. What is wrong with that? Sir, and they are telling us that we are not a caring Government, that we are not a people Government.

Sir, I would like the Leader of the Opposition to re-examine her statements.

Sir, I now come to the matter of food and I just want to appeal to my comrades in one area. I know that in our desire to ensure that Barbadians get reasonably priced food, I heard the invitation to bring in competition from outside. Sir, what we do not want for ourselves, let us not ask for others, because understand, those whom we bring in from outside owe us no favours.

Sir, what it has shown in many cases, is that countries which have tried that experiment have become even more impoverished. Sir, I just want you to look at Haiti and Latin America and see the results of foreign capitalist domination and penetration.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five more minutes.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, I also want to go now to go to my pet peeve. I should not call it a pet peeve because it is a job for me, agriculture. Sir, I want to applaud the Government because, for the first time in 14 years, we see a Government making bold, definitive steps when it comes to agriculture. We see agriculturalists now being able to walk around and hold their heads high.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: It was literally disrespected, Sir, under the previous Administration. I would say that the best Minister of Agriculture that they had, Sir, was the Honourable Member for St. James North during that period. Do you know what happened? Sir, he was moved in short order. He was not allowed to stay too long, because he did not fulfill their agenda, so in haste he was moved.

Sir, I just want us to understand that we are concentrating on things that matter for people. One of the proposals is that the Government will guarantee loans to a total amount of \$15 million to the BAMC and BADMC, to provide an additional 10 acres of green houses, shade houses, tunnels, irrigation systems for modern agriculture,

packing housing and systems, cooling rooms and vehicles for transporting this produce.

Sir, can we appreciate the impact that this additional production would have on food in this country? We are teaching people how to feed themselves. Not only that, we are creating additional employment in this country.

Sir, we are not doing like the previous Administration, encouraging a mendicant attitude that puts people on the dole begging every week. You see a politician and you run down the road, give me this and that. It is not about that. We are empowering people to do things for themselves.

Sir, we are looking to guarantee a loan for the financing of a \$60 million project for drainage and water storage at the River Plantation in St. Philip. It clearly demonstrates that the agriculture sector is being taken seriously.

Sir, I quickly want to refer to the Southern Meats Abattoir. Sir, do not let that Abattoir fall either because it is a responsibility which the previous Administration did not recognise, of any Government to ensure modern Abattoir facilities would be provided to the livestock sector, if it is to be successful.

Sir, the last Administration experimented with it and we are still meandering around the subject. Sir, we need to pay attention to these things. We also need to move hastily on the Agricultural Protection Bill.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two more minutes to wrap up.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, we do not appreciate the impact of the farmers' incentives that are being provided upfront. We had a situation in the Ministry of Agriculture where farmers had to beg to get an incentive. Now, we are saying, listen to me, we are giving you the incentive upfront.

10.00 a.m.

Sir, people do not understand the interest expense cost that is saved, or the fillip to investment in the sector which that would create. Sir, let us appreciate these things.

Sir, we are looking for alternatives. That is why there is the \$4 million in respect of the cassava feed project. Sir, the Government is not sitting idle and waiting for things to happen. It is being bold and imaginative. Sir, in that kind of environment, we have a situation where a loyal Opposition is sitting talking nonsense about who it is going to impact on, and where we are going.

Sir, we have to take stock in this country and recognise that Barbados faces difficult economic times ahead. In that respect, Sir, the intellectual talent of all Barbadians has to be mobilised in an effort to create a new Barbados.

Sir, I thank you very much. (Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair.)

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to support the Resolution before this Honourable Chamber and to fully endorse the comprehensive strategy set out in the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, which will position the Barbados economy for further growth and development, protect the vulnerable and improve the quality of life of all Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, so far this morning we have had the opportunity, and I believe some Honourable Members referred to it yesterday as well, of referring to this Budget as a people's Budget. Mr. Speaker, I want to highly commend the details in this Budgetary Proposals to the constituents of St. James Central.

Mr. Speaker, it is a most humbling experience for me to have been given the opportunity to represent the constituents of St. James Central and for this I take the opportunity this morning to thank them most heartedly for that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also congratulate the Honourable Prime Minister for his leadership and understanding of the economic challenges facing our nation at this time.

Mr. Speaker, when we assumed the office of Government of this country on January 15, one of the first challenges we faced was the tremendous increase in the prices being charged on the world market for grain. Mr. Speaker, a lot of these prices would have started towards the final quarter of 2007.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of this Honourable Chamber would have heard the presentations we have made in here in respect of those prices. Mr. Speaker, having heard the Honourable Leader of the Opposition speak yesterday, I wondered whether she was absent when we spoke to some of those challenges that we were experiencing in the first quarter of this year.

Mr. Speaker, oil prices have now gone in the vicinity of US\$145 per barrel. It is projected by some that the price will approach US\$200 a barrel toward the end of this

current calendar year. Others project that it would not return to the 2007 levels, that we would never see oil prices below US\$100 per barrel.

Mr. Speaker, we have also had to face the challenge of the increasing price of grain caused by the expanding economies of India and China and of the poor harvests in countries that would normally be the major exporters of wheat. Mr. Speaker, we have already seen the price of some grains, particularly wheat, decreasing.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry is monitoring that situation carefully because when the price of wheat was going up, business people in Barbados sought to take their prices up. Sir, I believe that we should have an environment that, as prices start to level off and to reduce, there should be some concession in those prices.

Mr. Speaker, I expect that the business community in Barbados would be very conscious of this because my Department would be looking very closely at the situation over the coming months. Mr. Speaker, I give the assurance to the people of Barbados that we are constantly monitoring that situation.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East made a big fuss over one or two items that she felt merited a reduction in VAT. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the VAT was removed from a substantial number of basic food items from as far back as 1998, so there is not a big group of items that one could consider to be basic food items that VAT is still on.

Mr. Speaker, this Government, in these Budgetary Proposals, has removed the 2 per cent Environmental Levy from a number of items: Condensed milk, tea, oatmeal, herring, sardines, cereals, juices, imported beef, lamb, cooking oil and rice.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East made a big fuss about brown rice. Sir, brown rice carries no VAT. There is no bond rate or CET charges on brown rice. That situation has been so for some time. The Honourable Member needs to do her research.

Mr. Speaker, the other items from which the Environmental Levy has been removed are: medicated soap, coffee, ginger, salt, cooking oil, butter and baking powder. Sir, the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, there are other items that we are looking at that we just cannot make a decision willy-nilly on because they have implications to other businesses and manufacturing businesses in Barbados.

Sir, we have to be careful. We cannot be an irresponsible Government. We just cannot reduce the bond

rates and so on from items willy-nilly. We have to do the research. We have to have discussions and so on with the people who sell and manufacture those products in Barbados. We have to be conscious about the impact that would have on their particular business, jobs and so on. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of items that are in the works that we are evaluating.

Mr. Speaker, in a general sort of sense, the policy of this Government in respect of the rising costs and so on is that the increases would be shared.

10.10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, much of the cost has to be passed through to the consumers but we also expect that the business houses in this country would do their share of absorbing some of that cost. There is no need in this crisis situation for business houses in Barbados to continue applying the same level of markup that they were applying previously on their goods. That would mean they would be making a higher dollar profit. Sir, the distributors, wholesalers and retailers could hold their profit margins at the same dollar level. It would help to cushion the impact, so that the full impact would not be passed through to the consumers.

Mr. Speaker, there has to be an approach that the Government accepts its responsibility, and it has done that because we have made certain initiatives in that direction. The business houses also have to take some responsibility. Mr. Speaker, I noted it in one of our daily newspapers, an individual indicating that the increased cost of approximately \$2 500 to professionals, such as lawyers, would be passed on to clients and that it would be inflationary.

Sir, the fees of attorneys and several professionals in Barbados are based on a percentage off the top. Further, the cost of land is going up without any additional work on their part. Their fees have gone up and so they could absorb this increase. This does not have to be passed through to clients. Everybody in Barbados has to accept that we are in this pool together and that it is their civic duty to absorb some of the increases, wherever possible.

I know there are certain businesses in Barbados that would be challenged to do that, particularly those in the transport business, and some allowances have been made to address that. Sir, we are still monitoring that particular situation. We are still looking at what additional measures we could introduce that would make life somewhat easier for some of those sectors. Sir, we have to recognise we are in this together, and we all need to try.

Mr. Speaker, this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals is a people's budget. Our policy, in addition to

the increased cost being shared among the interest groups in Barbados, we feel strongly that the vulnerable groups within our communities must be protected from these increases. Mr. Speaker, when I speak about vulnerable groups, we are talking about the disabled, about children, about pensioners, and the senior citizens in this country. Sir, you would notice that within the Budgetary Proposals, there has been substantial increases in allowances that would make life for that category of individuals in Barbados somewhat more bearable under the circumstances. Sir, for example, the Reversed Tax Credit has been increased. It is now \$1 300 for income under

\$16 500.

This morning and yesterday other Honourable Members have identified several increases in the pensions and allowances paid to the disabled. Sir, my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central, has highlighted the disabled in his presentation. The Honourable Member is quite right because throughout Barbados, we have a pretty significant number of disabled persons.

We are not just talking about people who are mentally handicapped. When people speak of the disabled, some see just one particular category, but there are a number of persons who, because of diabetes and other non-communicable diseases, have lost a limb or both limbs. Those persons who have had strokes all fit into that particular category of persons when we talk about the disabled. Sir, as a society we need to be a lot more conscious of the needs and the responsibility of the individual to the disabled in this community.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to exhaust my time without touching on some of the areas I need to speak to this morning. I want to refer to a number of comments made by the Honourable Member for St. George North yesterday, who is not in his seat. The Honourable Member was tongue-in-cheek when he spoke about this Budget not having anything for the people of his constituency in Todds and in Guinea. Mr. Speaker, there are more working-class people of this country who use Public Service Vehicles more than they use cars. There are more children of working-class parents in this society who use PSVs, as opposed to cars. Sir, the fact of the matter is that in respect of bus fares, we have made a specific and conscious policy not to increase those rates. We have made a specific and conscious policy to continue the subsidy that has been provided to bus fares. This is all part of our overall policy of addressing the cost of living challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I know when I did my canvassing in Redmans Village, Arch Hall and Fitts Village, there were persons who identified that they were meeting challenges in sending their children to school. Sometimes they did not

have the bus fare nor lunch money for their children. Sir, these policies will come to the benefit of those particular families. They are the ones who are going to be benefitting from the initiatives within this Budget. Sir, this is a people's budget, as I said.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that with regard to school children travelling freely on buses, as the Prime Minister has indicated, he expects to see changes in the behavioural pattern by mid-September, otherwise other initiatives might be taken in terms of banning children from travelling on PSVs all together. Sir, if it comes to that, I would hope that we would get the opportunity to have that school bus service privatised in some form, so that service could be efficiently managed and the maintenance of those vehicles also properly managed.

Mr. Speaker, my Honourable colleague had alluded to the amendments made to the Students Revolving Loan Fund, such as the removal of the need for sureties, special low interest rates that are 1.5 per cent above the principal.

10.20 a.m.

There is repayment of the loan over 30 years; an increase of the loans up to \$100 000 over four years. Mr. Speaker, the primary beneficiaries of the Student Revolving Loan Fund have been middle-class Barbadians, but the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East indicated that there was nothing in this Budget for middle-class persons. Sir, that is what the Honourable Member said yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, the Value Added Tax removal from houses for people earning less than \$42 000 per year - The Honourable Member, if you recall, indicated that persons using \$3 000 a month, that persons in that category and middle-class persons in this country, that the removal of the VAT from housing for people earning less than \$42 000 comes within that same definition of middle-class as enunciated by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. Sir, I could not understand and, maybe, she did not read the Budgetary Proposals.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch a bit on housing because housing is one of the main issues that I face each week when I have my constituency meetings. Sir, probably over 90 per cent of the persons visiting me want to own their own home, or they want a house spot and several of them have entered my constituency office with letters issued by the National Housing Corporation previously, indicating that there had been assigned to a particular area.

Sir, some persons had even three letters, and the Honourable Member talks about integrity. Where was integrity in the National Housing Corporation under the previous regime? These are the sort of challenges that we

are now faced with, in trying to fix that up. Sir, for years, under the previous Administration the National Housing Corporation has been issuing these letters and raising false hopes amongst ordinary working-class Barbadians and the Honourable Member speaks about integrity. Where is the integrity in that, Sir?

Mr. Speaker, in my Constituency, there have been a number of people complaining where they have had the benefit from the Urban Development Commission or National Housing Corporation of the poor quality of the workmanship and I want to recommend to the Minister responsible under our Administration that he makes sure that when the new contractors - because within our Budgetary Proposals we have made the observation that 40 per cent of the procurement of Government's expenditure and, by extension, 40 per cent of persons building these new houses in Marchfield and across Barbados, we have to ensure that those smaller contractors are going to produce a quality project. I want to remind him of this and to have his commitment that is going to happen. We have to make sure of this because there are too many complaints like water coming through the side of the house and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a bit about the issue of cooperatives because the Proposals speak to the reestablishment of the \$3 000 allowance for investment in cooperatives. Sir, the Co-operative Movement in Barbados has grown through contributions from Both Sides of this Honourable Chamber. We are not going to take exclusive claim to that because the development of Co-operatives in Barbados has been a programme that both Governments have put at the centre of some of their policies.

Mr. Speaker, over 150 000 Barbadians are members of the Co-operative Movement and members of the Credit Union at this time and if we take the wider non-credit union cooperatives, it will probably be a bit more than 150 000 persons.

Mr. Speaker, I raised that to say that we as a people need to work together in a cooperative movement, support each other businesses and there is ample opportunity for the cost of living and the increased food prices to be addressed if we can have a cooperative approach. The Co-operative Movement in Barbados now has assets in excess of \$1 billion and, Sir, it does not take a \$1 billion to capitalise any food retail company in Barbados, but it take Barbadians to support the business and that is what we want to achieve within that Movement.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member should be seeking to conclude in the next five minutes.

Hon. E.G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to support the Co-operative Movement.

Mr. Speaker, tourism. Sir, I am the Representative for St. James Central, which happens to be at the heart of the tourism industry in Barbados and I must say a few words in respect of that.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East in her presentation indicated that they have introduced initiatives to control the erosion on the beaches in Barbados. Sir, in the context of the importance of tourism to our economy, \$4 million has been allocated to the beaches around Barbados so it is not being allocated to all the beaches.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James North, along with myself, can speak to the level of beach erosion of the beaches in Holetown, in that area from Church Point up to Sandy Lane. Sir, a lot of that erosion has been caused by the loss of the reef.

10.30 a.m.

The reef has been damaged over the years and some of the hotel properties in terms of the distribution of their drainage. We are now faced along the coast with major high rise buildings. I do not know if I am permitted to call the names of some of the buildings. To the entrance to Sandy Lane there was a mangrove. That has been destroyed by reckless permissions, ignoring the environmental impact by those properties.

Asides.

Hon. E.G. HUTSON: I am talking about what the previous Government did. The loss of that mangrove will contribute to the further loss of the reef along the Paynes' Bay Coast.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is talking about a couple million dollars. It is going to take more than a couple of million dollars to fix the reefs along the West Coast, and this Government will have to address that. We now have those problems to deal with.

Sir, a lot of my constituents are earning a living from tourism along the beach, the beach workers, jet ski operators and speed boat operators. They are all earning a living, but there are little or no facilities outside of the little facility at Paynes' Bay. There is no facility for public recreation, nor toilet facilities for people who are working on the beach along the Coast.

I had to whisper this into the ears of the current Minister of Tourism, so he would be very conscious of the fact that when we talk about our tourism product, we need to talk about the people that are involved with the tourism product, the creation of jobs for them, because the high-rise

buildings are not creating the sort of jobs that we would want for the residents of St. James Central.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is short, but I just want to say here...

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

Hon. E .G. HUTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. R.C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, the opportunity for me to take part in this debate has been made possible by the good people of St. James North, to whom I am indebted and to whom I thank for once again allowing me to play an active role in this very Honourable Place. In all humility and with the help of God Almighty, I proceed into a humble peroration on this day. Sir, without in anyway interfering with, or trespassing on the duties of the Shadow Minister of Education, there are particular aspects of education policies, which were enunciated briefly, the day before, which I want to look at.

Sir, I begin by noting that the Ministry of Education is now called the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. In the context of human resource development and in the context of bold budgetary pronouncements, that poverty is going to be properly investigated, I would want an assurance that the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development sets out on a path of genuine human resource development, bearing in mind that it can be justified, not only on the grounds that we need to beat poverty, but also taking into account the realities and complexities of today's world.

I am prepared, personally, to support any move in the direction of a global holistic approach to human resource development that would position our people, not only to play an active role in the job market, but would also position our people to be truly self-reliant and independent, and permit them to be as entrepreneurial as resources would allow. I just want to make that comment in respect of human resource development.

I am not blissfully unaware of the fact that the approach to student revolving loans has been changed, or will change but, at the same time, a mere loan that facilitates better than previously, is not all that is necessary for human resource development. In fact, the Government's challenge is to calculate whether this whole concept of human resource development can be limited to one ministry or whether there are other Government Departments and Ministries, that have a role to play, for example, the Ministry of Social Care, the Ministry of

Labour and such like. I would want to urge the Government to ensure that its programme for the human resource development becomes the one policy that the rest of the Caribbean can follow. Sir, Barbados, when you go abroad, is often treated as the one Caribbean English-speaking country that sets the lead and sets the tone for other Caribbean countries to follow.

Sir, I am asking for further and better particulars on two items. The Honourable Member for St. John mentioned that a new secondary school will come. He also mentioned that a new primary school will come. We need to know the location of both. We need to know the number of students of both, the cost and particularly the curriculum. A lot of teachers are these days doing curriculum development. A lot of international trends suggest that curriculum reform is, indeed, quite necessary. I would like to know that when Government proceeds to implement its plans for a new primary school, and a new secondary school, that modern thinking and modern philosophical approaches inform such a policy. I really would like that to happen.

Sir, I am concluding my contribution on education on two things that really have been concerning me. We have a number of undocumented migrants in Barbados who bear children in Barbados. We have a number of undocumented persons, resident in Barbados, who bear children in Barbados, some of whom bring children into Barbados, but the point I am making is this.

A lot of innocent little children between the ages of 3,4 and 5 years, are being denied entrance to our school system. A lot of children were born here. The question is, if the parent is undocumented, can that be the basis on which we discriminate against an innocent child? The other question is: Does the welfare of the child count more than any other consideration?

Sir, I want to raise that because, like the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, I am one of these people that either would be ubiquitous some days, or will be perceived to be a person that you can come up to and talk to. These are problems that exist and we need to do something about them.

Sir, listen for this one now. There are Barbadian males who live abroad, who come back with children that they are prepared to father, who themselves had been encountering trouble, despite being citizens, getting their children into primary school. That is happening too.

10.40 a.m.

I want Government to be bold enough, innovative enough, creative enough to ensure that small children and not so small children, are not denied or refused an

education, on the basis of ancient immigration policies, which should no longer apply.

Sir, before looking at the whole question of agriculture, which I propose to examine at some length and in some detail, just let me mention two items which This Side is extremely concerned about.

The first item is the question of the policy towards the pricing of diesel. Honourable Members would recall that several weeks ago, the price of diesel was raised to its highest level ever and then that brought protests from the fishing community and particular manufacturers. In time, the increase was reduced, but not to the level to satisfy all who are affected by the changes in prices of this most important factor input.

I would want Government to know that when the Barbados Labour Party was in power, we charged gasoline prices in such a way as to subsidise diesel prices. What we did, bearing in mind that much gasoline goes towards consumption, we isolated diesel as a factor input and as an input not for consumption, and often did not raise the price of diesel, or would make adjustments to the Excise Taxes on fuels and spirits in a way that would cushion the impact of any internationally driven price increases.

I am urging Government to look and to rethink its policy on diesel, especially in light of the fact that many people in productive sectors are not today very happy about how the matter has been handled.

I did say that I propose, Mr. Speaker, to look at the question of agriculture. Let me start with vending. My ears permitted me to hear and my eyes allowed me to see a proposed policy where, at least one day or periodically, unlicensed vendors can ply their trade alongside licenced vendors in our markets. I want to caution that the licenced vendors who depend on vending for a living, and who incur some financial sacrifice by having to pay licences, will probably resent the notion of persons not paying entering.

Sir, what could also happen is that those who are not going to pay will show up on the days allocated to them and claim the best spots.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Yes. I am dealing with human nature and what I have experienced in this place. Unlicensed persons could very well be treated as trespassers by the licensed persons. Unlicensed persons can, through skill, through timing and such like, organise to get the best spots where they are going to be treated as moonlighters by those in competition with them. This policy has to be carefully crafted. It has to be policed in a

decent way and it has to be one that will truly serve as a spur to agricultural activity.

Looking at agriculture itself, in my copy of the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, which I have here. Agriculture runs from page 66 and onwards. There are times, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, when I will actually go into the document to comment on particular parts of it, but before doing that, I want to say that before January 15, we were working on a sustainable agricultural development bill.

We are now hearing of an agricultural protection bill. The two things need not be disharmonious with each other. The two things can be combined. The Sustainable Agricultural Development Bill was one conceived to stimulate agricultural activity. I take it that the Agricultural Protection Bill is just about the same thing with another name.

The files in the Ministry of Agriculture should be in such a state as to guide the new Minister of Agriculture - whom I wish well - to look at what has been proposed and what was being worked on, and where he can be allowed, with the benefit of ministerial information, to proceed to do his work.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to say is that during the Throne Speech, I got the impression that the Democratic Labour Party Government was contemplating 30 000 acres for agricultural purposes and agricultural development. We, on This Side, would rather that figure be 45 000 acres. Sir, part of the legislative programme that was being worked on by the Barbados Labour Party was to identify as many pieces or parcels of land as possible that could allow us 45 000 acres.

The purpose of having 45 000 acres was to ensure that agricultural diversification occurs, including the important area that we have not yet looked at in this debate, the area of horticulture, which bears tremendous potential. Sir, in this global village that we call this world, we have been getting signals from Italy, Germany and England that our tropical flowers are of such a quality and character, as to be in enormous demand in those places.

As a member who has been here for a while, it does not suit my purposes to hold ideas purely for the Barbados Labour Party. It suits my purposes for these purposes to coincide with the national good. And so, I am asking this Government in the interest of the national good, to look closely at horticulture and to permit the Honourable Member who sits in the Other Place, to have resources to ensure that all those horticulturists out there are not only given incentives but are permitted things like export credit, and export guarantees.

This is important because the start-up capital cost to get a green house going and the start-up capital cost to get a horticultural project going, are quite high. Therefore, this is an area where Government can prove that it can help the farmers involved in this particular area of agricultural economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, before we demitted office, we had devised a national strategic plan and, within that national strategic plan, there was a policy on agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture itself had done its own internal work and had worked out what it concluded into the National Strategic Plan, which the Barbados Labour Party Government had proposed.

After careful research, it was concluded that Barbados can, and has the resources to achieve self-sufficiency in the production of pork, milk, poultry, all vegetables, cassava, sweet potatoes, eddoes, and yams.

10.50 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados, if it went the way of making itself self-sufficient in those areas, it would save some foreign exchange and, at the same time, point its citizens in the direction of better dietary habits.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at things, we found that we could not be 100 per cent self-sufficient in the production of fruit, lamb or beef even though we are of the view that we should do our utmost for the promotion of the black belly lamb.

Mr. Speaker, after very careful analysis, we calculated that \$500 million in food was being imported into Barbados. Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful there. Many years ago, it was fashionable to talk about imports substitution where your imports took second place to local production.

Mr. Speaker, in this thing called trade liberalisation and globalisation where a country from anywhere in the world can compete against you in your own market, we have to be careful enough now to produce at such rates and on such terms as to use what we produce while keeping out competition from abroad, but we will not be able to do it unless we have proper phyto-sanitary measures in place.

Mr. Speaker, there are countries in the big world that export commodities to us in the small world without the accompanying standards that should inform free and fair trade.

Mr. Speaker, I would want the Honourable Member for St. Philip West to get involved in this as Minister of Health. The reason I would want him to get involved is that somewhere in the Ministries of Agriculture and Health

there is something called the National Agricultural Health and Food Control Authority where there is going to be, if the Democratic Labour Party Government accepts it, a body to look at proper nutrition, proper health standards and proper food security.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to encourage Honourable Members to consider the whole question of letting health work alongside agriculture in the interest of the best possible phyto-sanitary standards which Barbados can set and observe.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation has a role in the future of agriculture in this particular instance, which I will now cite. We complain of the gluts that erode the efforts and profits of farmers. We complain of problems of spoilage and the loss of income resulting from gluts.

Sir, the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation has to be positioned to enter boldly into the realm of agro-processing so that when farmers produce gluts, we would have somewhere to take the additional surplus. The Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation should get involved in agro-processing, especially in circumstances when particular private sector farmers might either find it burdensome or unattractive to do so.

Mr. Speaker, bearing in mind that the current Director General of the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations has a soft spot in his heart for Barbados, we can use all the technical support that the FAO can offer Barbados to help us to come to a stage where our agriculture improves.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying all this as a patriotic Barbadian. I am also saying all this bearing in mind that in 1960 some 250 000 tonnes of sugar were produced in Barbados while in the year 2007 only 31 000 tonnes were produced.

Mr. Speaker, this shows a number of things. It shows a decline in the amount of land available for sugar. It shows how other sectors, which were cleverly introduced, have been competing against agriculture. It also shows that agriculture has proven to be unattractive to particular investors. Mr. Speaker, we need to take agriculture to that level where, once again, it becomes attractive to investors.

Mr. Speaker, I have offered earlier in my contribution to look into the Proposals that came here and to cite them with the view towards adding to the debate. At page 74 of my document, which I believe is already a document of the House, it says in relation to sugar that:

“The primary focus of our sugar cane industry will also change from producing sugar for export at cheap prices to producing electricity for local use and for which there is an assured market at a good price and to producing molasses for our expanding rum export industry.”

The question arises, Mr. Speaker, whether that statement, as it is, is suggesting that the future of sugar is inextricably tied to electricity production and the production of molasses only. It is not impossible to put that construction on that particular statement. Therefore, I am craving clarification for that because, taken at its worst, it suggests that the sugar industry will not be functioning in the same way, and to the same degree, as it has over the years.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just let me indicate that you have five minutes in which to conclude.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the same document at page 84, the second paragraph says:

“Additionally, Government is reviewing the proposed new factory for the sugar industry in order to find ways to reduce the very high capital costs of the proposed factory. The review will also provide direction on the decision for the mix of products to be manufactured on the basis of the available market for those products and the incremental profits to be made from each of the proposed products.”

Mr. Speaker, in light of what is proposed at page 74, which I cited, what comes here at page 84 craves clarification.

Mr. Speaker, what also craves clarification is Barbados' future in sugar. For years, Barbados has been a member of the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. For years, the ACP was able, with the European Union, to work out a protectionist policy backed by aid in the interest of these tiny countries. Mr. Speaker, those days of protectionism are over. We are now into a new era where we have to assess carefully our relationship not only with Europe but with other parts of the world.

Mr. Speaker, some member on That Side, probably a Front Bencher, should spend a good 12 to 15 minutes during this debate to set out our position on what are popularly called EPAs and where we are going in light of the fact that one of our CARICOM brethren from Guyana seems most doubtful and sceptical whether Guyana's interest with its rice and sugar would be properly served.

Mr. Speaker, I want an assurance that this Government is not going to leave this debate tonight without looking at EPAs, their potential...

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, after all the drama, the clapping and the thumping, we need to calculate if this Budget has really been as great as has been said when subjected to the microscope. For example, can the taxes, the road taxes, the taxes on vehicles and the environmental levy really positively impact on our development the way we want it?

11.00 a.m.

Has manufacturing been given enough, especially when this is a sector that has been craving attention for some time? Are those manufacturers in Grazettes, who recently had that very bad setback been given enough? Sir, to those manufacturers who suffered enormous damage as a consequence of that fire, I want to say that the Barbados Labour Party Opposition stands in sympathy and in empathy with them.

Mr. Speaker, there have been some initiatives proposed for tourism. They do appear to be creative and with a careful approach to them, no doubt some of them could work well. Sir, I am proposing an all party approach to the question of the new policy on tourism. I would not say anything to the effect that is not a policy of the Democratic Labour Party. What I would want the Democratic Labour Party to do would be to engage not only the normal stakeholders in tourism, but also the Opposition, on the question of the expansion of tourism, especially since new ground would be broken and new areas in the sea for cruises, as was heard last night, would be embarked upon for the first time.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure for me to take part in this debate. I did not, in any way, seek to be emotive or emotional about it. I once again thank my constituents north of Trents Corner and south of Cobblers Cove and between, for having permitted me to come here. Sir, I conclude by saying this presents an opportunity for us to look critically at ourselves, to look critically at the policies, with a view towards ensuring that the interest of Barbados remains paramount.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this my first budgetary debate, to start by expressing my appreciation to the people of Christ Church South, who

have put on my shoulders the responsibility of representing them in this Honourable Chamber, on the behalf of a new Democratic Labour Party Government, which came to office on a crescendo of public support on the night of January 15, 2008. Mr. Speaker, it has been for me a labour of love, because we have stuck to our task in Christ Church South and we feel very capable in being able to articulate the issues as they relate to that constituency and the unique wishes of the members of the communities in Christ Church South that need to be satisfied.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget which was so ably presented by the Honourable Prime Minister and Member for St. John, was presented against a global, regional and local background, one which is unprecedented in many ways. We could continue to try to explain away such things as percentage increases or percentage changes in the price of oil, the facts are that the world now faces an unprecedented challenge with respect to the price of fossil fuel and derivatives of fossil fuel.

There is a global problem, largely because of a change in the way in which participating Governments have changed their emphasis in the treatment of their oil reserves. We speak to a movement towards nationalisation once again. This is evident in countries such as Russia and closer at home, like Venezuela, where States are once again taking over the management of their oil reserves and where the United States of America, our major partner, regardless of how we look at it, is in a battle of survival of supremacy. This supremacy is built around their military power, in large measure, and again a supremacy dependent on the availability of oil.

Regionally, Sir, the struggle is for a number of small island States in the Caribbean to survive in this global environment. We are heartened by the coming together of the minds, most recently in Antigua, when there was a consensus in respect to the placement of even more funds towards the marketing of the Caribbean and toward marketing the Caribbean as a single entity. Mr. Speaker, more and more, this will become necessary, as we fight the global and international battles.

Mr. Speaker, further, locally, we have the competing needs of our constituencies, of which there are 30, and of our constituents. Indeed, in my consultations, the need of the constituents continue to be the need for low-income housing and jobs.

Mr. Speaker, in an environment where the Barbados Labour Party would like to boast to the nation that they have essentially solved the question of jobs in this country, this fact is not borne out by my consultations with 20 or 30 constituents every Saturday morning. Sir, we have a lot of work to do, given this background. Sir, it is truly heartening to see the acclaim with which the Honourable

Prime Minister's Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals was greeted in this country. It recognised so well the particular needs at this time in our history, with respect to the continued development of our people.

Mr. Speaker, like the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, I too have developed a "Misery Index." I do not know what statistics the Honourable Member used to arrive at her figures. The Honourable Member was very fleeting in the way she dealt with her Index, but the Honourable Member promised us that she would review it from time to time.

Mr. Speaker, my "Misery Index" was published yesterday in the Nation Newspaper, at page 18. The article which I remember, refers to the comments of Barbadians who spoke to the Budget. Barbadians were speaking about the impact of the Budget. Sir, as I recall, one man said he was a pensioner and the only thing he was sorry about was that the pension increases were not yesterday and that he has to wait until September 1.

Asides.

11:10 a.m.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, we are happy, however, that we can address, in some small measure, the needs of our pensioners in our community because they have done their part. They may not have been beneficiaries of an organised, structured way in which they could participate in a benefit's programme for their future, but we need to include them in our rescue arena.

Sir, another man, as I recall, indicated that he appreciates the efforts made by this Administration by way of solving the education issues in this country. Another person referred to the question of the school bus service. There are about three of them who I recall spoke to the school bus service and throughout this country, accolades after accolades, have been foisted on the backs of the decision-makers of the Democratic Labour Party Administration for a truly magnificent stroke. All that the Honourable Members on That Side could say is that it should be more, and they are saying more in the same breath that they say we are taking too much from the people of Barbados, so you cannot take them on their word.

Sir, that is why I have not included in my misery index the comments of the Honourable Member for St. George North because he gave the Budget an A plus, but I am not including his comments in my analysis. He can give his comments to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, where she can include them in her statistical analysis. Sir, that is the reality.

Mr. Speaker, all in all, my Misery Index speaks well and it culminated in a letter which I received last night when I got home from a member of the Barbados Labour Party who writes me very often. He said....

Aside.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: I do not want the Members of the Other Side to expel the gentleman. He has served that organisation well and he is a source of great inspiration and advice to me, so leave him alone, allow him to make his comments freely.

Mr. Speaker, we have spoken about overpasses and the Honourable Members on the Other Side need to be reminded that they introduced the whole concept of overpasses on a television show one night when the Honourable Member for St. George North came on television and told Barbadians that he was introducing Operation Freeflow to Barbados. He gave a simulation, which was the artist impression, and that was the first artist impression of these overpasses. He said there would be two, three, four or eight flyovers. Sir, we can get the film clip, if necessary, from Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation because every Barbadian saw that performance.

Sir, it moved from there to a situation in 2008 in the month of July, where we still have no overpass. They were constructing overpasses in 2005 for Operation Freeflow. They never did it and now they are reprioritising their own programme without ever coming back to the people of Barbados. They went on, on a roll-on basis, where they paid out monies and monies after monies, sometimes against the best advice of the technocrats in the Ministry and they come in here yesterday and want to brandish two Memoranda of Understanding about proceeding with special areas as signed contracts, or pretending that they are signed contracts between the Government of Barbados and contractors, when the Constitution provides for a Prime Minister, an Attorney-General and other persons who are mandated to sign contracts on behalf of the nation, and they produced two memoranda, initialled by the staff of the Ministry of Transport and Works and purport that these are contracts. What kind of imbecilic opportunity are they seeking in putting this kind of position to Barbadians?

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George North keeps coming and whispering in my ears about he knows who introduced 3S to Barbados because he wants me to tell the people of Barbados who did it but, Sir, that is his job and he has to stop messing around and tell Barbadians who introduced 3S to him. Sir, it is not my job and he will not get it from me.

The Honourable Member for St. George North must tell Barbadians who introduced 3S to him. The truth is, the

contractors who worked on that job are Barbadians and 3S has brought nothing of special substance to the construction of the Highway, and we will complete the Highway without 3S, as mandated in these Budgetary Proposals. They can resort to the Honourable Member for St. George North and to his puppeteers.

Mr. Speaker, so much for the ABC Highway. I want to publicly thank the people of Barbados for the tolerance they have exhibited during the entire construction. I want to thank them for the tolerance even when we were not in Government, but to the special tolerance being exhibited now as we bring this project to completion. I believe that with careful study by the officers of the Ministry, and by the Transport Authority - we will get to them a little later if we have time - we will be able to open new opportunities for public service vehicles, the Transport Board, taxis and commuters, generally, to use the roundabout areas created by the expansion of the Highway to expand their opportunities for moving passengers around the island.

Mr. Speaker, in my Ministry we have responsibility for roads, road rehabilitation and we spoke about the ABC Highway. We need also to speak to the fact that we are constantly reviewing our repair programme. We are not informed by small constituency politics, but we are informed by regular visits to the areas of greatest need. The truth, the state in which the Barbados Labour Party left a number of our public highways, is a horror story on its own but that would require a separate Bill to discuss. The fact, Sir, that we have identified Yorkshire Road, for instance, as a major area where we need to accelerate during the period of the holiday from now until early September and we have identified Highway 5 as being urgent.

11.20 a.m.

We know there are many areas which need our urgent attention, but we have to almost, week by week, reprioritise our programme so that we can attend to those worst cases, and those strategic worst cases first. I am sure that I am going to have the cooperation of my colleagues in this regard.

We treasure their input as we treasure the input of the technical staff of the Ministry of Transport and Works, so we do not treat them the way they were treated under the Barbados Labour Party Administration. We do not treat them so. Sir, when we consult, we consult seriously, and we consult to hear the views of persons who we ask to contribute. That is why the consultation the Honourable Prime Minister was able to refer to, was so meaningful. The consultations under the previous Prime Minister were reduced to curse shops.

Asides.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: The Honourable Member for St. Peter is a gentleman who, on more than one occasion, has told Barbadians that he is going home and sharpen his tongue on both sides for him. Those are his famous words, and they will live in his craw for the rest of his political life, as simple as that. You cannot treat people that way from 1994 to 2008, and expect by some miracle or transition, you will be transformed into some Messiah. It does not work like that. So the Honourable Member will have to deal with that, just like the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East will have to deal with the fact that her paws are planted in nearly every activity in Government.

Her footprint is all over the place, just like it is over 3S. Her footprint is over everything that you do. The Honourable Member likes to come in here, in keeping with her former master, pretending that she has a document of tremendous secrecy, peeping under some Minister, and getting an agreement before the Minister gets the agreement and all of those things. What is she going to do with it?

Sir, we are in the business of running a mature responsible open Government. We are not about peeping under anybody, and we will continue to build the human resources, and I will continue to build the human resources talent at the Ministry of Transport and Works, in particular now, until we reach a stage where that Ministry is the embryo, and performs the opportunity for the development and production of a technical cadre of people to serve Barbados like it used to in the past.

Sir, many of the experienced engineers, surveyors and architects of recent yesteryear are products of the Ministry of Transport and Works when it did work, but it was emasculated by them, like so many Ministries were. They took away the work from the Ministry per se, and handed it carte blanche into their friend contractors and consultants of their choosing throughout Barbados.

We want to restore a cadre of technicians at the Ministry of Transport and Works who will serve this country well, who will be able to contribute with confidence and help to bring about meaningful technical solutions to the challenges that we face every day, and they can do it. Sir, I can see the eagerness to contribute, but they are tired of being ignored by a Minister who did not care, and by a Prime Minister who cared even less. Those days are past, Sir.

Sir, let me move to the airport and seaport again, for which I have responsibility. We recognise that Barbados continues to be a lead player in terms of the provision of airport services and we intend to keep Barbados there. I spoke earlier, in recent time, about the contribution as far back as the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, an

aviator himself. I do not pretend to be an aviator. I have other special qualities.

The point is, we recognise where Barbados must be and we are pursuing the kinds of partnerships which will bring out a further opportunity for development, private/public sector cooperation at our airport and seaport to help solve the problem of international competitiveness, to remain viable, to remain being able to meet the demands of a discerning travelling public.

We have done well, and we need to give credit where credit is due, but we need to let the Barbados Labour Party know where they went wrong and remind them where we are taking off from. Sir, we are moving this Administration from where they left it. So the tragedies and ill-conceived areas of development at the Grantley Adams International Airport will have to be corrected by us. The leaking roofs, the lack of jet bridges and the inadequate space will have to be corrected by a Democratic Labour Party master plan. That is what they have to understand.

Sir, when we have to allocate \$8 million for a fire station - Let me indicate that we are going to be starting construction at the Grantley Adams International Airport and the turning of the soil is next Monday, July 14, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, as you outline that, let me remind you that you have five minutes in which to conclude.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: That would be adequate, Sir.

Sir, the covering of the Waiting Area for departing passengers, up by the area I call the LIAT area, a horrible error, in an Administration where money was no problem. They beat on their chest and talk about how much money they created. They had all the answers, and it was Category 1 and Category 1, and 1, 1, 1. That was the kind of nonsense, the utterance all the time, while inadequate development was taking place, and nobody over there had the intellectual competence to redirect it. Nobody over there had the capacity to intervene to make sure Barbadians got something for what they paid, they could be truly proud of whether it rained or did not rain. Our job is to correct that, Sir.

Sir, I want to touch on the Private Sector vehicles for one short moment. I recognise all the comments that have been made by the private sector. I want to once again commit the Transport Authority to their responsibility with the Ministry, of making sure that the Private Sector Vehicles are accommodated within the economic framework of a future Barbados Transport System.

We have put in place the Transport Authority. This is the real Transport Authority, not the one the Honourable

Member for St. George North played around with towards the end of his time. Sir, just like the plastic licence, he played around with that for four years. Do you believe that? Sir, to get a little plastic with a man's name on it, he took four years to not do it, but we have put it in place.

Sir, we have put the Transport Authority in place. They will bring to the Minister and to the Cabinet of Barbados a comprehensive solution to the Public Service Vehicle operations in Barbados, including taxis, the Transport Board, to some extent, and other Private Sector Vehicles, ZRs, et cetera, in terms of the numbers we allocate, in terms of the sizes of buses, and where discretion can be exercised by the Minister, it will be exercised. It will be exercised in a meaningful and effective way.

11.30 a.m.

Sir, we will introduce a level of interviewing of applicants for Private Sector Vehicle permits in order to put a face and a business entity to a number of these applications that come before us all the time, not like the way the Honourable Member for St. George North handled it, where his Personal Assistant took down a wad of permits from time to time to satisfy small constituency and Party political favours. It does not help Barbados to operate that way.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: A wad - a large ball of - that is what a wad is, so that is how the Honourable Member operated, Sir.

Therefore, we want to bring rationale. We want to rationalise the operation. We want to make sure that we provide real opportunities. I know that the Private Sector Vehicle operators have urgent concern. We are mindful of it. We are working with you, and we are confident that we will reach a solution which is meaningful, effective and will redound to the benefit of the larger community which we serve, and redound to a better and more beautiful Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to you, Sir.

Asides.

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

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, I rise to lend my support to the Budgetary Proposals for 2008, presented by the Honourable Member for St. John, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on July 7, 2008.

Sir, before I do that, I want to thank the good people of St. Michael East for giving me this opportunity to address, to lend my support to the Budgetary Proposals. It is through the will of God and their support that I am here.

First of all, I want to say that this Budget falls strictly in line with the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto, which speaks to pathways to progress, and transforming the Nation to meet the real needs of the people. I am saying, Mr. Speaker that this Budget has met that mandate.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the question of education, where the Government has taken the bold step to solve some of the issues of overcrowding in our schools. Sir, very soon, we will be building a primary school and a secondary school. We can boast of that because the Barbados Labour Party, throughout their 14 years of reign, have created havoc in the education system, such as overcrowding of the classrooms. They have closed more schools under their regime than any other Administration in the history of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, it is heartening to see that our Government has decided that they will increase the amount in respect of the Student Revolving Loan Fund and has gone so far as to indicate that those persons who placed their real estate as far as security, there would not be the need for sureties in that regard, which is an excellent move.

The Government has also extended the areas of repayment and almost given the individuals who return to Barbados time to catch themselves before they start to repay the money.

I am sure that this Government will be prudent. We will do all in our power to make sure that the monies that were lent are collected, and not in a state of repayment that presently exists under the Barbados Labour Party for the last 14 years, in respect of the Student Revolving Loan Fund.

Sir, under the heading of Family, Youth, Sports and Entertainment, it is a very innovative and far-reaching idea, where the Honourable Member for St. John indicated that as from the next school year, there would be free camps in all of the Constituencies. I can say that I greatly support that idea because, at present, I have more than 60 students in St. Michael East at a summer camp, and they are paying a meagre fee of \$40 for the entire camp. I gave instructions that all other activities will be free, that I have worked hard for, Sir.

Sir, I think that is a brilliant idea and the mere fact that the volunteers will be given a stipend for their time. The calibre of volunteers would seek to guide these young minds, to keep them out of trouble, to keep them out of the

drug culture, to keep them out of the lawlessness in the streets and away from crime, so that their minds will be active.

The question of the Constituency Councils, gives those individuals that are part and parcel of a constituency, who have the knowhow to assist the Government to solve the issues at the constituency level. This was one of the promises that was made in the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party, which speaks to pathways to progress.

Asides.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Sir, within less than six months of taking office, we have put the necessary machinery in place.

Sir, for 14 years, they masqueraded around this country, collecting data through the Youth Service only to serve their own purposes, or to find out how many young people they could woo to vote for them. Sir, that was the purpose. Sir, those are the things that make this Government completely different to those on the Other Side.

Sir, if you turn to page 30 of the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto, you will see that the Democratic Labour Party envisions a constellation of towns across the country, that are the seats of Constituency Councils, each of which would be chaired by the Parliamentary Representative. I heard a lot of weather being made yesterday, Sir, about people being selected and not elected.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East pretends that she is all this community oriented and she is for all about the representation of the people of St. Michael North East, but only in a particular sector or a particular area. Yet, the Honourable Member wants to behave like the master of community work.

Do you know what a young child, 11 years old told me this morning? She said that I have listened to the Budget and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East did not connect to the Budget. All she did was to curse the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto. Sir, that is a sad indictment on the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Budget - House A14, Sequence 73, 22:40:14

Wednesday, July 09, 2008

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Sir, the people of Barbados were looking for alternative positions and substance from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East in respect of her response to the Budgetary Proposals that were proffered here on July 7, 2008, by the

Honourable Member for St. John, but she was more about cursing the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto.

Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member had read carefully the Budgetary Proposals, she would have seen that everything within the Budget came from our Manifesto with a few adjustments based on the mess they have left in office. Instead, she masqueraded with documents in relation to something at the Rural Development Commission.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member was in charge of the Urban Development Commission when a former minister and his wife rented the Urban Development Commission houses as theirs and received the money. We have the evidence to support that. That is the kind of thing you are having from the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Speaker, I will move on to the question of tourism. The Barbados Labour Party wants to make people believe that they care about the average person, but the Honourable Member for St. Peter indicated, quite clearly, that he is tired of playing the poor black man syndrome. He does not want to see working-class and grassroot politicians. Those were his words. Sir, to affect the poor grassroot people so severely, he decided that for the taxi operators only diesel vehicles would be duty-free.

Mr. Speaker, you and I know for sure that a vehicle's life is about five years and that after five years it starts to call for all sorts of parts, which means that the average Barbadian taxi operator's family will suffer because he has to do a balancing act, either to keep that car for five years, or to spend the disposable income which he would have taken home to his family to feed them to maintain that car.

Mr. Speaker, the bold decision of the Democratic Labour Party was to reverse that draconian and wicked act to make it with immediate effect that all taxi operators shall have duty-free vehicles, whether diesel or gas.

Mr. Speaker, we went a step further to indicate that those taxi operators who have machinery that operate for the disabled will have duty-free concessions. Mr. Speaker, what makes it worse is that the Barbados Labour Party say that they care about the disabled and they placed the Disabilities Unit in an upstairs building at the National Union of Public Workers.

Mr. Speaker, what I am talking about is a non-caring attitude towards the disabled. Those persons have to struggle to get up stairs. No wheelchair can get up the stairs and the lift scarcely works, and they want to tell you that they are a caring Government.

Mr. Speaker, when the decision by this Government was made, you should see the joy and the relief on the taxi operators' faces as they jumped for joy and said what a fantastic job, well done Honourable Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, let us go to the question of the revenue for the Highway. There is much talk about the increase of road tax from \$265 to \$400. Sir, if you look at the real situation, at \$265 a person was paying 72 cents per day to travel on our roads. He would now be paying \$109. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Minister of Transport, Works and International Transport would ensure that with the additional revenue we would have a proper road maintenance programme so that the number of claims reaching his office will be greatly reduced. Sir, the patching of potholes whenever the rain comes would be a thing of the past as there would be a proper road maintenance programme, not that the one that was administered by the Honourable Member for St. George North...

Asides.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Those roads were only done in St. George and St. Philip and Mr. Wood is still out of office.

Mr. Speaker, they are criticising the free ride for school children on the public transport. Mr. Speaker, what annoys me is to hear the President of the Minibus Association saying that this Government wants to shut down that business. Mr. Speaker, we have on record in this country a situation where minibus drivers and conductors were prohibiting school children from travelling on those buses unless they pay \$1.50. They wanted to commit an illegal act. That is the kind of situation we have in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, in his zest and attempt to cure the bad behaviour, indicated in a Budgetary Proposal that he was increasing the road taxes on PSVs to pay the Police to police the van stands. Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed for 14 years. This Government has given them a probationary period to clean up their act or else. We will put the necessary legislation in place to bring back a semblance to the public transport in this country.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget is really and truly one which speaks to our pledges in our Manifesto "Pathways to Progress, Transforming the Nation to Meet the Real Needs of the People".

Mr. Speaker, I was a student of agriculture and my first job was in the Ministry of Agriculture when agricultural production was at its highest level. Mr. Speaker, there was a change of Government and that was

the doom days for agriculture in this country. The Graeme Hall Agricultural Station, which was the hallmark, and the experimental station became a thing of the past. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the innovative measures that are in this Budgetary Proposals would revive agriculture to where it belongs.

Mr. Speaker, everybody has become afraid because of the oil prices and are crying out, but for years I have been advocating that we need to grow more food and we can become self-sufficient. There was a time in 1977 when we carried out many experiments on different varieties of onions to meet the tropical conditions. Sir, the only problem we had was that of wind blast.

Mr. Speaker, this Government will ensure by the measures in place for agriculture that we will take this country to another level. We will become self-sufficient and our food

11.50 a.m.

We will take agriculture back to the young people by way of 4-H Clubs. We will make the small area of agriculture more productive with Green House Technology. In addition, we will ensure that we have storehouses and processing plants, and that there would be no excess agricultural products on the market. We will make sure that in circumstances where there is excess that there would be somewhere to store that excess, for times of scarcity. Mr. Speaker, we did not leave the farmers to struggle. We decided that we were going to give them an incentive on concessions up front. This means that they could get on with the business of returning Barbados to a productive nation.

Mr. Speaker, it is these kinds of innovations and ideas that make us completely different from the Barbados Labour Party. The Barbados Labour Party, for 14 years, has failed to look after the people of Barbados. In their Manifesto, they indicated that the young craftsmen and entrepreneurs, including mechanics, would be provided with a place to carry on their trade, yet for 14 years we still have young men plying their trade alongside the road. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party could have used some space at the IDC building to put those persons there. This would have helped them to develop and grow, but none of that came from the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, on the question of housing. Sir, one of the most brilliant ideas by this Democratic Labour Party was that in 100 days the people renting the units of the National Housing Corporation were given letters indicating that they would be able to own their homes. Furthermore, we said we would do the necessary renovation to those units, to make their living conditions better.

Sir, I can speak to that because one of those Housing Developments falls within my Constituency. Sir, the people were overjoyed to see that after 20 years of paying rent, they could now own a piece of the rock in this country.

Mr. Speaker, in our Manifesto as it relates to housing and to providing affordable housing, we spoke of providing 500 lots. Sir, we have transformed that information from our Manifesto to the Budgetary Proposals. Therefore, we are sticking to our words. Mr. Speaker, you could understand this is a Government that cares about its people. You could understand this is a Government that is concerned about the pathways to progress, not about the pathways to destruction and cannibalism, something that was practised by the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party would want to talk about what we have promised the teachers and police, but the teachers were happy to hear we are building new schools. They were so happy to hear that we are providing opportunities for special teachers for slow- learners, so that those slow-learners would be able to excel quickly.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, who is a former teacher, could not even imagine, nor was not brilliant enough to say that these are the ideas that were proffered under the Barbados Labour Party. The Honourable Member was only concerned with the School Meals Department. That is why the Honourable Member carries the title as the Honourable Minister for School Meals. Sir, we decided that we are going to continue to the "Pathways to Progress" by putting the people of Barbados first, and by ensuring that every one is taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, the minibuses and ZRs to which the Honourable Member keeps referring, provide an essential service to this country. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North would indicate they do provide an essential service. Sir, we on This Side have recognised that, that is why we have not touched the taxes but have given them concessions in relation to diesel. Sir, they do not have to pay that tax anymore because the road taxes do not relate to PSVs. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North was confused when he talked about commercial vehicles. There is a difference.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what amazed me when the Honourable Member spoke about trucks? The Honourable Member has decided that he is going to be part and parcel of a Ministry that is going to oversee the building of the ABC Highway. He told me: "But you know, this is what they did to me, they bring 3S(Barbados)SRL and give me 3S(Barbados) SRL. I inherited 3S."

Asides.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, what was amazing was that at a town hall meeting, the Honourable Member finally admitted that they had got it wrong, that there was no environmental study, nor consultation with the people in those areas, particularly the people in St. Barnabas and the Pine. Mr. Speaker, it was then that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East and I raised the issue that the artist's impression was really beautiful.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes in which to conclude.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, it was only because of us making noise at that town hall meeting that the Honourable Member for St. George North decided he was going to pull back on the flyovers. Sir, there was so much confusion at that town hall meeting that the discussions went from flyovers to under-overs. Sir, they were so confused, yet they want to come here and make noise and say that we are burdening the poor.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at it, they have all really looked after the poor. Sir, I could not have said that in here, because I would have received the wrath of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. Sir, this morning when the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East spoke from his conscience, I saw the Barbados Labour Party Opposition out there thumping and nodding to themselves that they needed to speak from their conscience as well.

Mr. Speaker, when the Honourable Member for St. James North spoke, the Honourable Member spoke from his conscience because he understands the passion about agriculture and about what agriculture could do. I could support the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central who said that the best Minister of Agriculture on that side was the Honourable Member for St. George North, but he did not last long.

Asides.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by giving my wholehearted support to the Budgetary Proposals as were presented by the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I am going to try my best to be motivated, after that very easily forgettable speech. Sir, I certainly would not be able to congratulate the Prime Minister, as he has done, for his presentation on Monday although, quite frankly, I did not expect anything better from the Honourable Prime Minister.

12:00 noon.

While this is the first Budget delivered by the Honourable Prime Minister, I knew from the outset that the Prime Minister really did not have any concept of what a Budget is, or what it is supposed to be. Sir, I say that not willy-nilly, but I remember the first statement ever made by the first Prime Minister back in 1989 on what he thought a budget really was when he was in the Ministry of Finance. It is to be found at page 3774 of Hansard in 1989 and, there the Honourable Prime Minister said:

"Sir, a budget is simply a budget." Sir, how profound! He then continues:

"A budget

Sir, is the philosophically factual position of the Honourable Prime Minister on what a budget is. If that is what he said, how on earth, we have come here on Monday expecting to hear from him anything of substance, or to hear anything that would deal with the issues of concern to Barbadians today?

Mr. Speaker, what was delivered on Monday was really a deviation from all the Budgets that went for the previous years prior to it because Barbadians have become accustomed to listening to a budgetary presentation under the former Administration to hear, Sir, not by how much taxes, charges, et cetera were going to be increased, because when that happened that was the exception, not the norm. Sir, people used to listen to Budgets under the last Administration to see by how much taxes, et cetera were going to be decreased and on almost every occasion, they were, in fact, decreased.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday when consumers listened with baited breath to see exactly how the Prime Minister was going to deal with the much talked about reduction in the cost of living, which they touted as priority No. 1; priority No 2 and priority No. 3, what exactly did they hear, given the expectations, on that issue? Sir, absolutely nothing.

They heard nothing at all about any ease in prices that they would have to pay when they walk into the supermarket or any store to purchase anything. They got nothing, Sir. They heard that from next month, whenever there is an increase in the price of petroleum products, gas, diesel, kerosene, that a ministry has now been assigned to just pass on directly and immediately to the consumers of this country all increases without any sort of buffer or cushion at all that the former Government had put in place to ease the burden on consumers. Sir, there is nothing at all, no buffer, no cushion. If the price of oil goes up, the consumers pay, heartlessly and mercilessly.

Mr. Speaker, car owners, lower middle-class people, poor people, even bicycle owners now have to fork out more money to pay this Government. There are a lot of people who have bicycles, not as a luxury thing or health thing, but as a means of transportation, but they have to fork out more money now to pay the Government under the Highway Revenue Project.

Mr. Speaker, small shopkeepers - The Minister of Commerce did not spend any time on his portfolio but small shopkeepers who sell alcoholic drinks now have to pay more for them because of the increase in the excise tax, who now have to pass that on to consumers as well adding pressure to consumers and the same small shopkeeper. Sir, we await the fate of these shopkeepers because we remember well their fate in a previous incarnation under the Democratic Labour Party when they put 574 of them out of business, almost overnight, so we await their fate.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget is not really for ordinary Barbadians. There are some things in there that will benefit ordinary people, if you look at it superficially, but if you give somebody \$22 million and then take back \$104 million you are only fooling yourself that you have done anything for them and, Sir, consumers pay every single tax that is introduced in this country and every pensioner is also a consumer, in case you have forgotten it. Sir, it is like taking one step forward and then two or three steps backwards, so I am not going to fool myself and the Government can continue to fool itself.

Mr. Speaker, I have gone into my Constituency since this Budget was delivered, but nobody up there is shouting for joy because of any relief supposedly given to anybody in this country. Sir, nobody is jumping for joy. People still see the burden of the cost of living that the Government has refused to tackle.

Mr. Speaker, I really do not believe that this Budget was written by the person who read it. I do not believe that Sir. The very clumsy way in which he read it, the obvious disconnection, the fact that a Prime Minister could opt to be out of the country for the week before a Budget is to be delivered, shows that it was being written for him.

Sir, I liken him unto Milly Villainy who was opening his mouth, but when he was opening his mouth the words that were coming out were not his words. In this case, Sir, they were the words of the person who wrote it and I find it more than passing strange that in a first Budget the Prime Minister can find it possible, at the same time that certain tourism development is taking place at Sam Lord's Castle and recall this - The person whose company is carrying out the development at Sam Lord's Castle, about a month ago in an interview said publicly that it consisted of various things, including villas and condominiums and the CEO of the company then said publicly that the Town & Country

Planning permission had not yet been granted but it will be shortly. He was saying to the Minister of Town Planning "I am to get that approval shortly," and was saying to the people of Barbados that it will be granted shortly.

Sir, it is to me very strange that at the same time the CEO can pontificate as to what will be done by a government department, the Prime Minister comes to this Parliament and announces that from now on condominiums and villas no longer have to be placed in the rental pool to assist the tourism sector and at the same time a development is about to be concluded at Sam Lord's Castle by we know who.

Sir, I believe that individual would have had a say in writing this Budget. Of course, Sir, for that individual to write this Budget considerable assistance by some primary school grammar teacher would have been provided. Mr. Speaker, I do believe that some assistance would have been provided.

Mr. Speaker, be that as it may, the cost of living in this country is too high and it is continuing to rise with the new Government waking up to the realisation that many of its Manifesto's pledges, especially re the cost of living are simply unworkable.

12.10 a.m.

Sir, when the Minister of Education complains that he had a national consultation on education and there was a very poor attendance, it was not because education is not important. It is because people cannot prioritise that at this time. They are feeling their pockets. They want some ease from the Government who promised them relief. They cannot take on any national consultation on education at this time, Sir.

Sir, when the Prime Minister announced at a recent National Council Consultation, the attendance was large, it is not that the Prime Minister possesses any magnetic powers of attraction. It is because people went to the National Council Consultation on the Cost of Living to hear how the Government intended to honour its pledge to reduce the cost of living. That is why they went.

When a large number of stakeholders go to Illaro Court to speak to the Prime Minister on issues affecting them, it is not because they want to go to Illaro Court, or because the Prime Minister has some powers of attraction. It is because they went to hear what relief this Government was going to be giving them, and the Government is not living up to its promises.

Sir, who would have expected to hear that long after 100 days, as the Democratic Labour Party said in its Manifesto, it was going to remove VAT for building

materials of houses valued up to \$400 000. Sir, check how times have changed. This is the change that the Democratic Labour Party asked for. Things have changed because it is almost 200 days. All of a sudden the \$400 000 have been reduced to \$150 000, and all of a sudden they have inserted certain conditionalities.

You must be a first-time homeowner, and the house must be owner occupied. Sir, none of these things were mentioned in the Manifesto, nor during the Election campaign, but all of a sudden you heard on Monday, that the position has changed, almost 200 days after. The 100 days no longer apply.

Sir, who would expect to hear the Prime Minister of Barbados, who was knocking the last Government on the rate of unemployment, come and just casually announce that, based on these proposals, he is bringing today, unemployment in Barbados is going to rise. Who would have expected to hear that? Who would have expected to hear that six months after the Elections?

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party promised in their Manifesto that they were going to give 500 lots, which they said in their Manifesto had already been identified, would be given to Barbadians within 100 days of the Elections. We are now almost 200 days, and they are still struggling with excuse after excuse.

They are now saying that they are now identifying them. Sometimes you hear that they are still identifying them, and in the Manifesto they said that they are already identified. Now they are now being identified. The Prime Minister said on Monday that something went out to tender and work should start shortly. Again, another promise made that has been broken.

Sir, when last did any of us hear of the Government's promise to remove VAT from electricity bills? When last did anyone heard any mention of that? That has now faded into oblivion, as yet another statement made to get into office, and then write off the people, and the list goes on and on of broken promises.

Sir, this Government inherited a country that was in great condition. I have said that already, and it is well-known. Not only was the country on a sustainable growth path, but when we compared it with the performance of neighbours in the Region, the point is better made. I am just going to use two indicators and get on to some other points.

Sir, last year the rate of inflation in Barbados was 4.2 per cent, and there was a big "hoo-ha" and we rightly said that was too high, but when you look at the other countries in the Region where you can get data... The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East touched on this

yesterday. We have to come in here without the benefit of a Central Bank report. This is the first time this has happened.

The Central Bank Report said that there is a section dealing with the regional overview. You want to get that to get the most current position. What is the Government covering up all the time? Why is it you cannot get any of this information at all? In the month of July 2008 you cannot get a Central Bank report for 2007? Sir, that is not good enough.

Sir, the information I have shows that in Trinidad, where it was 2.2 per cent in Barbados, it was 7.3 per cent; Jamaica, 10 per cent, 4.2 per cent in Barbados; St. Vincent, 4.3 per cent, still higher than ours; Guyana, 12.2 per cent; and in every OECS country, for the first six months' inflation rose in every OECS country.

Sir, now inflation in Barbados is skyrocketing, since the change of Government. I want to ask Barbadians to hold this Government to its word in relation to inflation. Barbadian consumers are a little complacent. I want to ask Malcolm Taitt and his body to get the necessary permission to stage a peaceful march up to Government House and hand the necessary documentation to the Governor-General expressing their disgust with the betrayal this Government inflicted on them in relation to the cost of living. Sir, it is time for the Barbadian consumers to get to that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to get to some tourism matters. In tourism, we were a success story last year, as the Honourable Minister of Tourism knows. Even compared to countries in the Region, we were one of the leading destinations. For the first three months of this year we were also on that same growth path, where tourism in Barbados for the first three months grew by over 10 per cent.

Sir, I heard the Minister of Tourism, speak in here last night. He and the new Government would wish to take the benefit for the 10 per cent increase in tourist arrivals for the first three months. If that makes him happy, I will give that to him. I am not going to fight him up on that. Sir, I have to take issue with some of the things that were said by the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister of Tourism and certain impressions that were given.

Sir, at Page 15 of the Budget delivered on Monday, the Prime Minister said:

"The reduction in tourism output growth, from 3.1 per cent in the first half of 2007 to an estimated 2.7 per cent during the review period, came as April tourist arrivals returned to pre-CWC 2007 levels, leading to a sharp decline in the second quarter of 2008."

Sir, that is not terribly clear. Last night, the Minister of Tourism said, apparently trying to praise himself, which is his want apart from his right, said that every month of 2008 saw an increase on 2007, except for April 2007, because of the World Cup in April 2007.

Sir, I am growing very weary of the blatant lies coming from That Side.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, pardon me?

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: I am going to prove it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member you are not permitted to accuse any Honourable Member of telling lies, and you know that. You have to withdraw that. Thank you.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: I withdraw that. Sir, I am growing weary of the type of statements being made by Honourable Members on the Other Side.

Sir, only last night I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central say in this Parliament, that the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto had nothing at all on the issue of integrity. Sir, Pages 76 and 77 set this out very clearly. I do not know how an Honourable Member could get up and just say that. These are the sort of things I am talking about.

12.20 p.m.

Sir, the Honourable Attorney General, and my good friend, recently said in contradiction to the Minister of Health, that he has never seen the St. Joseph Hospital Report. It was not there when he got there, when the Minister of Health had said previously that it was on his desk. The Minister of Health said that publicly. Sir, these are the sorts of remarks that I cannot understand coming from That Side.

Sir, I return to tourism. The Minister of Tourism said last night that every month for 2008 there was an increase on 2007, except for April. Sir, I have the figures for April and May. I wanted to get the Report for the month of June but I was told by the BTA, that they had to get authorisation to give it to me, so I could not get it in time for today.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, I thought this was public information.

Sir, for April it is a fact that the overall arrivals this year were down in relation to last year. Also, the month of May for this year, was also down, compared to the month

of May last year. Therefore, the Minister cannot say that everything is up, when both April and May are down.

Sir, what is worse and seriously reflect on the Minister's competence, the figures for April this year are not only down compared with the figures for April last year, but they are down for the figures for April 2006. Can you imagine that this new Government has put Tourism in a worse position this year, than it was in 2006? Can you believe that?

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I do not mean to belabour this issue, but the Honourable Member indicated that he does not have figures for the month of June. I can provide them for him. The figures are actually up for the month of June, 3.5 per cent and that is due to some increased regional traffic as a result of some initiatives actually held in the St. Michael South East Constituency. Therefore, you can talk to the Member over there, who is still a Member of the Party, and you would learn why the figures are up for the month of June.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: The point of order is that the Member is misleading the House. He said that the Tourism figures so far for June 2008 are worst for 2006, and that is not so.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just one minute, please.

I recall the point he made was that the figures for the months, and he indicated the specific months, were down.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: The Honourable Member also indicated that we are doing worse this year than for last year, 2006.

Mr. SPEAKER: He said that we did worse with respect to April, 2006.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: I am just debunking that notion. He dealt with the separate months but then he dealt with the total picture. I am suggesting that his information of the total picture is inaccurate. I am willing to provide him with the accurate information. It is as simple as that, and he can get on with his speech, if he has something to say, so that is all I am saying.

Mr. Speaker, the Clerk is free to take this and he can have it. It can be made a document of the House and everyone can have it to peruse. If he has a point to make he can make it, but he does not need to mislead the House in so doing.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, thank you for ruling that it is not a point of order.

The fact of the matter is that I said and I maintain, Sir, that for the months of April and May, we are worse off this year than we were last year. I said that with respect to April. We are worse off this April, under his stewardship as Minister of Tourism, than they were in April 2006. Sir, if he wants me to give him the figures for 2006, I can give him, but he said he has them.

Sir, what is worse, the figures for cruise tourism, if he wants me to go further. They are worse for May 2008 than they were for May 2006 as well. He does not know these things as Minister? Lord. Yet, I cannot get the information that you get because they told me they cannot give me because they have to get clearance. You do not know these things?

Sir, do you know what is also significant is that the Prime Minister said in his Budget at page 52 that we are looking down some negative performances. Do you know what is important too, not what the Minister gets in here and says about what is going to happen but what the players say?

Sir, I remember being at a function recently when I was at a table with some hoteliers. Sir, when I asked them how things were looking for the rest of the year, they said that things are not looking so bright, but that is a common position coming out the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association. They also said that they are not even comparing it so much to last year, but they are finding now that a lot of them are having bookings that are lower than the bookings they had for 2006. Sir, that is what is coming out now.

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

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, I hope you would give me back my time I just lost. I lost five minutes and I would like five or ten minutes more, which I lost on a non point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the Honourable Member wants to come and take the Chair, you may do so. You have five minutes in which to conclude, Honourable Member.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: No. I am just asking for a little equity. That is all.

Sir, the Minister of Tourism has to understand that the job of a Minister of Tourism is to get people to travel to Barbados in large numbers, not for him to travel to a large number of places.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: There is a fundamental difference there.

The Minister of Tourism has gone from the North Pole to the South Pole, from the West Pole to the East Pole. Sir, he has gone every single place in this country between January and now. He is captivated by the glamour, but the truth is, he has to explain the performance that I just outlined. I would like him to point to just one single initiative that, as a Minister of Tourism, he has taken that has shown any positive development at all for the Tourism Ministry.

Sir, he can talk very well, glib and slick but, at the end of the day, tourism is going nowhere. I do not want him to mention anything about West Jet because for three times now the Minister has spoken about West Jet coming to Barbados. On each occasion he spoke after me, so I could not interrupt him but he came back last night again and said it; about airlines and air services have been decreased from AA - big deal, but he has West Jet and, on that side, they clapped. Sir, he has nothing whatsoever to do with West Jet coming to Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, negotiations with West Jet began way back last year, long before the Elections, with the former Chairman of the BTA and the CEO with West Jet. Sir, West Jet was part of their plan to expand their scheduled services which started in the Bahamas, and then they went on to Jamaica and St. Lucia. This year they are going to start in Barbados and I think Mexico. Then, they are looking to move into Grand Cayman as well. This has nothing, whatsoever, to do with the present Minister of Tourism. This is a project that started long before him.

Sir, with respect to Condor. I heard the Minister say that he was en route from ITB to somewhere and he stopped in Germany and spoke to Condor and got a second flight put on. The advantage is that I have been there already and I have done that, Sir. I know you do not drop in on an airline and get any additional service. You do not get any additional service by dropping in on an airline and talking to them now, and they say, okay, I am going to start up something for you next week. Sir, many sets of negotiations have to go on to get an additional airline.

The Minister of Tourism has so far been a failure story. He is far from a success story, and apart from talking all the time, he needs to get down to some elbow grease. Let me see some results. So far Tourism is on the decline with him and the projections are not going well.

12.30 p.m.

Sir, how much time do I have left?

Mr. SPEAKER: Two minutes.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, I want to speak on the issue of the National Housing Corporation units. Mr. Speaker, I wish the Democratic Labour Party well in the area of housing because there is a saying: "He who broke it, should fix it." Sir, the problems in housing started between 1986 and 1994 under the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, it is but right now that on being elected to office in 2008 that the Democratic Labour Party should be made to fix the problems they created between 1986 and 1994. Sir, the sale of the units to the tenants is the most discriminatory policy I have ever seen. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East touched on one aspect of it yesterday, but I want to look at the issue of straight raw mathematics. I have about five points to make, but I can only get in one in the two minutes.

Sir, the cost of building each unit in Eden Lodge ranged between \$5 000 and \$8 000. I got this information from a reliable source, not from a truck or anything like that. Sir, I am going to use the highest cost, \$8 000 and the figure of \$25 as the average rent paid for a unit to be most favourable to the Government. Sir, if you do some maths, you would see that a tenant occupying a unit would have therefore paid \$1 300 each year at \$25 a week. Sir, if you take \$8 000 and divide it by \$1 300, you would see that in 6.2 years a tenant would have paid for the unit he lives in, in Eden Lodge. Sir, anybody living in the units in Eden Lodge continuously for 6.3 years has paid for the cost of that unit.

Sir, anybody living in a unit for 20 years in Eden Lodge has paid \$26 000 and, in effect, has paid for three and a quarter units. Sir, why are the people who have lived in a unit in Eden Lodge for 6.3 or more years being discriminated against? They have already paid the cost of the unit.

Sir, every time you mention the word "free", Honourable Members on That Side jump up and say: "No, they are not getting them free. They have paid for them." Sir, I accept that. Sir, using simple mathematics, everybody living in a unit in Eden Lodge for 6.3 years has paid the cost of the unit and has also paid the legal fees. Why are they being discriminated against and why should they have to pay legal fees? The Government should have absorbed the legal fee as well.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member your time has expired, unfortunately so. Thank you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to second that.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 1.45 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.40 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour this evening for me to rise and to support this Resolution. Sir, this is something that is not difficult for me to do, after having heard other Honourable Members speak. Sir, I am sure if we all were to follow our conscience, that it would not be a challenge for us to support this Resolution. Sir, I want to congratulate the Honourable Prime Minister and Member for St. John for his responsive and responsible Budgetary Proposals.

Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the people of St. George South for this opportunity to be here. This is my first Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals to which I am responding and I am very honoured that they have chosen me to be here at this time. Sir, the people of St. George South are the ones who spur me on.

Mr. Speaker, it is through the people of St. George South that I could stand here and support this Resolution because every week when I see them at my Constituency office, I hear their heartbreaking stories of poverty, of homelessness, of not being able to look after their children and giving them the type of homes they would have wanted to. I heard about the standard of living that they would have wanted for their children. Sir, hearing these stories day after day, week after week, I have become more aware that finding a few jobs here and there for a few people, or finding a few houses here and there, is not enough. It does not make an impact in the overall standard of living for many Barbadians today.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I heard about the "Misery Index". We were given an introduction as to how it is calculated but, certainly, from my understanding, if the definition of the "Misery Index" has anything to do with the unemployment statistics as they were given to us, and if those unemployment statistics are skewed as the Prime Minister has outlined to us, then it is reason to understand that the "Misery Index" itself is a bit off base and full of misery in itself.

Mr. Speaker, I have my own "misery metre" because whenever I talk to my constituents, I hear of their misery

and so I do not want us to be misled into looking at figures in this Misery Index” and thinking that Barbadians have been happy up to this point. There are a lot of Barbadians who are struggling, who need help. Indeed, there are a lot of Barbadians who today are acknowledging that this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals is one that will provide relief for them.

Mr. Speaker, what we see here is the beginning of the creation of an overarching environment, one that would not only address the cost of living, but would address the quality of life for Barbados. Sir, that is what we need to address, especially when we know how the economic situation is going to be a challenge in addressing the cost of living. We know, at least, what we are doing is addressing the quality of life, especially for poor Barbadians who cannot do it for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the people of St. George South and to all Barbadians, we are creating that environment. We are creating a new Barbados. Indeed, morning has broken on a new day for Barbadians. Sir, I am particularly touched by these parents, some of whom are men, but especially the countless women who come to see me. These parents are desperate for a decent home for their children or they come seeking welfare. This is something they have to put their pride aside and do but they know that they have no other way out but to seek out that welfare. Some parents even attempt to get daycare because of the fact that daycare facilities are so limited. They feel their last resort is to go to a politician, as that might help them to get a stay in a daycare centre.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage those parents because I know what we are doing here is going to provide an ease for those families who are trying. Sir, when parents come to see me, very often it is not for themselves, but for their children. They do it because they want to create a better life for their children. Sir, the view of this Democratic Labour Party is to create a Better Barbados for our children. Sir, every page of this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals speaks to making Barbados better for our children.

Mr. Speaker, like my Honourable colleagues, I am concerned about the number of children in St. George South and throughout Barbados, who have to miss school on a regular basis or who have to take turns in their families going to school, where one member would go to school this week, while another goes the following week.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to say that because of what the Prime Minister introduced into this Honourable House last Monday, that those days are done, Sir, for example, school children travelling freely on Transport Board buses.

Sir, do you know how many parents across Barbados are breathing a sigh of relief because they could now send their children to school? There is now more money to put into lunches and other things. Mr. Speaker, I would only urge the Honourable Minister of Transport, Works and International Transport to make sure that he puts enough buses in all those outlying areas of St. George South, such as Lower Greys and St. David's.

Mr. Speaker, I have another concern in terms of buses for those school children who live, for example, in areas such as St. George, who go to school at the Alleyne School, St. Andrew, where these children have to rely on two buses. We are hopeful that we are going to see the number of buses, including the timeliness of the bus service improve as well, so that those children who go to the Lodge School, St. Lucy Secondary and Alleyne School, would have a reliable service, where they would not have to look for other means to school.

Mr. Speaker, a point was made by the Other Side that you cannot legislate culture but because of how this Administration feels about our young people, we certainly could foster the culture that we want for our young people. That is what this measure is to put in place. It is to allow our school children to be able to drive on the Transport Board buses and to keep away from that culture. Sir, we have gone even further where we said that we would change the legislation to ban these school children from taking ZRs, if these vehicles do not fall in line.

Mr. Speaker, as parents and as a government, we have to protect our children. We have to create the environment that would allow the children to develop. We also have to exclude some of those behaviours that we do not want. We have made legislation about alcohol and tobacco for minors and if we have to make legislation for school children not to travel on ZR vans, we will do that.

1.50 p.m.

We have to protect our children. It is not to castigate the young people. We cannot sit back and say that young people today are no good because, when we do that, we are making self-fulfilling prophecy for the future of Barbados. Instead, what we have to do is to look after them and this Government is committed to that.

In the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment we are also committed to this national vocation camp. It is something we have been trying to see if we could roll out for this vacation. Indeed, what we have done is, through the Division of Youth Affairs and the National Sports Council, to increase the number of summer camps this summer. They have increased from a total of 4 500 to about 6 000 students, but there are so many young children who are not in summer camps, who are not doing

anything constructive this vacation. There are a lot of young people who have nothing to do and, believe it or not, they do get bored with the electronic games and DVDs after a while, and they need something constructive to do and we know the saying "Satan finds things for idle hands to do," so we need to find something constructive for them to do and also too, the fact that it creates an opportunity for volunteers and for teenagers to be able to volunteer.

It teaches them their civic responsibility. It gives them a sense of community. It gives them a way to interact with the younger children and it gives them a way to interact with the older folks. This idea is what we need if we want to create the kind of society that we want to see fostered in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, summer is a painful time for many parents because summer camps are often more expensive than schools and there are a lot of parents who have to go to work. They cannot take eight or 10 weeks off, and they have to go to work and so they leave their children at home because they cannot afford to send them to a summer camp. Even if they do send them to the summer camp, it breaks their heart and it breaks the hearts of their children when tour day comes and the tour is an extra \$20 and they cannot find the additional \$20 to send their child on the tour, but now we are going to provide the camp so that children can be exposed to this wonderful experience of summer camps. They are vacation camps and not just summer camps. It is going to be all the vacations. Sir, sure there are other camps that would continue to reach their particular target groups, some that you would pay for and those private camps and so on but, through this measure, no child would be left out of this valuable experience.

Mr. Speaker, a further demonstration of our commitment to the young people is the 4-H and how we have increased the subvention. We have not just increased it but we have doubled the subvention to the 4-H and that also speaks to youth development, to agricultural development and to seeing our young people developed in all areas, including agriculture. It says to me, Sir, that the Prime Minister has his finger on the pulse of the family. He has his finger on the pulse of parents, what parents' concerns are. Indeed, with the creation of the Ministry of Family, we have seen that.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Family has begun its work with parents to address some of these concerns. You may not be surprised to know that the Ministry of Family struck a chord in the society, and from the time it was announced, people have been calling to herald it as a long overdue intervention. There are people who have been calling because they want to help. There are countless people who have been calling with their problems and their concerns like single mothers, single fathers, fathers seeking access to their children, parents with delinquent youths at

their wits ends and do not know what to do. Families with all kinds of social, emotional and financial needs have been calling the Ministry and they have been receiving assistance and we have been working with fine partners; corporate, NGOs, the Churches and civil society. They have been doing their part, but now that we have the Ministry of Family, they have been coming together so that we can put a more structured programme in place, and we have been able now to impact more and more families across this island.

What we are doing is having an impact even though all the structures have not yet been put in place. We are having an impact on families across this island and I am excited for the future for families over the next few months as the structure takes shape and unfolds.

Mr. Speaker, the progress has not been as rapid as we would have envisaged before we came into Government. In fact, even in the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment, where one would not expect to find a lot of corruption, we have had our fair share of it in the Ministry as well. We have seen further evidence, and you have heard from colleagues, but we have seen some of those evidences of accounting irregularities, people billing for services not rendered.

We even have one example of somebody billing for \$21 000 for services rendered and when the bill was mentioned to the new Board, and the Board asked for the invoice, a few days later it showed up as a mistake and someone said it was an extra zero, that it was really \$2 100. Sir, these are the kinds of things we are dealing with.

Mr. Speaker, accountability and transparency have been challenged in several Ministry Departments, even in the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment. We have situations where persons who are involved in the Ministry, are still providing services in their own private companies for the Government and billing the Government for those private services. These are things that do not speak to good governance and these are things that we have to deal with and weed out and the Boards are working overtime to address these and some of these Boards are meeting daily to be able to address these matters.

Sir, we have a lot of staff concerns in the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment. There is little job satisfaction among many of the workers and that impacts their productivity and we know that our budgetary proposal spoke to the issue of productivity.

We have situations where the facilities for general workers and that category of staff are not adequate, toilet facilities, changing facilities for general workers are not adequate, where management can get all the perks and

create all the perks for themselves and general workers and that category of workers cannot even find a clean or decent bathroom to use, and they cannot find a place that they can sit and have lunch. Sir, these things affect their moral and it affects their productivity.

Mr. Speaker, we have workers who have been temporary for years not being appointed every month for years; some 10 years; some 15 years and, again, they cannot be comfortable in that situation because they have no job security. They have nothing they can take to a bank to get a loan, a mortgage or nothing.

Sir, many workers do not have pensions and these are issues we have to address, if we want to see productivity improve in Government. We have to address these and we are working on these because some of these things are affecting the rate at which we can roll out some of the policies that we are itching to get on with.

Mr. Speaker, I heard a comment made yesterday where the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East expressed disappointment that having examined the Budgetary Proposals, the Honourable Member did not see any evidence of environmental measures there. There was no evidence of climate change because the words "climate change" were not mentioned; because the words "green economy" were not mentioned. Pronouncements were made that nothing in here spoke to the environment; that the words "sustainable development" were not in there. Sir, those are all the buzz words in environment today.

Mr. Speaker, the words "sustainable development" might not have been in there but when you see what is proposed for the development of agriculture and for land use, that speaks to sustainable development. That is the very crux of sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, the fishing villages - Again, that speaks to sound environmental management and to sustainable development. Sir, food security - all these agricultural measures are here for food security. One of the reasons we are concerned about climate change is because of the impact on food security. Sir, we say "climate change," but we are addressing food security. It is just an attempt to mislead the House. This document is devised with measures that address the environmental concerns in Barbados today.

Mr. Speaker, the Waste Energy Project - Of course, anybody can look at that and see that has environmental impact.

2.00 p.m.

The Waste Energy Project is going to put 4 megawatts to 6 megawatts into the national grid and will

reduce the dependence on the landfill and protect our water supply, minimising the toxins that go into the landfill at Greenland. Sir, that waste energy initiative is eligible for financing under the Clean Development Mechanism. That mechanism is defined under Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol, with the objective of emission reductions, sustainable development and support for adaptation to climate change.

The most impactful thing a government can do for the environment at this time is to reduce the dependence on fossil fuel. Government is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, user of electricity in Barbados, today. Government will take the lead in generating electricity at its properties, as mentioned on Page 80:

"Government will take the lead using its properties in generation of electricity from solar, wind and waste for its own facilities and for sale into the national grid.

This initiative will also be accompanied by any necessary fiscal incentive to encourage the efficient generation of energy from these alternative sources.

Additionally, Government will lead the way in retrofitting its buildings and facilities, and in revamping its fleet of vehicles in as feasible and economical a manner as possible in order to conserve its own use of energy, particularly of fossil fuel energy.

Building standards and incentives will also be put in place to encourage major conservation of energy."

Sir, it says "energy", but it addresses our environment. I dare anybody to look at this and seriously say to Barbados that we, as a government, are not concerned about the environment.

Sir, we have seen an increase in the ad valorem packs at the landfill. What that says to me as the Minister responsible for the Environment is that this now encourages more people and more companies to send their refuse to be prepared for recycling. We have those services in Barbados. Do not even think about dumping into the gullies, because the Environmental Management Act is being drafted by the Honourable Attorney-General's Chambers. This is going to provide comprehensive legal and institutional parameters to deal with things like dumping in the gullies because you will be caught. There will be more surveillance and there will be more fines to deal with it. This encourages recycling. Again, this speaks to the development of our environment.

Sir, this Budget, as I mentioned at the outset, eases many families. It places emphasis on the youth and the environment, the expansion of welfare, the new nurseries and schools that are being proposed. Right now there are 1

052 students in nursery centres, 15 Government centres across this island, and the waiting list has gone up from 2 100 to 2 400 people waiting to get into Government Nursery Schools.

Sir, I have been encouraging corporate Barbados to assist us in providing nursery schools in this island. Many of them have said that they are interested in assisting us in building nurseries. Some have said they are interested in putting nurseries on their compounds. Again, Government is leading the way in providing new nurseries that would certainly help to ease parents.

Sir, you may look at it and see dollars and cents, but parents across this island will breathe a sigh of relief because many of them have nowhere to send their children, or have to pay exorbitant rates to put children in nursery schools. Some parents earn \$50 which has to be paid in full to the nursery. Every cent earned goes towards paying private nursery schools.

Sir, the provision of additional nurseries eases parents, especially those parents from the lower income bracket who are already struggling. Do not tell me that does not help with their cost of living. All of these little things help to improve the cost of living for them.

Sir, it helps for varied needs of students. This is something parents have agonised over, and have been unable to address, where a child is doing well, and is being kept back, but there are no options for that child, or the converse where the child is not doing well. Nowadays we have a lot of children who suffer from Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder. These children are often branded in the classroom as unsettled, not focused, they are not doing well because there is nothing geared to their particular needs.

Again, there are many parents in Barbados, who are struggling to get their children a proper education. We know that our system affords a good education but there are those kids who slip through the cracks because their special needs are not being met. We are glad to see that Government has put a fund in place that will provide more money for education development, and these students would have their needs met.

The Honourable Member for St. John also spoke of expanding the opportunities for children after CXC. Again, this may mean nothing to some in here, but to parents across this country, again they are breathing a sigh of relief. Many parents are worried when their Fifth Formers do the CXC, where would they go from there? They may not get into the limited spaces in a sixth form school, but they know in their heart, that their 15 or 16-year-old is not ready to deal with the different structured environments at the University or Barbados Community College. Sir, adding

more sixth form schools and additional secondary schools will ease the burden for many parents in Barbados. I, myself, have had to agonise over that. I know this eases the burden for many parents.

Sir, the expansion of the Student Revolving Loan Fund is a master stroke. The Honourable Member spoke this morning about a student who got a partial scholarship. I know of another student who got a partial scholarship and had to turn it down because he could not find the additional funding that would be required for him to take up that scholarship. Now relief has come in the form of the expanded Student Revolving Loan Fund, the fact that you no longer need surety.

Sir, there are many students who when they reach that point, hit a stumbling block because there are no sureties. There is no one with that kind of money or property that can be used as surety. Mr. Speaker, this is for poor people. This is for them. This assists them. This eases them. I am proud to be a part of this.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes in which to conclude.

Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Speaker, some would have said that the honeymoon is over, but that is all right. Honeymoons would come to an end. What we have seen here is the building of something solid, something that would last, a legacy that would survive for a long time, something that people would speak of in years to come in the same way that many who owe their progress to the many policies of the Democratic Labour Party, like free education, the policies that we have seen put in place here, like National Insurance, Sir, the policies that we have seen put in place today that will redound to the development of years to come. The next generation would look back at this and say that it is because of this, their lives have been turned around.

Sir, there are children in Barbados who cannot go to school every day and every week because they cannot afford the bus fare. I think, if nothing else, everything else that we have done is justified by this provision of bus fares for school children.

I do not know who else has been calling on Honourable Members, but I have received positive feedback. My phone has not stopped ringing. The emails continue to come in, a positive feedback from all sectors of this society. I have even had retired persons calling and asking me how soon they can join up with these vacation camps, because they are eager to get on board as counsellors. Retired persons are ready.

People are ready to give back to the community, because for them, this Budget represents something bigger

than dollars and cents. The Budget represents a quality of life that we have seen slipping away in Barbados, a quality of life that this Government is committed to returning to Barbadians. It is because of that, people are excited and ready to get on board.

2.10 p.m.

Some may not understand that, but this Government is looking out for the disadvantaged. They are actually obeying a scriptural precept, Zachariah Chapter 7, where it says to execute through justice. Show mercy and compassion, everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or fatherless, the alien or the poor, and let none of you plan evil against his brother.

Barbadians understand the value of these measures that we have put in place. They know these measures come at a cost. They know the current economic situation. They also know that there is some personal sacrifice that they can make, and they are willing to help the less fortunate, and we are seeing that in Barbadians right now. Sir, people are heartened that this Government continues to put people first, and the Democratic Labour Party, Sir, always will put people first.

I thank you.

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

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to give support to the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals delivered by the Prime Minister on Monday. I support these Budgetary Proposals because they impact, in a very direct and positive way, on each and every one of my constituents. Most of them have communicated to me that they have impacted on them in a very positive way.

As I traverse the length and breadth of Barbados, I have been meeting many people over the last few days and most of them have told me in no uncertain terms that these will impact on them positively. As a matter of fact, so positive are these responses that even the Honourable Member for St. George North, in his attempt to score a political point, pulled out about four or five components of the Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John's Budgetary Proposals, and he attempted to mark them harshly, not realising that there is such a thing as a grade point average.

In about three or four components of the Prime Minister's speech, he marked him, A+ and in one instance when it came to the incident of content, he marked him a

D- (minus) but, of course, when the grade point average clicked in, he actually gave the Prime Minister, A, a good pass mark. Therefore, even the Members on the Other Side are seeing this Budget as a positive one. Of course, I do not need to mention the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East. He was brilliant, stellar in his performance, Mr. Speaker, so when you tip the balance, of course, it is coming down heavily on the side of this Government when it comes to the performance of the Budget.

Mr. Speaker, we came to Government, of course, we went all over the length and breadth of Barbados and we were promoting the good cause of the Democratic Labour Party, not realising that we would be facing some of the recklessness that we found when we came to Government. We inherited a raft of inappropriate, thoughtless and irresponsible policies. We have to deal with these policies first before we can actually formulate our own policies and put the corrective measures in place.

These Budgetary policies show some deep thinking on our part. Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wonder what really became of the deep thinkers on the Other Side. There were several economists on That Side of the isle, and I would imagine that they should have put their heads together and try to come up with the kinds of innovations that we presented in our Budget on Monday.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to many Financial Statements and Budgetary Proposals over the last number of years, of course, from outside of the House of Assembly. I believe this is the first time that I have heard a package of Budgetary Proposals, which would actually reshape the social engineering within Barbados. It is about time that we move away from constructing large monuments and large buildings and start to refocus Barbados and start to set the social engineering in Barbados and focus on people. I believe that what this Budget has done really is to start to point the direction again towards the development of the human element.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Certainly, when we come to situations like our school children, we have heard it repeated several times from both This Side and the Other Side, regarding the question of children and the PSVs. I want to say upfront that I have a special sympathy in my heart for the members of the PSV community.

I believe that the Private Service Vehicles (PSV), are integral to the transportation system in Barbados. They play a key role in Barbados, and they are primarily owned by black business people. I think they are some of the most productive people in Barbados.

As a matter of fact, it is because of this element of productivity that forms part of the whole body of the PSVs, which sometimes they run afoul of the Law and commit several infractions in trying to get the job done. Of course, that is a long story and goes back to how they are paid and everything else.

I believe that in my heart of hearts the Private Service Vehicles in Barbados play an integral part, but they had enough time, Mr. Speaker, to get their houses in order and to present to this country, a system that will fall into line within the four corners of the Law. I believe at this stage, we need to help them along with that process, because they have had enough time to formulate their own plans with the owners on one hand, and drivers and operators on the other hand.

Mr. Speaker, if they cannot get their houses in order, I believe that Government as an agency has to assist them. Therefore, it is against that background I see that the Government is trying to accommodate them in some way in helping them along in formulating a plan by allowing our children first to ride on the State-owned buses free of charge.

We are not closing the door to them. We are giving them a window of opportunity to bring some measures in place to correct their behaviour, fall in line, institute certain measures that will allow the ambulance on the buses to be of such, so that when the children arrive at school, they arrive in a frame of mind that is conducive, of course, to teaching and learning.

Therefore, the framework has been set. They have a window of opportunity to fall in line, get behind the Government and assist us in bringing some sanity back to the Private Service Vehicles and, of course, the transportation of our children.

Now, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North said that in this Budget there was nothing for the small man. He was emphatic in saying that there is nothing for the small man. I want to say that taxi owners, fishermen, pensioners, vendors, the used car dealers, the owners of houses, are all small people.

I want to say that taxi drivers are singing the praises of the Government in their numbers.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: The President, one of the members of the Taxi Owners Associations, a constituent of mine - in no uncertain terms - said that for the first time they are now enjoying duty-free concessions, not only on diesel cars but also on their gasoline driven cars.

What about the fishermen? The President of that Association is also full of praise. She is saying that they are now accessing...

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Okay, the past President. I heard her speaking on it, and she too is full of praise for the Government. They are small people. I do not know of any rich or large fishermen. Of course, I do not know but the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would know. He operates a business in a fishing community.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time pensioners would soon be receiving \$142 in their hands.

14.20 p.m.

Most of us, on This Side and on That Side would have seen a number of constituents during our clinics whose welfare grant cannot meet most of their needs. Sometimes we have to dig deep into our pockets and help supplement those welfare grants, so the increase in the welfare grant is a plus.

Mr. Speaker, the vendors in Barbados were given a really hard time by the last Barbados Labour Party Administration. They were shunted from pillar to post. At one time there were a number of vendors who sold their wares from the back of the old fish market just behind Furniture Limited, and in the dead of night, an agency or agencies, under the instruction of the Barbados Labour Party Government, swept down on those people and demolished every single kiosk and stall that was in that location. An investigation was promised by That Side and I have not heard anything from That Side regarding that investigation. The stalls were mashed to pieces.

Mr. Speaker, the used car dealers have been complaining for years of the onerous taxes and the Environmental Levy which was put on them which almost pushed them out of business. As a matter of fact, I do not even know if anything could be salvaged from this particular sector at this stage, because several of their lots are bereft of any cars. Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that with these measures, the reduction of the Environmental Levy to \$1 500 across the board, some of the businesses can be salvaged and brought back into business.

Mr. Speaker, we promised a number of housing solutions. It is reported that some 25 000 people are on the waiting list. Mr. Speaker, most of us can substantiate the fact that 90 per cent of the people who come and see us on our clinic days are asking for housing. The other 10 per cent is shared between unemployment and other miscellaneous things.

Mr. Speaker, most of the people who come to us about housing always present a file number which sometimes makes me so angry because this file number means absolutely nothing. They have been on the waiting list for 10, 15, 20 and 25 years.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Sir, if we have 25 000 people on this waiting list, we have to make a concerted effort in making a dent in this particular statistic. Mr. Speaker, we have identified 500 lots in six months, almost 100 lots per month, and they have pooh-poohed it as if it is some joke. What have they identified?

As the Prime Minister said in his Budgetary Proposals, houses are already in the pipeline, tenders have gone out, so the ball is rolling. We are meeting the housing needs of the people in Barbados. We have promised 2 000 housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, we have also proposed to remove the VAT from up to \$150 000 for first time homeowners, a commendable gesture. Mr. Speaker, instead of the Barbados Labour Party offering some solutions in fixing the mechanism to deliver this particular solution, they are pooh-poohing it again saying that who knows when somebody buys a window or a door that it is going to the house and all kinds of frivolous nothings. They should be helping us deliver on this particular proposal to help the people of Barbados. Far from that, they are trivialising it because any person building a house between \$10 000 and \$150 000 will be benefitting from this.

Mr. Speaker, I will now go to some of the increases that will directly impact and impinge on the people of Barbados. The first is the increased taxes on the private cars. Mr. Speaker, most people in Barbados own cars that fall into the category of \$265 that will move to \$400. Mr. Speaker, that really works out to about \$11 a month over a 12-month period.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the people of Barbados are sensible enough to know that \$11 a month for the improved road work and the infrastructural work that has gone on in Barbados is not much, and they would want to make a contribution to this. Sir, it is not only the infrastructural work and the road work improvement that they would be contributing to, they would also be picking up the tab for the reckless spending that occurred on That Side. Sir, it is a threefold thing that they are picking up on, the reckless spending, the improved road works and the improved infrastructure in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the other charge that is directly impacting on the people of Barbados is the question of the \$4 a month contribution which we are asking each of the

290 000 mobile phone owners in Barbados, both post-paid and prepaid, to make. Mr. Speaker, this charge is not a whimsical charge. The monies are going to be directed toward the finance of the Primary School Textbook Loan service, which is commendable.

Mr. Speaker, I have three children, of course two are now out of school, but I know from a personal point of view what the cost of textbooks are. Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as Member of Parliament for my Constituency, I help people because it is a prohibitive cost.

Mr. Speaker, if some of this money is being directed towards the support of the Primary School Textbook Loan Scheme, that is money that would be well-spent. This money is also going towards the funding of tuition and related costs for Barbadian students at the University of the West Indies.

Mr. Speaker, the two direct charges that I just mentioned, the increase in the private car road taxes and the charge on the mobile phones, are all going toward worthy causes. Mr. Speaker, I believe that Barbadians, as I said before, are sensible enough to understand that they would have to make a contribution to a better life in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to look at a few items that fall directly under my preview as Minister of Community Development and Culture. I know this would tickle the Honourable Member for St. Thomas because she shadows me. Mr. Speaker, a change in management at the National Cultural Foundation saw that we started late this year. However, I want to pay kudos and bouquets to the management and staff at the National Cultural Foundation for rising to the occasion and, not only planning, but executing a festival to date that has been without controversy. Mr. Speaker, that is not because of any special magic. It is because we have returned the Festival to the people.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have not only embraced the people who attend the many events but, also, the stakeholders. We have held their hands and brought them into the fold and helped them to execute the Festival with us. It is a people's Budget and a people's festival. Mr. Speaker, we have recorded record crowds at all of the Cavalcades and at all of the events to date.

Mr. Speaker, the involvement of the communities was evident at the Gala Opening. We thought that we would return the Festival to the actual communities from which they had sprung. We had the Float Parade. Sir, I want to pay special compliments to Lucy, the mother of all the parishes. She took away the first prize, and I want to

commend the good people of St. Lucy for taking the first prize in our first Float Parade.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say also that we are proposing to take a new look at the prize for the King and Queen of the Crop. Sir, most people think this Festival revolves around the axil of music, entertainment, calypso, tents, semi-finals, finals, Cohoblot, but we have to take it back from which it has sprung. Sir, it is a fact that Crop Over is exactly what it is, a celebration of the sugar crop in Barbados and, therefore, pivotal to all of this, is the King and Queen who reap the most canes in the crop. Therefore, we are proposing to increase substantially, in a way where the mechanisms have to be worked out in the National Cultural Foundation, how we would approach an increase or an enhanced prize for the King and Queen of the Crop.

Mr. Speaker, we have increased the subvention to bands this year. Across the board, we have increased subventions to all bands and tents. We have moved the increased subvention from the bands from \$7 500 to \$10 000. We have also increased the tents from \$15 000 to \$16 000. That is to assist the tents through this season, and they are deserving of it.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of staging the Pick-O-De-Crop competition has moved from \$699 000 to \$839 000. The cost of Grand Kadooment has moved from \$374 000 last year, to \$486 000 this year. The overall cost of producing Crop Over is \$5.6 million. That is up from \$4.5 million for last year. Therefore, we have injected money into the Festival because this year we anticipate that if it is not going to be the biggest, it would be one of the biggest festivals. That is purely because, as I said, the stakeholders are on board, holding the hands of the executors of the Festival, the National Cultural Foundation, and making it better for the people of Barbados. We have also put special measures in place, in terms of security. We have on board one of the celebrated top policemen in Barbados looking after our security arrangements. Therefore, our security is in safe hands.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Cohoblot will be staged this year at the Kensington Oval, as we all know, with a Caribbean element. Sir, at this stage, I want to say that we cannot speak of overlooking or shutting out the Caribbean elements in our Festival because every year our local entertainers trek to several destinations in the Caribbean and perform at their Festivals and, therefore, we must reciprocate and allow those performers to come to our shores and perform.

The cost of admission has been marginally increased and therefore is still affordable to most people who would want to attend the Festival. Sir, I want to say a big “thank

you” to the management and staff of the National Cultural Foundation. They have stepped up to the block and have done well for us to produce what to date is considered to be one of the finest festivals.

Mr. Speaker, in our Community Technology Programme, in the Community Technology Department, this programme has been introduced since 2002 and is now at eight Resource Centres. Sir, we propose that those Resource Centres would almost quadruple and, therefore, we are aiming, not only to use the Resource and Community Centres across the length and breadth of Barbados but to use the EduTech-ready schools to further enhance that programme. Therefore, we would have a better geographical spread of the Resource Centres.

I want to assure all Honourable Members on Both Sides of the fence that we would have Resource Centres in their individual constituencies, which would cater to the needs of their constituents. Sir, not only that. We are also moving from one tier to a second tier. We used to have the entry level type of learning regarding the basics in relation to computer operations, but we are moving to another level because of the fact that the need has been identified and we are going to cater to that need.

We believe we should be moving people to the stage where they could be entering the job market with a recognisable certification. Mr. Speaker, the new focus this year would be the modification to the curriculum, where basic English and Office Technology courses would now be added, along with a new tier of advanced Computer Technology.

Mr. Speaker, I want to announce that the Barbados Library Service, which has been long in coming, will soon be opening its doors. It is about three years now, from 2005.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just be alerted that you have five minutes in which to conclude.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Speaker, since 2005, this move has been in the making but I want to announce that we are almost on the cusp of reopening the Library at the Independence Square location. Of course, the Carnegie Building is one of many projects that will be undertaken by my Ministry over the next few years, in bringing it back to its former glory. I want to say that within days, after just one more hurdle has been cleared, the Library at Independence Square would be opened.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Barbados Museum where it has now celebrated its 75th Anniversary. It is now moving to a stage where it would be opening its doors to the public, free of cost. This weekend, there is a grand celebration in celebrating its 75th Anniversary and I

want to encourage all those within the hearing of my voice that the Museum would be opened to the public, free of cost, where persons could encourage their children to visit and view the exhibits on display.

Mr. Speaker, overall I commend this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals to the people of Barbados. There is something in it for all of us. We just have to identify what is in this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals that would redound to our benefit.

As far as I am concerned, it is a solid Budget. This opinion is shared by the vast majority of people and, despite the naysayers on That Side, we could ignore them and plough on with our policies. The people of Barbados have decided on January 15, 2008, that they are no longer interested in That Side, and have given us the mandate to govern this country.

Mr. Speaker, the mandate is ours, therefore, let us run with it. Let us implement our policies. Let us get on with the business of running the country. Sir, with or without any critical comments, we will plough on with what we have to do for the good people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

2.40 p.m.

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

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, as I sat here and listened to the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central, I am reminded that the devil can cite Scripture for his own purpose. When he was speaking, I was looking at an article in the Nation newspaper. He was speaking about the Public Service Vehicles and he had said earlier that they are giving them a window of opportunity to get their act together, to fall in line and bring sanity to the public transportation sector and that if they do not get their act together that certain actions would be taken.

While he was saying that, at the same time the Honourable Member for St. Michael East had his head down, because the Honourable Member for St. Michael East is a PSV merchant. I know that because I was the Minister of Public Works and the Honourable Member for St. Michael East has about 20 minibuses, ZRs and taxis and he could prove me wrong. I was looking here and there is some language in this article that I cannot read the language because this is not the kind of language I would expect from Members in this House, but the first paragraph says that the Prime Minister, David Thompson, is treating the Public Service Vehicle operators like dogs.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I regret having to interrupt. I have been in this House a little longer than the Honourable Member and probably more regularly but, Sir, clearly it is a breach of the Standing Orders for the Member to read from a newspaper article. This is a long-standing Rule It has not changed in all the years I was in here and all the years he has been in here and, therefore, I am deeply distressed that a very senior Member of Parliament like the Honourable Member would be so flagrantly breaching the Rules of Parliament.

Mr. SPEAKER: I must uphold the submission. The Honourable Member would have heard the asides but I am institutionally deaf when it comes to the asides and I am sure he would be guided accordingly.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I said that while he was speaking, I was reading the newspaper. I never said I was reading the newspaper now? Sir, do I not have memory? The article I read while he was speaking was stating that Prime Minister, David Thompson, was treating the Public Service Vehicle operators like dogs. Sir, that is all I was saying, so that is a contradiction.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, even then, the Honourable Member is not aware that you are not allowed to read the newspaper during the Sitting. Do not let us make heavy weather of it. I think you know where we are coming from, so Honourable Member, let us proceed.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, this budgetary debate, like in most budgetary debates, one has got to assess a budget in terms of what that particular Budget does for you.

The professional fees have gone from \$750 to \$2 500. If I may use my memory again, the President of the Barbados Bar Association in today's newspapers said, his words, not mine, the spiral effect of this action by Government is that the cost to the public for use of these professional services is likely to increase immediately in terms of contributing to the inflation of the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, that is the President of the Bar Association. It is not a member of the Barbados Labour Party that I am reading from my notes. In light of the Government's widely publicised National Consultation, an increase this large, which affects the lives of a significant sector of the population, should not have been imposed without consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister indicated that he consulted widely with a number of players in the business sector and, certainly, this is a contradiction. If he consulted with the people in the business sector, the people who were supposed to be affected by these measures, it is obvious that he did not heed their advice. In

the Budget the Prime Minister stated that it is a tribute to the Barbadian prudence of which he spoke, that there was not one single outlandish or excessive measure that would be unbearable and unacceptable but, Sir, not so to the President of the Bar Association.

Mr. Speaker, he went further. I took note of what the President of the Bar Association said in commenting on these measures. Sir, I am a member of a law firm and every year we try to encourage and train young lawyers. There are about 10 lawyers in a firm that I represent and \$2 500 by 10 is \$25 000 and from my notes, what empirical evidence is there to justify the comment “these fees no longer bear any relevance to the individual’s organisation earning capacity or the availability of skills.”

The Prime Minister spoke about this Budget being youth oriented and, as the President of the Bar Association rightly said, clearly no consideration was given to the fact that most young professionals become accredited in the month of October due to the scheduled date of graduation from the University of the West Indies and would, therefore, be faced with a fee of \$2 500.

Mr. Speaker, this is a murderous budget to those young professionals who have just qualified, who are being called upon to pay \$2 500, the same professional fee as the Honourable Member for St. John, the Prime Minister of this country, if he were still in private practice and you are going to tell me that these are measures that are favourable to every sector?

2.50 p.m.

You are going to tell me that the Prime Minister consulted with every sector in this community that would be affected by these measures and he took that advice to heart in making these presentations?

Mr. Speaker, the comments of the President of the Bar Association were so instructive that I made my notes. It goes on:

“ This increase effectively attacks on the earnings of private individuals, and therefore begs the question as to how the Government proposes to employ the increased revenue and whether any of the said revenue would redound to the relevant association.”

Sir, this is unfair. When the Prime Minister speaks about consultation, the Prime Minister’s concern was to make the small man believe that he was part of the process, but the small man was only there. You could go and tell your friends that you are having a meeting at Illaro Court with the Prime Minister, and make them feel good, but their advice was not followed.

Sir, when I look at this Budget in terms of what it has done for my Constituency and constituents, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition made reference to the fact that this Budget is more conspicuous by its admissions and as the Representative from a constituency in the Scotland District, and as the Honourable Member who ran in St. Andrew, St. Andrew is the major part of the Scotland District, and we on This Side pay particular attention to the development of the Scotland District, but there is nothing in this Budget. All of the measures which were implemented for agriculture, and although St. Andrew was known to be the food basket of Barbados, nothing for the Scotland District, and it follows closely to what has been included in the Estimates.

Sir, we declared the Scotland District as a special development area, and I am reporting from the Manifesto, Special Development Areas, which qualifies investors for certain incentives, where an agricultural development plan identifies fruit, livestock and crop production as ideal for the area. Sir, between 2003 and 2007, the Barbados Labour Party Administration spent \$49 million on a variety of projects that included a Forest Station as part of a plan to establish nature trails.

Additionally, to facilitate Private Sector investment in the Scotland District that will establish a ten-year tax holiday for the private investment in food production, processing and marketing, and amended the Orchard Development Subsidy to provide annually \$5 per tree, 1 000 trees per farmer, for approved species of plants, but there is nothing in here for the Scotland District.

Sir, on that basis there is nothing in this Budget for the Constituency of St. Andrew. If you look at the constituents, and I can take one constituent as an example, a popular constituent in the person of a fellow called “Gamby”, Gamby’s Bar, in Orange Hill, a shopkeeper, who is having difficulty meeting his expenses in his rum shop. There are not many people in here who would understand that Rum Shops are places of recreation. These have become places of recreation in today’s business, for me as well, not a profit-making business.

Sir, even before these measures, Gamby was having problems paying the \$350, making payments in three installments. Do you know what Gamby did? Gamby decided to do a little freighting on the side, but lo and behold Gamby now has to pay \$1 000 for his licence, The shop proprietor, taking up the freighting on the side, now has the additional charges for road tax and insurance. He also has to pay additional for diesel and gasoline. So what this Budget has done for my constituency and my constituents, nothing. Mr. Speaker, a failing grade again. Let us move on.

Sir, seeing that this is the first Budget since the General Election, we ask the question: Does this Budget address the promises which were made by the Democratic Labour Party during the campaign? They spoke about the cost of living. The number one problem was the cost of living. The number two problem was the cost of living. The number three problem was the cost of living.

Sir, if one would look at what has transpired between January 15 and now, you would realise that the problem number one was the witch hunting. The problem number two was harassment, and the problem number three was dismissal. Sir, it is a serious matter.

I must say that this country has not really understood, because if you look at the responses from the Barbados Workers' Union and the National Union of Public Workers, it is obvious that we have not understood what transpired when George Edgehill, General Manager of the Urban Development Commission was fired. It is the worst case of victimisation ever inflicted on a public official since the introduction of Ministerial Government. A man was fired for doing his job, and these dismissals have continued.

The Prime Minister got...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I keep having to remind you that the correct way of referring to Members is the "Honourable Member". The same way the Honourable Leader is the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, so is the Honourable Prime Minister.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: Sorry, the point is taken. The Honourable Prime Minister.

Mr. SPEAKER: In addition to that, I noticed yesterday the whole question of calling names without having sought permission beforehand. Let us all stick to that directive.

Mr. G.W.A. PAYNE: Sir, the point is taken. Sir, the General Manager that was fired by the Government of the Democratic Labour Party is so well-known, when you say the General Manager of Urban Development Commission, everybody knows his name. Sir, if you want me to repeat. It is the worst case of victimisation ever meted out to a public official of this country since the introduction of Ministerial Government. Sir, a minister firing a public official, after a Cabinet meeting, for doing his job, simply for doing his job. Sir, one is not surprised.

Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister has a way in a short space of time of making certain decisions and then backtracking as in the case of diesel. That is a fact.

3.00 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please, you still have to keep the environment so that you can hear the Honourable Member make his contribution.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: The present Prime Minister recognised that he has made a mistake. He recognised that he cannot go back and apologise to the General Manager of the Urban Development Commission for what he has done.

I understand that he ran into the General Manager of the Urban Development Commission subsequently and said: "Oh, you are the fellow that name so and so? I did not know that was you."

Therefore, what we have, is so highlighted, and the Prime Minister's conscience pricks him very much. Sir, you do not want me to call his name but his name is mentioned in this Budget. A lot of you do not realise that there is reference to the General Manager of the Urban Development Commission in this Budget.

Asides.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: Sir, do you remember the famous Press Conference that the Prime Minister gave, when he made a commitment that in his Government - which came in with a great fanfare - there would be no recriminations and no long knives? In fact, the Prime Minister promised good governance and openness.

Asides.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: The Honourable Member for St. James, my Member of Parliament, said that they are short knives. I hope the Attorney-General and the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, the Minister of Health are listening. No long knives because nobody in the Barbados Labour Party is going to put any long knives in anybody over there. The long knives are going to come from over there.

Sir, in this Budget, we are hearing now that there is going to be a consultation. Now, you fired a man after a Cabinet meeting and five months after, you cannot apologise to the man, you cannot make a settlement in the matter, but you are going to talk about a consultation to teach Chairmen.

My understanding is that the Chairman of the Urban Development Commission and the General Manager of the Urban Development Commission had a running battle going back for years. It so happened that the Cabinet appeared to have been duped by the Chairman of the Urban Development Commission in getting rid of the General

Manager of the Urban Development Commission. Sir, I am saying that it is too late.

Sir, now the Prime Minister in this Budget is talking about consultation to teach Chairmen of Statutory Bodies how they should behave towards management and employers. Too late. Too late.

Those of us with constituencies interact with our constituents on a regular basis. Sir, not all of us, because the Minister of Agriculture has set up a Constituency Council and he does not have a constituency. Sir, on This Side many of our constituents work in these corporations, the UDC, RDC, QEH, SSA, NCF, and they have been telling me that they are literally trembling when they go to work.

Sir, this is what is happening now and that is the type of climate that the Democratic Labour Party has created since the last General Election. Mr. Speaker, it is about time the witch-hunting and dismissals stop.

Mr. Speaker, this is the next question that I have to ask. Does this Budget address the problems facing the economy? The Leader of the Opposition gave an excellent presentation yesterday.

Asides.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: Sir, after the Leader of the Opposition spoke, the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central actually started to beat the desk, without realising it. Therefore, I need not go into what has been said by the Leader of the Opposition, but it is fairly obvious that the Democratic Labour Party has come to office at a time when we have had good governance and the economy has been in good shape, so they could boast.

Sir, if you read this Budget carefully, you would realise that two people wrote this speech. The Prime Minister obviously wrote the first part about the measures. Somebody else wrote the second part. Sir, the Prime Minister said that today Barbados stands tall in the international arena as one of the highest ranking developing countries in the world. Yet, later on, I could hear all of this foolish talk about messes being created. What messes?

If there is a mess at the ABC Highway, call in the police, call in the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Attorney-General obviously would like some work to do. If there is a mess with the GEMS Project, call in the police, call in the Director of Public Prosecutions. If there is a mess with the NHC buildings, call in the police, call in the Director of Public Prosecutions. If there is a mess at Kensington Oval, call in the police, call in the Director of Public Prosecutions. If there is a mess at the Prison, call in the police, call in the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Judgment coming today. Call in the police. Call in the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Sir, those of you on That Side feel that if you could speak about the mess that you have to clean up, people would be distracted from the fact that you came in and, as the Leader of the Opposition said, there was elbow room that these measures were totally unnecessary.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have three minutes in which to wind up.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: Yet, we are saddled with these measures.

Sir, I was hoping that I would have enough time to deal with a host of other issues, but I would just like to thank the people of St. Andrew for electing me for another term. I had indicated to them when I first ran that I would be around for about 25 years, which have almost past. I would like to thank them for the support they have given me.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party seems to think that they should remain in Government forever. Sir, when they look at the under-currents in this Budget, they recognise the type of good governance that the Barbados Labour Party has given this country during the past 14 years. The only way that the Democratic Labour Party would be able to sustain another victory would be at the expense of the public purse. Therefore, we are hearing a lot about Constituency Councils.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at this Budget now, they have gone a little further. They are now talking about 30 4H Councils. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, a loser in the last Election, is Mr. 4H in Barbados. He has already set up his 4H Council. Mr. Speaker, they could only operate and have some influence in their constituency by the establishment of these various organisations at the public's expense.

Mr. Speaker, I hold a summer camp every year. For the first time in about 10 years the Ministry is not paying for any volunteers. There were many candidates in the Democratic Labour Party during the last Election who could not organise a proper summer camp, so they want to organise the summer camps at the public's expense. By the setting up of summer camps in the vacation is an attempt to use the public's funds to run their campaigns, and so is it with the Constituency Councils.

Mr. Speaker, there was a town hall meeting in St. Andrew with respect to the Constituency Council. I believe that the Minister did not know anything about it, but they

organised a constituency town hall meeting at the same time and in the same venue as a Democratic Labour Party Branch meeting. What does that tell you? That is totally improper.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. D. S. LOWE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew is misleading the House. The town hall meeting was not held in the same place as the Constituency Branch Meeting. Mr. Speaker, the town hall meeting was held at the Alleyne School in the hall. Sir, as you know, all public schools have several locations where different events can be held. The impression the Honourable Member is seeking to give is that they were held in the same room. Sir, they were not held in the same room. They were held in separate and distinct places, and I want the record to reflect that.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I hope that I will get back my five minutes.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you were essentially coming to the end of your time but I will give you a minute in that regard.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, he confirmed what I said. They were advertised for the same venue.

Mr. Speaker, one would have thought that in this Budget - here again is an omission on the part of the Minister of Finance - they would have created the framework for sensitising Barbadians to the European Partnership Agreement seeing that we are about to be a signatory to that Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, it is fairly obvious that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, the only Minister on That Side that has been shafted in this Budget... All of those Ministers consulted with all of those Ministers. There was nothing from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade on the European Partnership Agreement. Mr. Speaker, no wonder why the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West comes in here talking about braces, locks and things totally unconnected and has insulted the former Minister, Senator Elizabeth Thompson from the Other Place whose name can be called, through whom Barbados has been given an international award. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West comes in here to downplay the contribution.

Mr. Speaker, they do not want to talk about the European Partnership Agreement because they would have to speak about the contribution that was made by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which would be

out of line and out of sync with what has been said in terms of the contributions by the Honourable Members.

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

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker, but the next time I hope you give me my five minutes.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for the City.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Resolution before this Honourable House. First, I would like to sincerely thank the good people of the City of Bridgetown who elected me to be their Representative in this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I see my presence here as a victory not only for myself and the Democratic Labour Party, but for the thousands of working-class people within our dear country.

Mr. Speaker, I note the clear difference between the Democratic Labour Party and our progressive philosophy, and the conservative reactionary right-wing approach of the Barbados Labour Party. Mr. Speaker, I recall that as far back as the 2003 General Election, the former Member for St. James South and others on the Barbados Labour Party platform sought to ridicule your humble servant for being a pedestrian because the philosophy of the Barbados Labour Party was that you had to be a self-declared millionaire, or someone of that bourgeois orientation, to be eligible to be in the House of Assembly. Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados and the people of the City have said: "No".

Mr. Speaker, due to the visionary policies of the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow and the Democratic Labour Party by providing fully taxpayers funded education right up to tertiary level, your humble servant, coming from grass-root origin, the child of a house painter from Santo Domingo Alley, King William Street and a homemaker from the Bayville area, was able to sit with Members on the Other Side. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and I sat in the same Sixth Form at Harrison College. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West was a junior to me, but we are able to have equal opportunity, thanks to the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, since we rescued the country and regained office on January 15, the Honourable Members on the Other Side have even sought to ridicule your humble servant's presence here, talking about my Degree. I have a Bachelors Degree in Economics and Mathematics from the University of the West Indies.

Mr. Speaker, there is an Honourable Member on that Other Side who I can hear, but you cannot hear, who does not even have a Degree, who is seeking to ridicule me. Mr. Speaker, that Honourable Member does not understand that she is laughing at herself. She should not allow the bourgeois right-wing people over on the Barbados Labour Party side to condescend upon people who are not graduates. They are Barbadians too, and they have as much right as anybody else to become a Member of Parliament, a Minister or even Prime Minister in this country. The Democratic Labour Party will protect these persons and embrace them as persons who could make a contribution to our country.

Mr. Speaker, let me go on. I would also like to pay tribute to the late I'Akobi Maloney who was a constituent of mine, who lived in the Cat's Castle area. I grew up with his mother. She lives in the Christ Church East area. Sir, just a few weeks ago he and his brother came to visit me at my weekly Constituency consultations at Reed Street and I was very impressed by his high level of intelligence. He was a very articulate, very ambitious young man. I mourn at his passing and look forward to the full police investigation into his untimely death.

3.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about weekly consultations. I am saying that it hurts me that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, who has not been in his seat all day today, which is consistent with the Honourable Member's persistent absence from this Honourable House since the January 15 General Election, has shown little regard to the efforts of the Leader of the Opposition in her presentation. The Honourable Member had to ask him to shut up because he could not even show her the courtesy of letting her deliver her reply in peace.

Sir, clearly the Honourable Member for St. Peter has not come to term with the fact that he has been dethroned by the people of Barbados and is no longer the leader of this country, and therefore the Honourable Member continues to show little regard for this Honourable Chamber. Sir, I am saying if the Honourable Member is no longer interested in representing the people of St. Peter, he should resign, let us have a by-election, and let the Honourable Minister from the Other Place gain that seat.

Sir, I understand the constituency office of the Honourable Member for St. Peter is hardly opened. Sir, let me remind the public that through Parliament, Honourable Members are given funds to pay rents for their constituency office. Therefore, if the Honourable Member is not opening his office, he should give back the money if he is receiving it. Parliament also pays for a constituency aide/secretary and, therefore, if the Honourable Member for St. Peter is

not opening his office and doing the people's business, he should either resign the seat or pay back the money.

Mr. Speaker, this is consistent with the attitude of the Barbados Labour Party in representing the people of Barbados. I remember, not so long ago, there was a former Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, who had his constituency office in Bridgetown. That is the total lack of regard for the people of St. Joseph.

Mr. Speaker, it goes further. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East had a lot to say about Constituency Councils and as the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, who has just taken his seat. Sir, I could understand why they are so worried and afraid of the great work which could be done by Constituency Councils, to empower the people in this country to have a say in the decision-making process of our country. Sir, under the Barbados Labour Party Government, your humble servant, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, had to suffer under a situation where my opponent, who was not elected to the House of Assembly or the Senate, was given access to millions of taxpayers' money to manage the beautification of the environs around Kensington Oval.

My opponent was either repairing houses, or was just painting the front of these houses, the part that you could see, but was leaving the back part of these houses unpainted. This was to try to get that person elected to the Honourable House of Assembly. Sir, it was an abuse of power by the Barbados Labour Party when they put millions of dollars into the hands of an undeclared candidate.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is well aware of this. The Honourable Member talked about tours. Sir, the Urban Development Commission was under the portfolio then, after the former Prime Minister had demoted her to a Ministry, one was not sure had much to do but, at least, it was under her control. The Honourable Member toured those areas in New Orleans where houses were being constructed by Hardwood Housing Factory Inc. Some of those houses were poorly constructed. Some were done with the kitchen area at the front of the house, while some had no back door.

Mr. Speaker, I was a constituent living in 7th Avenue, New Orleans, and I highlighted it in one of the newspapers in this country. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party paid little regard to that gentleman's circumstances, to the extent that he turned to heavy drinking, suffered a stroke and passed away before he could even occupy the rebuilt house.

This is a shame on the Barbados Labour Party. His blood rests on the hands of the Barbados Labour Party. That house was being done under the Urban Development

Commission and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West was Minister with responsibility for the Urban Development Commission. She toured that area. I believe the Honourable Member would have seen the house I am talking about, along with others.

Mr. Speaker, we would have also seen situations where, under the watch of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the Urban Development Commission would have hastily, in time for the last General Election, put on waterborne toilets and bath facilities onto dilapidated houses, in circumstances where some of those houses were wood ants infested. Sir, there was no attempt made to have those houses repaired, but simply to attach those toilets and baths, only to win votes.

Sir, this was cheap political electioneering and an abuse of public funds. That is why we are having a thorough forensic audit at the Urban Development Commission to uncover this abuse. Mr. Speaker, the Urban Development Commission is now within the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development.

It was publicly admitted by the last Government that the authorities had to check behind the Hardwood Housing Factory, in terms of the cost of constructing those houses. There were exorbitant prices for a few 'fandangle' houses that the people in the area did not want. Mr. Speaker, that is why I said the Other Side is afraid of the Constituency Councils because they are judging us by their own standard, but we are not going down that line. We are going to be very fair about this.

Mr. Speaker, Constituency Councils are mentioned within the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals and so I am very relevant. Further, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East spoke about it a lot in her presentation. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East has a lot to say about Constituency Councils but we had 13 town hall meetings throughout the 11 parishes of Barbados.

Sir, as Minister of State within the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development, I was at 99 per cent of those town hall meetings and I can say, without fear of contradiction, that not one Honourable Member from the Other Side has ever paid the courtesy or interest in attending any of those town hall meetings.

Sir, we had a town hall meeting at the Lester Vaughan Secondary School, in the Constituency of St. Thomas. Where was the Honourable Member for St. Thomas? There was no interest in Constituency Councils then. We had town hall meetings in St. James South. We saw the Honourable Member for St. James South there. We

saw the Honourable Minister of Transport, Works and International Transport at several of these meetings. We saw the Honourable Member for St. Michael East at the Springer Memorial School, and the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to these town hall meetings, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East now has to rely on second-hand information because the Honourable Member did not take the time to attend any. Furthermore, we had extended invitations to all sitting Members of Parliament to address the audience.

Sir, the Honourable Members on That Side had no interest in attending any of those meetings so do not let any of them try to fool you that they have any real interest in Constituency Councils. They are afraid. They know that it is imaginative. They did not refer to it in their Manifesto. They had no interest in implementing such programmes, yet the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East and others are fully supportive of Constituency Councils.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of election, the Democratic Labour Party did not slide this concept of Constituency Councils under the back door. We went to the public. We even put it in our Manifesto. We received the mandate of the people of St. Michael Central. They have given us the go-ahead to govern and to implement this programme and so what are outlined in this programme are certainly non-negotiable.

Mr. Speaker, we accept from the experience of local Government here and around the Region that we are not trying to reintroduce local government. We are talking about local governance. In our Manifesto at page 46, and I quote:

"Good governance assures that corruption is minimised, the views of the people are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable members of society are heard in decision-making."

Sir, we go further. At page 48, we determined, and I quote:

"The Democratic Labour Party will also:

(a) establish state-funded Constituency Councils, to execute community enhancement and development projects. These Councils will comprise representatives from the Church, civil society, and the political Administration."

Mr. Speaker, I am saying we are specific. We want to make sure that the vulnerable interest groups, which I have just mentioned, along with others, are fully represented.

3.30 p.m.

We are conscious of the fact that if there is full-scale electioneering going on, we could have polarisation in the same way in which local Government exists in Trinidad and other countries where you have heavy financing of candidates and political parties would seek to get majority membership within such Constituency Councils, thereby alienating those Church groups, the disabled, the youth and sporting organisations who do not have millions of dollars to spend to elect their persons. I am saying that we do not need to have such polarisation, such political tribalism as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East mentioned and that is why we are going the route of getting more people from each particular interest group to make sure they are all represented.

Mr. Speaker, you could have a hybrid system where, for example, the position for the Church member on the Constituency Council, that person could be elected by the churches represented within the various constituencies, so you could get a hybrid system. We are urging the public not to be fooled by the propaganda of the Other Side to try to create mischief out of the laudable initiatives of the Democratic Labour Party Government.

Mr. Speaker, let me go further. Let me just say that the issue of the Lodge School is dear to me because you and I, Mr. Speaker, are graduates of that great institution in St. John, and the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central. I remember at the first Constituency Council meeting which was attended by the Prime Minister, as busy as he was he made sure he was there with his constituents at St. John for the first town hall meeting, unlike the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Sir, you understand the contrast in leadership? There is firm leadership here by the Honourable Prime Minister. She had no interest in the town hall meeting, whereas the Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, took the time to come to the first town hall meeting to give support. He is always constantly paying interest to ensure that the implementation is not delayed.

Sir, while I was in St. John at the Lodge School, that nostalgic moment, as I reminisced about my days at Lodge School I was so hurt, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure you will be when you visit the school, to see the dilapidated condition of that school that has produced Barbadian scholars and leaders in Barbados and throughout the world and the Barbados Labour Party Government under their 14 years of leadership has let that school run down to the extent that the walls are full of moss. This is why I congratulate the Government, in particular the Ministry of Education, for promising to rehabilitate that school to the tune of several million dollars and I think that deserves serious applaud.

Even our alma mater, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East would have gone to Harrison's College with myself and others, and we are pumping considerable sums to rehabilitate that school because we know at that institution you have some desks that look as though they were built in the 1800s and some of the walls are full of moss.

We are saying that it is the premier secondary school in the country and that it needs to have a better ambience. I taught at Parkinson Memorial School for a number of years and, therefore, I am happy that school is being rehabilitated by a caring Government.

Mr. Speaker, the area of the vendors is dear to me and I am happy to see that we have listened to BARVEN and the Wayside Vendors' Association and that we are giving them access to a plantation where they can cut out the middle man and achieve greater profit and improve the issue of food security by growing what we eat and, Sir, that is commendable.

Mr. Speaker, the whole ethos of vending, you would have seen your humble servant championing the cause of vendors at Bridge Street, but this is consistent with the Democratic Labour Party because, even in 2003, we had promised to abolish licences for vendors across the wayside. We are not saying there should be any chaotic situation but these people are Barbadians too, and we do not support the view of the Other Side that big business alone should flourish and the vendors should be chased off the streets as though they are common criminals.

Mr. Speaker, there are people, women, grandmothers who live throughout Bridgetown and throughout Barbados, who seek to earn a decent living, an honest dollar, by offering their goods, be it fruit, vegetables, craft, clothing for sale to the general public. Sir, a caring Government, like the Democratic Labour Party, is seeking to have a sustainable solution to this problem, in a symbiotic way, so that the big and medium-sized store owners are not in anyway discriminated against so that they suffer but we can have symbiosis where the sort of intrinsic Barbadians nature of our vending, which brings tourists and business to Bridgetown and other centres, can then result in greater sales for the store owners themselves, so we understand this holistic view.

Mr. Speaker, I remember I was in St. Vincent a few months back and they built a spanking new market facility and still on Saturdays - there is street right next to the market - the market still has vendors but you allow vendors on weekends to overflow into the streets, in an organised way. Sir, elevators within the market are well aerated, not like what happened at the Cheapside Market or the Eagle Hall Market, which is a crying shame because all the elements and rain blow on to persons selling there. Sir, then

at the Cheapside Market you had the situation where initially, I remember the former Honourable Member for the City, at the very last minute just before that facility was to be handed over to the Government because she was busy travelling all around the world, she realised that the contractor did not even build the necessary counters for the vendors to sell and a last minute adjustment had to be made.

Sir, no proper marketing of the upstairs section was done and it resulted in millions of dollars wasted because, as you travel upstairs the Cheapside Market, you see that not many people are even aware that there are establishments upstairs and those operators have had to go on to the streets to try to earn a decent living.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is that with the BTI car park being constructed, there is going to be a walk way to upside the Cheapside Market that could bring some of that vehicular traffic over so that those people can get some more sales.

Mr. Speaker, let me go further. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East had a lot of problems with the increased Excise Taxes on cigarettes. The Honourable Member for St. Peter, when the Honourable Member for St. John was introducing this aspect, was clearly shaken and clearly disturbed that he was interfering with his favourite beverages, the alcoholic beverages.

He has not said anything as yet, but the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East should tell this Honourable Chamber and the public if she is worried about the cigarettes that she may consume. Sir, as her colleague that went school with her, I would encourage her, as all Barbadians, not to smoke. It is bad for your health.

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

Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, we want to see people live long and it takes 10 years off our lives. Sir, I congratulate the Honourable Member for St. John for taking that bold initiative. The late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow used to say that Barbadians had champagne taste with mauby pockets and, Sir, some of us have brandy taste with sugar brandy pockets.

Sir, I am saying that I totally support the initiative that would dampen that demand for alcoholic beverages and cigarettes that can break up homes and cause people to lose their lives, so that is a caring initiative there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of my stewardship in the City thus far, as I have said, I have been having weekly clinics and this is consistent with the Manifesto promise under

good governance of our Democratic Labour Party and all of us over here on This Side have been doing this. Sir, I have been able this year to visit all of the primary schools within the City and I have spoken to the students on the eve of their taking the Common Entrance Examination, and they really appreciated that motivation.

3.40 p.m.

Moreover, consecutively, this year again, I was able to give prizes to all of the primary school students within the City, who excelled in Mathematic. This is something I pledge to continue.

Sir, within days of assuming office, we were able to bring a huge group of public service officials from the Ministry of Health, the Environmental Division at the Black Rock Polyclinic, Ministry of Transport and Works and the Sanitation Services Authority, and we cleared those drains that have been left blocked for years under the Barbados Labour Party Government. Within days of assuming office, we cleared those drains within the perimeter of the Westbury Primary School and Pickwick Gap.

All the excuses that the Barbados Labour Party had, we took the initiative and showed that it could be done. We pledge to continue the issue of drainage in a holistic way, because we realise that drainage is a serious problem. If there is a serious downpour I cannot even get into my house at Reed Street.

Sir, under the Democratic Labour Party Government we have signed the loan agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank in terms of the Householder Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme which will address issues like drainage in the Cat's Castle area, Greenfield, in the City, and, Mr. Speaker, the Garden Land, in your constituency, also Allen View, in the Honourable Member for St. Thomas' Constituency, where we are going to reblock the area, widen roads and improve drainage and lighting, and have a total view. I am saying that the Barbados Labour Party had promised it for years, but the Democratic Labour Party is now about to deliver.

Mr. Speaker, let me go further. We have a lot of problems in the City, with stray dogs running around the ZR stand, Baxters Road and so on. We are happy to see that this is being addressed in the Budgetary Proposals, with improved legislation, as well as rodent eradication, which is a big problem in the City. Therefore, I congratulate the Honourable Member for St. John for addressing this issue in terms of rodent control of crops. I encourage the businesses in Bridgetown and other commercial areas to give back something to the community and assist the Government with bait.

Sir, this week we are going to be giving full support to a team of environmental students. The inspectors will be going around the Bridgetown area, Cat's Castle and Suttle Street, to do a massive cleanup in that area. I give it full support because we are talking about public health.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am sorry I must advise you that your time has expired.

Hon. P.M.T. TODD: I must say in closing, that the issue of cell phones will help to make sure that you no longer have people with two or three cell phones because the jury is still out in terms of safety. I understand that the health of those of you who wear them around your waist, could be affected by the radiation. So put them down and do not rely on so many cell phones. They are essential but you do not need that so much.

I thank you, and I will continue to represent the people of the City and to be a part of this Democratic Labour Party Government, and give this Resolution my fullest support.

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

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the privilege. I would try in my humble way, to say how proud I am to have been identified for a third consecutive election to represent the interest of the people of St. Thomas. With God's help, I will do it to the best of my ability.

Sir, I am happy to be associated with the Barbados Labour Party and the legacy that the Barbados Labour Party has left for the Democratic Labour Party as a Government to carry on, because of the vision of this Barbados Labour Party, and the usefulness of the projects that are being continued, for the development of human capital.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say, "Judge not, lest ye be judged", because there are a number of infelicities we know of, on This Side, that will be revealed with time. My main purpose and the first premise I want to make in my presentation, is to express my disappointment and dissatisfaction with some of the Honourable Members on the Other Side, who do not seem to be persons with a mother, a wife, a daughter, a stepdaughter, a stepmother or any female in their lives. Sir, I am so disappointed with the way that the males on the Other Side have been treating some of the honourable females on This Side. I heard all kinds of dirty, distasteful comments meted out...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, these were comments made from the Floor?

Miss C.Y. FORDE: We heard The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West yesterday, speak about political vampires, referring to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition; the political shams...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you referring to comments while Honourable Members were on their feet, and they went unchallenged?

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Sir, I heard them, and that is the reason why I feel disturbed. If I have the opportunity to ignore yesterday evening, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute, please. I think this is serious. We cannot have it both ways. You cannot have a situation where the convention is, that the Chair does not hear asides, you do not rise on points of order and then you expect to raise them in this manner. I really do not see how we can be asked to address it in this manner.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw if you did not hear the comment, but I still stand by my statement because I represent the women of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, I will carry the mantle for women, in this country, because we have fought long and hard as women to empower, or to carry the flag for Barbadian women. We will continue to fight the cause for women.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a moment please. We need Honourable Members to help create the environment for the Honourable Member to be heard. So please keep it down. This is the third time that I have had to say so for the day, for this session. Please let us keep it at a respectable level.

Honourable Member, please continue.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Sir, I heard people talk about coming from the grassroots, and the Barbados Labour Party did not see the need for the grassroots, through our former Leader, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter. I speak as a woman from the grassroots.

I speak on behalf of the Honourable Member for St. James North, who is not in his seat right now. I speak for the Honourable Member for St. George North, who is not in his seat, and there are so many others who have come from the grassroots, that for the past 15 years and previous, have served the people of Barbados well. I am a person who will give Jack his jacket. Therefore, I wish to comment on the statements made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, who spoke about the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, who never had any

contact with the communities and who did not do this or that, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy and proud to have been the teacher of the Honourable Member for St. Michael East's children, and if they fell, it is not through me as a teacher. It is through whoever parented them. Therefore, the Honourable Member cannot come in here and cast aspersions on me referring to me as the Minister of School Meals. The Honourable Member must be told that this recent term, and in all the 15 years that I would have worked with the Ministry of Education, there was never a pin found in children's food, or any other object, as has been the case within the last month in the School Meals Department. Therefore, the safety and health of the children of Barbados are paramount, and I have no problem being called the Minister of School Meals...

3.50 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please, I think we are reaching areas where we need not go. We are becoming unnecessarily personal and to that extent, unparliamentary. I will not tolerate it, either from Members when they are making contributions, neither will it be tolerated from Members who are shouting across this Honourable Chamber and distracting it to the extent that we cannot continue our business with decorum and with respect.

Honourable Members, you are taken to know the Standing Orders, so please let us comply and move along with our business.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I would not want to say anything that would reflect as an untruth on any of the Honourable Members, but I take my little notes to suit my Seventh Standard education. I can refer to them and I would not offend anybody but, if I so do, I am woman enough to apologise.

I only want to make the final point, Sir, because the Honourable Member for St. Michael East went on. He supports the policy of school children travelling free on the Government buses. He also spoke, Sir, about the - he said, "draconius" but I know he meant, 'draconian' - and wicked acts meted out to the people of Barbados by the Barbados Labour Party. The Barbados Labour Party created havoc in the education sector and closed more schools in its period of performance than in any other part of history in the island of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we came to Education and found schools in the worst condition ever, and the EduTech Project that comprises not only the technology but the teacher training and the rehabilitation of schools, has put Barbados on a level that is second to none in the Caribbean.

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Sir, even when you go internationally, Barbados is better than some of them. Therefore, I can speak proudly of the performance of the Barbados Labour Party in education. I am not going to dwell on that any further, except to say that the Leader of the Opposition made mention of some infelicities - I would call them, but if you wish me to use another term, I will correct that - at the Rural Development Commission where contracts have gone to the highest bidder, which is not in keeping with the standards in the Act that is usually used.

I know that there were very good workers from all over Barbados, who have served as contractors and have done excellent work because I see it every day across the length and breadth of the rural communities. Sir, houses were going then for \$56 000 and \$58 000 for the two-bedroom houses. Today, they have escalated to \$72 000 and more for the same two-bedroom houses.

Sir, the electricity was \$3 000 before. It has gone to \$10 000, and some are not in the constituencies that we would expect them to be in, but it looks to me that many are going to St. Philip, sections of St. Peter and St. George. There is one in Pleasant Hall, one in Maynards in St. Peter and two at Cottage in St. George. Therefore, Sir, the ones with the houses at River Land, Industry Hall and lots for \$2 500...

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: I have roads in the constituency that were started by the Rural Development Commission where, today, the people of Harper Valley in Rock Hampton Road, Jackson, St. Michael, who have trenches as deep as, from where this cupboard is to the ground, with nowhere to walk to get to their houses. They are falling by the minute because the Rural Development Commission has done its role but we cannot get the Barbados Water Authority to do what it has to do.

I have persons there, Sir, who have been on the list for many years to have houses repaired and they are being overlooked for persons who have now come in January because they are somebody's friends. Sir, we know the legacy of this Democratic Labour Party Government, families first, but I will get to that in a minute.

I want to take this opportunity to call right now for the resignation of the Boards of these institutions that continue to wreck havoc on the lives of Barbadians. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the Rural Development Commission, the Director who has served there for more than 11 years, is at home. Does he have families to attend to first? He has children, he has a mortgage, he has a car

loan, he has everything else and the cost of living is killing him too, but he is sitting at home, sitting.

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South is all emptiness; a big voice, so I am not going to pay attention to him. I just want to say that the people of St. Thomas are taxpayers, who are humble, who would help to repair their houses from the back and come forward, once they have the funds, Sir, but they too, need assistance from the Rural Development Commission to sink a well for a water-borne toilet.

Sometimes they only ask for the well. They have already put up the bricks and they have bought the various pieces of materials and equipment to be able to set up their toilets. Sir, nothing is happening for them now. Everything is going in a different direction, to the detriment of Barbadians because the Democratic Labour Party says in its Manifesto a lot about human development and how people should be treated.

The job security they speak about on page 35 now seems a thing of the past, as contract work take preeminence, wages are under pressure as workers are called upon to work harder, while earning less and conditions of work continue to decline, even in the public services of Barbados.

Sir, if you are talking about the decline of the Public Service and the inhumane treatment meted out to them, I can speak to it because I know that there are hundreds of civil servants who are cringing tonight because they do not know if they would be the next to be asked. Do you know why? It is assumed that they have supported the Barbados Labour Party.

It brings me to the point that we know in the Caribbean of itself, in this Region. There are persons who lose their lives because they do not support a particular Party. Some of them go home, if they miss and wear the wrong colour shirt. Mr. Speaker, are we going to polarise the people of Barbados and put them in that position, where they are not sure if they should go out and cast their votes? I have a difficulty with that, Sir.

Therefore, I know a lot of them are angry, especially the Honourable Member who is the Minister of Education, when in early February, before even the post was taken up, he is going to kick down doors, in order for him to be able to get documents that he has asked for that he had not received. If there are people in the Ministry of Education, who do not want to work with him, let them ask for a transfer, because he is coming; then, less than two months ago, to make the comment that the new Democratic Labour Party is being sabotaged, not only by ordinary civil

servants but some at the highest level; and people are going down at the Port and burning documents. What madness and what nonsense?

Mr. Speaker, I think it is wrong to create that kind of fear in the hearts of, not only civil servants, but Barbadians on the whole. I really have a passion for speaking for the ordinary man too, and to be able to make a case for all Barbadians who are worthy of living a proper quality life, and should be able to continue to work and live and do whatever they have to do in this country as long as they are doing it within the Law. I have a problem with the political tribalism and the victimisation that is taking place.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I am hurt that some of the contracts from CBC have now gone to a leading company in Barbados.

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Yes. It is Clico.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Board of CBC should resign now too.

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: I believe that the Sanitation Service Authority Board should resign, if the Democratic Labour Party does not have a proper policy of training Chairpersons and Members of the Board to let them know that there is something called due process, and they should continue to uphold the whole Barbadian outlook. We have pride and dignity and treat us accordingly.

4.00 p.m.

Sir, something is wrong with all the ability the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is talking about that is flowing through the veins of the persons on the Other Side. I have a problem with that.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that a large percentage of the insurance policies at the Insurance Corporation of Barbados are also transferred to CLICO. Who is CLICO? Why are we being faced with such serious challenges in this country over the period of six months?

Mr. Speaker, in the book of 1st Samuel Chapter 8, the people of Israel asked for a king. God told Samuel they would ask for a king but they are going to suffer as a result of asking for the king. God said that their children would have to go to war and there would be slavery and pestilence and so on. The people said they wanted a king. They were tired of this. Mr. Speaker, in verse 22 of the same Chapter, God said give them a king and the people of Israel suffered the consequences.

Mr. Speaker, Barbadians wanted change and they got change. Sir, we respect that change because none of us are here forever. Sir, I believe that the Democratic Labour Party, as a government, could have offered the people of Barbados a better package than what has been meted out to them during the past few months. They had their big expensive Swearing-in Ceremony at Kensington Oval, and I want the Minister of Finance to tell the people of Barbados what it cost to transform Kensington Oval to accommodate the Swearing-in Ceremony that normally would have been held in the dignified hall of the Governor-General's residence.

Mr. Speaker, I want to get some answers to some questions. Mr. Speaker, I am going to go into the Budget because I am a proud Barbadian. Mr. Speaker, I know that the policies of the Barbados Labour Party have been well sought-out because of the vision of the people on This Side.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make this document a document of the House. I believe it is already, but I would want to leave it in case there is need for it.

Mr. Speaker, I stayed here one day and heard the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, who forever goes into the trenches and the sewers and talks about rats and everything else, say that nothing was done for the people of Bridgetown.

Mr. Speaker, I am a country buck by name and nature, but when I step into Bridgetown, from the time I hit the Exmouth Junction by the gas station, I see the transformation of Bridgetown, and I love it. Mr. Speaker, if the Democratic Labour Party had done it, I would praise them for it because the people of the City deserve the best as is the people of rural Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I turn to page 27, "Bridgetown Transformed" in our Promises and Performance document 2003-2008. This is nothing that has been put in here at the last minute. These were in circulation since last year.

Mr. Speaker, in our Manifesto, we spoke about rebuilding Independence Square as the premier recreational spot in the City. The Democratic Labour Party flocks there often, and I am happy because we are not so biased as not to want to uphold the performance and the outstanding contributions of the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow. We spoke about completing the Lewis Wickham Boardwalk in the heart of Bridgetown. The former Honourable Member for the City, the Dame, always talked about putting people back to live in the City, hence the London Bourne Towers and the other communities that would have been there from an administration of the Barbados Labour Party before 2003.

Mr. Speaker, we spoke about starting the construction of a new multi-storey car park facility at Cheapside. This Government continues to support those policies because they were well thought-out and visionary.

Mr. Speaker, we spoke about recreating the Green in Jubilee Gardens by creating a modern inner city park where for years a mere asphalt surface served as a bus stand for thousands of hard-working persons.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the sweet part of the Budget on Monday presented by the Honourable Member for St. John, the Honourable Prime Minister, and I was saddened at the aspect of the \$150 000 amount for VAT free concessions for first-time owners and those who are living in their houses. Mr. Speaker, I know that a Manifesto is not usually the agreement on the side of the Democratic Labour Party because a former Democratic Labour Party Administration said that a Manifesto is not a social contract.

Mr. Speaker, when I see in their Manifesto on page 9 that within the first 100 days of the new Democratic Labour Party Administration, they would remove the VAT from building materials for houses valued up to \$400 000. There is a tremendous difference between \$400 000 and \$150 000. Their Manifesto did not have those stipulations about first-owners or owner-occupied, therefore I have a challenge with that.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on to mention other projects that the Barbados Labour Party has, but I would refer to the Budget.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to housing, I smiled sweetly because when I look at some estimates that I still have in my possession from 2005/2006, the same projects identified in this Budget on page 42 for the housing sector with all these houses that the Government would now construct as of August 1, 2008 on 51 lots at Greens, are the very same details here in my former estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I could make this a document of the House too. Mr. Speaker, this is a continuation of the projects of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, I support this because at the end of the day, the people of Barbados will benefit with these projects.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that they should take credit for having to have been able to write it in their Budgetary Proposals knowing that they copied it from our estimates. The same identical projects that are identified here in this document are projects which the Barbados Labour Party pursued; the 75 lots at Four Hill; the 85 at Greens; the 46 at Workhall; and the 18 at French Village.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, that is not all.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Never mind, Mr. Speaker. Persons have to go to lending agencies which take time. They have to go to attorneys to have everything properly regularised, which also takes time. This is the same project that the Barbados Labour Party had.

Mr. Speaker, I will go on because there are so many others that the Honourable Members have used that I believe I need to bring to the public's attention because our Manifesto spoke strongly to those issues.

Mr. Speaker, we looked at education and despite how much I am being accused of being the Minister of School Meals, the children of Barbados were never slow-poisoned yet under our watch. They received proper meals. They were properly fed and the Department functioned exceptionally well. I have received letters from members of staff who said we gave them the encouragement and the latitude to be creative and to do things differently. Mr. Speaker, I do not have a problem with any comments from That Side.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: That is all right, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well Ma'am.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: We are going to look at the cost of living. This is not the only place, Sir, for us to express our views on these issues. Sir, we heard about a new school to be constructed, and without having the name of the school, I know that it has to be the St. Ambrose School that the Barbados Labour Party Government worked so assiduously to bring the plans and so on of that school to fruition.

Mr. Speaker, the nursery schools that would be built are another project because we introduced universal nursery education. Mr. Speaker, I want the Minister of Education and Human Resources to give me word as to the status of the nursery school at Sharon where the Sharon Moravian Church has leased one acre of land.

This is going into the third year and we cannot get the lease out of the Ministry of Housing and Lands. Mr. Speaker, we have thousands of children, three years and up in that catchment area that is expanding, who want to go to school. These are poor people's children whose parents have to pay hundreds of dollars for them at nurseries.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I want to lend my support to the initiative for the disabled and the vulnerable in the society because that is a continuation of the projects of the Barbados Labour Party. The disabled and the vulnerable in the society are the persons whom we have been targetting in our projects for the alleviation of poverty.

Sir, the Honourable Minister for Social Care spoke overseas last week about welfare and said that too many people are on the list and so on. Mr. Speaker, this Barbados Labour Party provided a Welfare-to-Work Programme. Mr. Speaker, agencies like the Urban Development Commission, the Rural Development Commission, the Small Business Association, the Skills Training Board, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and other institutions instituted training and have lifted hundreds of those people who were below the poverty line into employment and self-employment so that they could fend for their family.

Mr. Speaker, I support the children travelling on the Government buses for free. This is another project the Barbados Labour Party instituted.

4.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we started to do all the work for a dedicated bus system approximately three years ago, and the former Honourable Minister of Public Works and Transport instituted a pilot project in the northern zone for the Alma Parris, Coleridge and Parry and Alexandra Schools. Sir, this started to work, but the fact that the buses at the Transport Board were so limited, was what inhibited us from putting it into full swing, as it impacted on the rest of the traveling public.

Sir, I want to speak boldly now for the people of Clifton Hill, Bibby's Lane, Hothersal Turning and those communities where, for six years, I have been asking for a small government bus to transport the people of those communities, who are at the tail-end of a bus coming from St. Joseph into Bridgetown. Sir, these people have to rely on the pirates, and God helps them if any of those pirates were to get into an accident, because they are not insured for that purpose.

Sir, I support the school children riding freely on Government buses, but what happens to the children living in the Ivy, where there is not a transport board bus service? What happens to the children in Deacons, or the children in St. Thomas, who are the ones that really need the buses?

This Government has not shown me they have put anything in this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for new buses to be able to upgrade this project they have presented. Therefore, I am asking for buses to be sourced, so that the children of Barbados could travel safely to school. I believe all children should get an

opportunity to travel freely on Transport Board buses, where they would be able to get to school safely and do the productive things necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East would know better than anyone else in here how reckless those ZRs and minibus drivers behave sometimes. Sir, I would catch B85 anytime when Sam is driving through Jackson. Sam always drives carefully and cautiously, but the children do not want to travel with him.

Mr. Speaker, I support the summer camps. That is another continuation of the Barbados Labour Party's project. Sir, as I speak to the Youth Development Programme, where this would have been happening for the last 15 years, here are now no less than 35 summer camps in communities throughout Barbados. There are Church groups and NGO's that have summer camps going. Certainly, some of the Members of Parliament here, although they should not be charging the children, are charging children \$40 per camp at their campaign houses.

Sir, the point is that an effort is being made, for the first time, by those on the Other Side. We over here have always done it. We are accustomed to using our time, volunteering our services and our resources for free because, at the end of the day, any one child that we could save from being mentally, sexually or physically abused; any child that we could save from neglect, drug addiction, et cetera, would be a worthwhile life saved. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party supports this 100 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know whether or not those persons who are now part of the programme, who for the last 15 years have been offering their services for free, would be getting a stipend? I want to know if those persons who do it for a living, where every summer, Christmas and Easter, there are programmes offered by private people, would get some kind of concession? Sir, it makes it easier for those poor people's children who cannot get to one of the Government's camps, who is going to a private camp, to be able to attend camp without having to be bothered or harassed about finding any such funds.

Mr. Speaker, I came here with my integrity intact and I am going to leave with it intact. I trust that the comments made this evening would be enlightenment for more women in Barbados, who must be respected in the highest order, whether they are Members of Parliament, housewives, doctors, lawyers, teachers or even the cook in somebody's kitchen.

Sir, with the concessions that have been offered, the Barbados Labour Party has paved the way for those persons to be recognised. I am happy that the Government of the day would follow through with our programmes because, at the end of the day, it is about one Barbados and,

therefore, all Barbadians would benefit by the good services offered to the people, from the Barbados Labour Party, which are being carried on through the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, at the end of the day, the people of Barbados come first.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues on This Side and, indeed, with the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas and the conscience of the Honourable Members in general, in supporting this Resolution before this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, to my mind, this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals exemplifies the great connection between the philosophy of the Democratic Labour Party and the policies and programmes of the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, let there be no doubt that the policies and programmes of the Democratic Labour Party are deeply connected to its philosophies from which we have not moved away.

Mr. Speaker, we came to this Honourable Chamber this week with these Budgetary Proposals, against a backdrop of rising oil prices, great challenges in the domestic regional economic economies, particularly with our trading partners, the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom. Barbados, as a small open economy, certainly, is susceptible to the challenges created by these situations.

There has also been a case of high food prices. I believe the Honourable Member for St. John was extremely eloquent and factual in his opening statements when he looked at the economic challenges confronting Barbados today.

The Honourable Member for St. John was also pellucidly clear with respect to what we have inherited. I know, as was said before, people do not want us to continue harping on what we found, but the reality about it is that six months into this new Administration, we are still spending what I consider, perhaps, to be too much time in trying to clean up the mess we inherited. Sir, Barbadians must be reminded that, in many respects, that has been a stumbling block upon us implementing many of our programmes and policies.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to note that in this document we have been able to propose what many people in this Honourable Chamber and those I have spoken to in my Constituency of St. James South and the

wider Barbados consider to be, in many respects, revolutionary and visionary. These are policies and programmes that would help to transform this nation.

Mr. Speaker, we came to Government and found \$117 million of an unsigned arrangement on the ABC Highway.

Asides.

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, referred to and made as documents of this Honourable House a Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 2005 between 3S(Barbados)SRL and the Government of Barbados, and a Supplementary Memorandum of Understanding signed a few months later. Therefore, for the Honourable Member to state that the project on the ABC Highway proceeded on the basis of an unsigned documentation would be entirely inaccurate, and I ask that the Honourable Member be made to withdraw that statement.

This is a case where the Honourable Member knows better and, therefore, the only inference is that the Honourable Member is intentionally misleading this Honourable House, and that cannot be right.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am not sure in this case the Honourable Member mentioned the ABC Project. What we recognise though is that there is some dispute as to the effect of the documents which have been signed or unsigned. To that extent, Honourable Members are entitled, in my view, to express their view as to the effect of those documents.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Speaker, I will not dwell on that matter, I believe the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and the Honourable Member for St. Joseph could seek legal advice from the Honourable Member for St. George North, if they so desire. We would not make that such a serious point in this Honourable House today.

4.20 p.m.

We also had a situation where this Government had to bring to book \$35 million in road works, undertaken in St. Philip. Sir, not that it was not supposed to be done, but it is a case where the former Administration did not adequately book that expense.

We also had to clear \$33 million overdraft at the National Housing Corporation at a time when the Government of the day built, what I am told, six houses in six years. Mr. Speaker, every Wednesday when I am seeing my constituents, 75 per cent of the complaints relate to houses, the challenges of getting affordable housing in

Barbados today and a Government that was there for 14 years, with all the money at their disposal, could not make a dent in the housing market in Barbados, but in less than six months' time, we have been able to come and identify more house spots, brought more housing solutions than the Barbados Labour Party was able to do in 14 years.

Mr. Speaker, we are a responsible Administration. We had to clear \$27.8 million with the Transport Board, the Enterprise Growth Fund, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Hardwood Housing, for example. Sir, Barbadians and Members of this Chamber, in particular, must not lose sight of the kind of mess that we inherited in this country. Sir, it was not just a financial level of mismanagement. It was also the extent to which, over the 14 years, they had placed their key political operatives in some of the most important Government Departments and institutions so I am not surprised that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East can produce documents.

Sir, the Honourable Member has not provided all the background information, typical Barbados Labour Party style of casting aspersions on people's character without providing all the evidence. Sir, I am not surprised that the Honourable Member on That Side can still be receiving, perhaps, even copies of statements to be made by Ministers in this Administration before we even see them. Sir, you want to tell me that must continue in Barbados? You can accuse us of going on witch-hunts?

I did not hear the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, who has all of a sudden found his voice after nine years in the wilderness. I did not hear a speech from him when the former Government fired the top four managers at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and there was not a squeak from him and he has the temerity to come in here and accuse this Government of going on a witch-hunt. What we are seeking to do is restore the Public Service of Barbados to a higher level of good management. This is no political witch-hunt. We have all suffered at the hands of the former Administration.

I heard people in here comment about this Budget in somewhat negative terms but this, to my mind, is the first time that I have seen such wide-ranging consultations by a Prime Minister in the preparation of a budgetary statement. It was never before done in the history of Barbados.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter who ruled this country for 14 years, only consulted with the private sector. He only consulted with those who he took to Sherbourne once a year to show them what he was going to do and then get their blessing on them. You cannot serve God and the man at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, this Democratic Labour Party Administration, led by the Honourable Member for St.

John, consulted with a wide cross-section, the vendors, the fishermen, the private sector, the unions, the Churches, the women's organisation, the men's organisation and even, I believe, the consumer body that only has one member. It was a commendable position taken by the Honourable Member for St. John and this is, certainly, in keeping with the manner in which this Democratic Labour Party Administration has been operating from day one.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Thomas a moment ago ask about the cost of hosting the Swearing-in Ceremony at Kensington Oval, and talked about the way you used to go up to the Governor-General's residence and, Sir, no disrespect to the Governor-General's residence, but that is a place for a select few. We took a position that we garnered our power and authority from the people of Barbados and we were having a ceremony that was in keeping with that connection. We did not believe that a swearing-in ceremony for a new government should be one where you have to fly to Miami and buy US\$500 gowns and all the fancy makeup that is put on at 6:00 o'clock in the morning to go to a ceremony at 3:00 o'clock. We believed that we needed to expose average Barbadians to the opportunity to come and stay in connection with the people that they elected to serve them in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this cannot be a case of going to the public, asking them for votes and their support, win a seat and then walk away and could only listen to a select few who pay your bills, your campaign and what not. Within this document, this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, we have spoken well to the issue of governance. The Honourable Member for St. Michael East stressed on this a lot yesterday; integrity legislation, governance but we, as a responsible Government, will not be rushed. We will not be forced into doing anything. They will not set our agenda. We made a commitment in our Manifesto to introduce integrity legislation. We spoke to the issues of governance and the various facets of it. We have put together a team led by an independent Senator and outstanding men and women in this society of the highest order of decency and character to come up with what we consider to be good integrity legislation.

Sir, coming into this Chamber and producing the first page of your asset declaration gets you no further than the front page of the newspapers. We need to stop making a mockery of this Parliament. Bring page 2 and page 3 of your assets...

Mr. SPEAKER: I recognise the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order and on a point of privilege. First of all, on the point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading

this Chamber. I take serious and deep offence at his suggestion that matters have not been produced when the Honourable Member, who has been the subject of all kinds of investigations for all kinds of illicit and undue proceedings could want then...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let her finish. Honourable Member, just ignore the asides. I am just trying to understand what you are saying. You took offence at what suggestion?

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: On his indicating that there has been an incomplete declaration. Mr. Speaker, I made a serious declaration in here. I also expect you to protect the rights of Honourable Members in here. The imputation is that I am dishonest and I am not going to put up with that from anyone who has been the subject and victim of other kinds of allegations.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I cannot agree with the interpretation. What I heard the Honourable Member say was that coming in here and making your declaration, essentially making your assets available, takes you no further than the first page of the paper.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Let us call for Hansard, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is no need to call for Hansard. He said page 1 and he said page 2 and page 3 and I am not going to put up with it from him.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member allows me to explain myself further, perhaps she can be enlightened.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: No, Mr. Speaker, I have asked for a ruling.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is no point of order with respect on that point. What is the second point?

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I need to clarify that a little bit further.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I would like to make a formal request for a copy of the Hansard of the particular comments that were made by the Honourable Member for St. James South. I am asking for it as a point of privilege. Sir, the ruling can come later this evening, but I want a copy of the Hansard relating to the comments which I have found to be offensive.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the Honourable Member wants a copy of Hansard, you are entitled to a copy of Hansard at

any time but I have made my ruling on the matter, and we will proceed.

4.30 p.m.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: The Rules of this House do not permit me to get a copy of Hansard of any other Member's speech. It only permits me to get my own. Therefore, you have a duty, particularly where I have raised that a matter is in dispute, to summon the Reporters to provide the relevant part of Hansard, such that it can be reviewed by yourself with the advice of the Clerks, and that I will have the opportunity to address it too. These are the Rules of this House that have been in existence for a long time.

Mr. SPEAKER: This is my final ruling on this matter. I have listened to your submission. I have made my ruling on the matter based on the information, and as far as the Chair is concerned the matter is at an end. If the Honourable Member wishes a copy of Hansard, yes, you may get it, and I hereby grant permission to make it available to the Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member for St. James South.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: This issue of Honourable Members seeking to upstage others by passing Declaration 1 on the Floor of Parliament is, perhaps to my mind, a very serious matter. I believe, and a couple of things led to this, (1) as an elected Member of Parliament if I am to declare my assets, I believe that it ought to be declared to an authority that is in a position to keep them in a confidential manner. I do not believe that any one of us should come in here and declare our assets to the entire world.

There are some serious security issues that are at risk there, and I will speak to those. If you are going to come in here and do that, be prepared to state the currency, be prepared to indicate the auditor who did the work, tell us the value of them, and provide supporting evidence. Beyond that, as far as I am concerned, it is nothing but a charade and a desperate attempt to garner some support, when instead we could be spending time in here discussing serious issues that affect the lives of our children, neighbours and constituents.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East came here with a document, perhaps, about 235 pages thick, perhaps, prepared by the former Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, and did not in the three hours on the Floor, to my mind, seriously challenged or provided any alternative to the excellent programme policies put forward by the Honourable Member for St. John.

This Party has always stood steadfast for education as a tool for upward mobility in this country, and this

Democratic Labour Party Administration has shown the public of Barbados, and this Honourable Chamber, how we will be reconnecting with that policy and wider Barbados. I did not hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East get up and challenge us in anyway, shape or fashion, about the revolutionary changes we are making to the Student Revolving Loan Fund. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, like so many of those on the Other Side, nor their families, did not have to go to the Student Revolving Loan Fund to educate themselves. We have constituents who had to struggle, borrow from Tom, Dick, Harry, Mary and Jane to educate their children. Sir, when this Administration can come here in the year 2008, and say we are going to raise the Student Revolving Loan limit to \$100 000, I think we should be commended. Sir, when you are not sure from where you came and where you want to go, you are bound to waffle all over the place.

Sir, I am satisfied, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that our changes in respect of the wider range of courses that can be accommodated under the Student Revolving Loan Fund, our changes say that if you have a piece of property you can put it up as a surety. You do not need personal guarantors, but when we should be getting support for such revolutionary changes, we are getting all kinds of spurious media-grabbing comments made in this Honourable Chamber.

I think that we need to be very serious about our work here in this Chamber, and should stop trying to score cheap political points. The Elections are over. The people of Barbados on January 15 voted for the vision of a blessed Administration.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John, in his presentation, spoke well to the issue of accelerating training and retraining of teachers in Barbados. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Thomas talk all over the place, down to depths that none of us would want to sink to, and did not have the temerity to stand up and say, I support that measure. Let your conscience be your guide.

Sir, we are committed to building two new nursery schools, and will start construction this financial year, then the school bus service. How much more revolutionary you can get? This is something the people in Barbados wanted for a long time.

Sir, come September all school-aged students can ride the bus free of cost. Do you know what effect that has among working-class families in Barbados, in particular, \$400 a year for a child taking one bus, \$750 a year in savings for a child taking two buses, and Honourable Members on the Other Side are saying we have not done anything for poor people in this country, and we have pushed up the cost of living and what's not.

Sir, a lady who now has three children to send to school is able to save at least \$100 per month in bus fare. That is commendable by any measure in this country. On This Side we have men and women who listen to their constituents who are in tune with reality. We are not about the glitz and glamour. We are about serious business.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: The Honourable Member talked about the Government not taking care of the most vulnerable in our society, but there are increases in pension benefits, increases in benefits for the disabled and increases in welfare grants. These may not be exciting and appealing to Honourable Members on That Side, because they cannot connect with the most vulnerable in this society.

Sir, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Andrew in here a few minutes ago spending 37 per cent of his time defending the legal profession, and the increases in professional fees, \$2 500 per year for an attorney.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: I do not know if that is what the Honourable Member charges for sending a text message to his clients, but for most of them, that is short change. The harsh reality is about - I have heard others in other places behave as though increasing professional fees for attorneys from \$750 to \$2 500 a year is going to stop people from buying food. It does not. Any lawyer in this country who uses that as an excuse to jack up his fees, to my mind, is a very dubious and questionable character. That is my view. The fees have not been raised for many years and there is no reason...

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: There are several attorneys on my side too.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please keep the asides to a level. We need to be able to hear what the Honourable Member is saying.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: On a point of order. I do not want to interrupt the Honourable Member.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have. Continue, make the point, please.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: The Honourable Member has indicated that certain things I said, insinuating that as an attorney-at-law, I am a dubious character. That is what he said. I would ask that those comments about a dubious

character be withdrawn immediately. I do not know if he is referring to Honourable Members on That Side.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member did not refer to any Honourable Member in this House specifically. I do not know to whom he was referring.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: The Honourable Member said that if any Member could say what I said he would have to be a dubious character.

4.40 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, my position is that any Member of such professions who uses the increase in professional fees as an excuse to charge clients...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I ruled on the point of order, so please continue.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Thank you very much, I am guided by you.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew knows that I will not do such to him. He has supported me well in the last Election. He is a constituent of mine and, I believe, he gave me his X, so he knows that I will not do such to his character.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: This Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals in respect of housing benefits, for a former Administration that in 14 years did so little for housing - We came and within less than five months, were able to provide housing in Barbados, at a minimal cost, to 1 725 families.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Sir, this includes more than 100 families in my Constituency of Haynesville, men and women who, perhaps, thought they could never own a piece of this rock, but with the stroke of a pen, can now boast that they own a piece of Barbados. They have an asset that they can pass on to future generations.

The Honourable Member for St. John who leads this Party, to my mind, and the entire group, have been able to make tremendous strides in respect of taking care of the most vulnerable groups in this society. Therefore, in this Budgetary Statement we have certainly done great work in respect of housing.

The issue of removing the Value Added Tax (VAT) on the first \$150 000 of input cost to housing, translates to a savings of about \$7 500 to the average poor person in this country. Many more Barbadians from that income grouping will now be able to go and work and do whatever they have to do to earn a piece of the rock.

We have sought to make housing more affordable. We have listened to the people who put us in power on January 15. We have stayed in touch with them. We looked at what we have in terms of resources and, to my mind, this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals encapsules it all very well.

I am only very disappointed today that the Honourable Member for St. Peter who said in here a few weeks ago that he is to blame for everything and all roads led to him - As a matter of fact, you know the Honourable Member for St. Andrew only speaks when that one is absent.

Sir, I am very sorry that the Honourable Member for St. Peter is not in his seat here today, so that he could really be brought up to scratch in respect of the enlightened policies, programmes and social revolution, which this Democratic Labour Party Government has been bringing to this country.

Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that the Government of Barbados has made tremendous strides in the six months. There is still a lot of work to be done. We recognise, certainly, in respect of the revenue earning side, the new opportunities that exist, for example, in respect of the diaspora and our brothers and sisters abroad, in the six months.

Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate the point that was made earlier. The former Administration treated Barbadians who went abroad and lived for many years and sought to return home, like they were aliens from Mars. Sir, because one friend or former acquaintance of the Honourable Member for St. Peter brought in a Mercedes Benz duty-free and all sorts of things, the Honourable Member for St. Peter then sought to penalise all Barbadians who were making wonderful contributions back to this economy. This Government has taken a position that we will treat them with respect. This is why there is such heavy emphasis on the Diaspora.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: This is why there is such emphasis on identifying the skills and resources of Barbadians who are living abroad who can contribute to the development of this economy. We will not treat them like strangers. They are aunts, uncles, relatives and they have a right to come back home and bring in their personal effects,

and a motor car, and get them delivered to their homes in a timely fashion. I commend the Honourable Member for St. John for this resolution that he is taking.

Mr. Speaker, there are those who have complained bitterly - I am only hearing about two on the Other Side - about taxes on alcohol, tobacco and gambling. If the Honourable Members on the Other Side take offence to the tax, well so be it, but on This Side, our consciences are clear. We are satisfied that these are areas that the taxpayers of Barbados can benefit more from, and I support the measure on the part of the Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, for increasing taxation in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up, I do not believe that the Proposals have, in any way, been onerous. I believe it really has been a budget that all Barbadians can benefit from in their quiet moments, especially the Honourable Members on the Other Side.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East stood up in here this morning and gave us full support, albeit that he has been subsequently summoned to a meeting in the Leader of the Opposition's office to be reprimanded.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you need to conclude at this stage. Your time has expired.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East has my full support like he has given us his.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your time has expired. I thank you.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I think this is a good time at which to remind Members that though of course the Chair is institutionally hearing impaired, other people are not. Therefore, your asides are heard by other Members, including the members in the Public Gallery, and members beyond these walls, and we need to bear that in mind because, in the final analysis, Members, these asides reflect on this Honourable House.

The other point you need to bear in mind is that in the same way you need to be accommodated when you are making your contribution so that you can be heard, when other Members are making theirs, they need that kind of

accommodation. Essentially, what goes around, comes around. Please bear this in mind, not only when you are speaking but when in your seats.

Thank you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended for 15 minutes until 5.10 p.m. today.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the Sitting be now suspended until 5.10 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

4.48 p.m.

Wednesday, July 09, 2008

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

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

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a privilege to speak this afternoon in support of this Resolution with respect to the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals delivered on July 7, a couple of days ago, by the Honourable Prime Minister.

Sir, in the Preamble to the Resolution, I note that the statement reflects a carefully designed strategy to protect the poorest, our pensioners, those with disabilities, those earning below \$15 000 per year and our youth, from the impact of inflation.

Sir, I note that the Proposals contain exciting programmes in housing, health, education, energy, agriculture, social and youth development, and tourism. Against that background, Sir, I would like to offer a few comments with respect to my own observation of the Proposals and how they would impact upon Barbadians, particularly the people of St. Philip South.

Mr. Speaker, if you would, please allow me the latitude, because this is the first occasion I have had to respond to a budgetary proposal in this Honourable Chamber, to express my gratitude to the people of St. Philip South who on January 15 reposed their confidence in me in a large majority.

Sir, January 15 also saw not only an echo for change throughout Barbados but, certainly, it began an era of change in terms of representation in St. Philip South. Mr. Speaker, we have moved toward a representation where I, like my Party, do not wish Barbadians to come to us cap in hand. Sir, that is why these measures are meant to alleviate certain difficulties that are presently being experienced, and I will expound more on that a bit later. Sir, I want, like the Democratic Labour Party, to have constituents who can provide for themselves physically, emotionally and financially. In that regard, Sir, I support and echo many of the comments made on This Side. Mr. Speaker, I believe that these Proposals are in sync with my philosophy and my vision for my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin with education because I still believe that education provides the easiest and the most favourable opportunity for poor people in this country and for all of us really to develop ourselves and to ensure that we maximise our potential.

Sir, what we have done here in these Proposals? Mr. Speaker, I know that I may be regurgitating some of what has been said before, but it merits being said again because some on the Other Side seemed not to understand or cannot understand what these Proposals are seeking to achieve. Mr. Speaker, maybe with some assistance from myself in my own easy English manner they would understand what these Proposals are meant to achieve.

Sir, were it not for the Student Revolving Loan Scheme, I would not have been able to go to Law School. Sir, I am sure that there are many Barbadians like myself who would not have been able to further their education were it not for the Student Revolving Loan Scheme.

Sir, we have recognised that there has been an increase in the cost of education and we have decided that we will take the limit up to \$100 000 over four years, which is commendable. Sir, we have removed the necessity for persons to have a surety if they can provide some realty as security. Again, what we are trying to do is to make life as easy as possible for those who want to utilise the Student Revolving Loan Scheme. Sir, we are giving a grace period of two years after completion of the studies.

Sir, to show that I am fair in my thoughts and do not mind speaking like it is from my heart, maybe we are a bit too generous in having a 30-year programme, but we have decided that 30 years is what we will give in terms of the repayment of the loan and we should be commended for that. Sir, not only that, we have decided that we would take other measures in terms of education. We want to ensure that the Audio Visual Aids Department is utilised more than it is presently being utilised. We are working on the refurbishment of certain schools. I know the Proposals speak to the Lodge School and Harrison College, but it

does not stop there because this is an ongoing programme. Even now during the summer, there are lots of schools that are having repairs done.

Sir, education, for us, still remains number one. I believe that 20 per cent of our Budget, about \$290 million out of our Budget, goes to education. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that to whom much is given, much is expected. Mr. Speaker, I want to urge all Barbadians who are recipients of free education now, from pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary, not only to utilise our educational system and maximise the benefits thereon, but to give back to the community when they are finished. Mr. Speaker, I say again that to whom much is given, much is expected, therefore, I want to urge a spirit of giving to all Barbadians who have benefitted from our educational system.

Sir, I say all the time that I am in to boys. I have three sons. I continuously say that we have to find some way to ensure that we address whatever issues there are in terms of our boys. I know that no scientific study has been conducted, but I am convinced, based on what I am seeing, that we probably need to look to see how we could motivate more of our boys so that they could come into the mainstream in terms of our educational system.

Sir, if you pass by the Springer Memorial School at night, you would see that if there are 600 students taking classes there, 500 of them are women. Sir, for some reason, it is very hard for us to get our boys, after they left secondary school, to go back to school and we need to find out how we could motivate them.

Mr. Speaker, quite often when we have opportunities for employment, the request is usually for three "O" levels or three CXC's or, in some cases, two CXC's. It is easier for me to find a young lady than it is to find a boy, or a young man in my community, and it concerns me slightly, so we need to address that.

Sir, I was a bit disappointed that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew could find fault in a programme that enables our young people between five and 15 years old not only during the summer, but during the Easter and Christmas vacations, to have supervised activities free of cost.

Sir, it amazed me that we could have placed some kind of a political connotation to what is, in fact, a seriously thought-out measure by this Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas said that there are programmes in place by the Ministry of Education. Sir, I will concede that even now there are programmes, but we are doing a comprehensive programme. Sir, yes, there is a programme now in St. MartinsMangrove where I believe the cost is \$30 for the

duration of the summer. I also believe that there is a programme at Bailey's School.

Sir, what I am saying is that we are going to ensure that whenever the children are on holiday, they would have supervised wholesome activities free of cost. Mr. Speaker, I do not understand how there can be any criticism of such a measure, and I am a bit disappointed, because I would have thought that when we come to this Chamber that we come to look after the people's business and when there are measures that are clearly in the people's interest, they should have the support of all. Mr. Speaker, I was a bit disappointed in that.

Similarly, Sir, I am a bit disappointed that we could have criticism of the Government's attempt to have a school bus system. Sir, I have on more than one occasion, and I am sure you have, received requests from constituents who have said: "Mr. Brathwaite, I need a bit of money because I do not have bus fare or lunch money for my child."

Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do is to ensure that our children, once they are in uniform or if they are going to the Barbados Community College or other institutions such as that and they have identification, could travel on the bus for free.

Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that they can travel for free so that if you have a child who is going from Rock Hall in St. Philip to the Coleridge and Parry School in St. Peter and he or she has to take two buses, his or her mother or father need not bother because the child could leave home every morning, five days a week, in uniform and travel free on the Transport Board buses come September 1, 2008. Sir, that is commendable.

5.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I do not understand, and I am a bit disappointed, that we could have some criticism on a policy like that. Mr. Speaker, I am confident because I know that the Honourable Minister of Transport would ensure that come September 1, there are adequate buses on the routes, so that we would not have bottlenecks at the various schools on afternoons.

Sir, I am under no illusion. I know there would still be some children who would opt to take the minibus because such is the minibus culture and we would not change that overnight. Sir, what we are saying, as a Government, is that even though this measure is in place, we will monitor what happens with the minibuses. We will ensure that if the behaviour of the children who continue to use the PSVs does not change, we would ban them from travelling on ZRs and minibuses.

Sir, we do not believe that culture is going to change overnight, and we know as parents that sometimes we have to make tough decisions for our children. Therefore, if that is what is required, we would have to make tough decisions for our children and, by extension, this country, Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I would not spend a lot of time on the matters that have been already dealt with by other Honourable Members during the course of today, but I turn to housing because this is another important concern in my Constituency. Sir, I have nurses, police officers, painters, labourers, et cetera. I have a book filled with names of people who come to me saying they are in need of housing. Sir, like I heard by some Honourable Members before, these people could produce letters and file numbers from the National Housing Corporation going back for a number of years. These people told me that they have been following up their requests for some time now, therefore, we as a Government want to put an end to that. We have said in our Manifesto that we would ensure there are 2 000 housing solutions. Sir, you would have heard from the Honourable Prime Minister that come August 1, we will start construction of houses, I believe 33 at Marchfield, which is about two minutes from my home; 44 at Work Hall; 51 in Greens; 40 in Four Hill, St. Peter, and 17 at French Village, St. Peter.

Mr. Speaker, most importantly, we said we want to ensure that a considerable number of these houses are reserved for small contractors under a government procurement programme for small enterprises. We said during our campaign, and in our Manifesto, that we want to reserve 40 per cent of the procurement of our services to small and medium-sized businesses. Sir, based on what we want to accomplish over the next five years, there will be lots of houses built in this country and, certainly, lots of opportunities, to ensure that small and medium-sized businesses could grow in this country.

Mr. Speaker, however, a word of caution to the Minister of Housing and Lands. The Honourable Member must ensure that he uses his office, not to continue to allow the same individuals who, for the last 14 years, have gotten fat through building houses across Barbados. The Honourable Member must now be creative and bold enough to allow new players into the market.

Mr. Speaker, I am not calling on the Honourable Member to allow players to come into the market, even if the prices do not make any sense, I am saying if there are opportunities, or that the Honourable Member must create opportunities to allow new players into the market.

Sir, I believe, one of the reasons I am here is to ensure that we create opportunities for more Barbadians to wealth creation. Therefore, if we continue to allow the same individuals, or the same companies, to get bigger and

bigger, as has happened on the Other Side, then we would be no better than they were. Therefore, I am saying this to the Minister of Housing and Lands. Sir, I am sure I would not have to say this to him too often because the Honourable Member is a good St. Philip person like me and therefore understands his responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, we said we would remove VAT on any house that costs \$150 000 or less. Sir, you would have heard my colleague and friend from St. James South saying that translates to about \$7 500 in savings. Sir, again we should be commended for that because we believe it is our responsibility. Sir, we have gone to Barbadians and promised them that we would deliver on our housing programme and I am confident we will deliver.

Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that the banks, the insurance companies and the attorneys in this country could work with us, to have a quick turnaround, so that our people could be housed as quickly as possible. Sir, whether it be the private sector or public sector, we must all gather our thoughts and our will and ensure that there is a quick turnaround in these transactions.

Mr. Speaker, let me use Rices, St. Philip, as an example. Sir, the roads in that development have been in for as long as I could remember, and I am yet to find out why the lots have not been allocated, yet every time the former Administration spoke about the number of lots they have available, they would include Rices. Sir, I have said to the present Minister to let us get rid of those lots quickly. I do not want to be driving up there and seeing empty lots anymore, and the Honourable Member has given me his assurance.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot leave the issue of housing without mentioning the fact that there are 44 lots in my Constituency and there is no doubt that some of my constituents would be afforded the opportunity to own homes near to Work Hall. I am fairly confident that this would happen. Sir, it makes no sense transporting people from St. Lucy into an alien culture like St. Philip, when, in fact, there are lots of people close to Work Hall, who are on my list. Sir, I look forward for the opportunity to be able to say to them that there is a housing solution for them in St. Philip.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of living is an issue for my constituents. Sir, one of the measures in the Budget is that we would remove the Environmental Levy on a basket of goods. The Government said it would be aggressive and, if necessary, it would introduce new players into the market. Sir, even before that happens, I would like to use this medium to ask the two supermarkets in my constituency, Emerald City, which I have seen you visiting once or twice, especially on Sundays and Trimart.

Sir, I am asking them not only to dwell on the basket of goods provided by us, but that they could use their own initiative. Sir, for example, Emerald City is one which has a 'Proper Pork' programme and so every week, or maybe twice a week they could have a sale. All I am asking is that they would provide opportunities to lower the cost, so that the people from Four Roads, St. Martins and Foul Bay, who walk or who drive to those supermarkets, would not have to bother going out of St. Philip because they could get good bargains in St. Philip.

Sir, furthermore, the people of St. Philip are loyal people. Once you are good to us, we would not go anywhere. Sir, I am sure that if these supermarkets were to heed my call, they would have a loyal cadre of continuous support from the people of St. Philip South and St. Philip as a whole.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, on the question of health because health matters to my constituents, I note that the proposal is that we will spend \$400 million developing the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and I support that wholly. I also support the fact that \$200 million from that \$400 million will come from the sale of shares, which are now in institutions, that when the maths have been done, that the money is best spent elsewhere, so I wholly support that.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the type of Government that we are, we have pledged that these shares are made available first and foremost to ordinary Barbadians. Again, Sir, there is a feeling in Barbados that Barbadians are not as investment conscious as they should be, so I am calling on Barbadians that when these shares come on the market, do not let them pass. It is better to purchase the shares that will grow from year to year than to keep your money in the bank, which pays you 2.5 per cent interest or what it is at the moment.

Mr. Speaker, I would have liked to see in the presentation some mention of the District Hospital in St. Philip, but I have no doubt that the Minister of Health will find a way to ensure that the deficiencies presently in the physical plant and elsewhere in the institution will be addressed. I am very confident that the Minister of Health will ensure that they are addressed in the fullness of time. I have every confidence in him, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, the Constituency of St. Philip South that I have the honour to represent is a rural constituency. We have farmers in Four Roads, in Kirtons, in Rices, in Ruby, in Union and we also have fishermen, so any attempt to improve the lot of farmers will receive my wholehearted support.

Sir, without looking at it, I believe there are more pages addressing issues with respect to agriculture in the presentation of the Honourable Prime Minister than any other topic in the presentation, and that reflects the seriousness with which we are taking agriculture. As a matter of fact, I believe it was the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West who said that if you can satisfy the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central with your agricultural proposal, then you know that you are on the right track and,

Sir, we are on the right track. We have decided that we will have an Agricultural Protection Bill. We have decided that we will ensure that the Wayside Vendors' Association that we will find land for them on a plantation so that they can grow their own produce.

We will not only allow them to grow their own produce but we will ensure that there are opportunities for them to market their produce because, Mr. Speaker, it gives us no pleasure when we see farmers in the newspapers with hundreds of bags of onions or tomatoes because of lack of proper planning or support and, again, we want to ensure that is a thing of the past.

Sir, I support wholeheartedly the measures with respect to the agricultural sector.

Mr. Speaker, one of the measures that brought me the greatest pleasure is this. Sir, one of my favorite constituents in Diamond Valley owns a boat and I remember her saying to me a few months ago that the Government needs to get a crane because it costs her too much to get her boat taken out of the water and that, sometimes, she feels like she has to beg to get it done. I am so proud to be able to look her in the eyes and say to her: "Fear not, your wishes have been granted by this Government." Sir, it gives me great pleasure to say this. We intend to acquire a crane to ensure that boat owners and fishermen do not have to be beholden to the private sector for the large prices charged from time to time and ensure that boats can be taken out of the water for repairs, or during the hurricane season, where necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I also note that we will be giving concession for tractor and associated equipment imported free of taxes. Sir, where you live, I am sure you have tracks of lands that you can see there is an issue in terms of finding the plough from time to time. In fact, in my district in Marchfield Village Road there are a couple of tracks of land that I would welcome a plough to come through and return these tracks of lands to agricultural production.

Sir, I am told of occasions where developers have gone to Miami and bought water heaters as opposed to using heaters from Solar Dynamics because they felt it was cheaper to use water heaters. Sir, as far as they are

concerned, they will make more money upfront. Sir, that is scandalous and I am saying that the Government can now use its moral persuasion, and we need to address that. Sir, let us use our clay, and there is no reason why we could not force them to acquire valves made locally.

Mr. Speaker, there is a young man in Dr. Estwick's Constituency, and I have three of his paintings in my home. In fact, he learnt to paint in prison. He discovered his talents in prison and I would love to see his painting on prints and placed in lots of these new hotels and create opportunities for individuals such as that.

I am saying to the Government that it needs not wait for one year, that any new large development that requires approval; any large new hotel development that requires approval, we should ensure that they use as much of our local manufacturing products as possible.

Mr. Speaker, if they are asking for concessions, we should ask them to give them something in return, not just take the money out of the country or keep the money in the country, so that they could declare how much money they make. Sir, we need to address that.

Mr. Speaker, I will not ask for any latitude in terms of time. I did not realise that 30 minutes could come so quickly.

5.40 p.m.

Sir, in closing, this has been an easy Budget to support, because the measures are so easy. Let me explain what I mean by easy. The measures are palatable to Barbadians. The measures are so meaningful to ordinary Barbadians, that it is easy for me to support.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew's first question was, what is in the Budget for him? On the other hand, my concern was, what is in the Budget for the people of St. Philip South, and there is much in it for them.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, as is customary, let me first thank my constituents, the good people of Christ Church West, who reposed their confidence in me again, the people in the North East of the Constituency, Sargeant's Village, down to the people of South West, Hart's Gap, Hastings, Balmoral Gap, Bonnetts and all of those places. Sir, I always make it clear that as the Parliamentary Representative for the Constituency of Christ Church West, I do not only come here to support the

people who voted for me, but also those who did not vote for me and those who did not vote at all.

Sir, I think that is absolutely important, and Honourable Members on all sides of this House should remember that. It is not only about what you have come to do for your Party's members, but it is about what you have come to do for the people of Barbados. I think that is one of the most important tenets of being a good Member of Parliament.

Sir, if I was to sum up the presentation made by the Honourable Member for St. John on Monday, I would have to call it a vicious tax grab. Any right-thinking person in this country who could have seen the quantum of taxes added on to the burdens of the people of this country, tax after tax, would have to agree that it was nothing more than a vicious tax grab, and anybody who would say otherwise would be stifling their conscience.

Sir, I am going to make another point on the matter. The Honourable Member took pains to talk about revenue gains and revenue losses, and gave an estimated revenue gain of \$22 million. I think that he has under-estimated the revenue gains and he has over-estimated losses, which make this tax grab even more vicious and unconscionable. I am going to explain how it is.

Sir, Let me go first to the Estimates. In the Estimates of 2008-2009, the Environmental Levy, at 1.5 per cent, is estimated to net the Treasury \$40 million. This information can be found by anybody in the Estimates on Page 3. If an Environmental Levy at 1.5 per cent is expected to net \$40 million, how could you increase the Environmental Levy, while reducing a small basket of goods, but extending the levy to things made in Barbados, then turn around and suggest that the Environmental Levy would only net \$3.5 million, the ad valorem aspect of it. It cannot be true.

The revenue gains are totally under-estimated. The revenue gains, based on the Estimates of this House at 1.5 per cent, \$40 million, increased by almost 100 per cent, is an estimated revenue of nothing less than \$20 million from the Environmental Levy. That is the first part. Sir, \$20 million added to the expected gains, takes it to \$124 million.

Sir, in addition, the Honourable Member spoke about the losses of VAT on lower income housing. The Honourable Member for St. John suggested, for it could only be a suggestion, that \$11 million would be the losses on a \$150 000 house. Sir, \$150 000, including house and land, indicate that the actual material, the 15 per cent VAT, cannot be anymore than \$15 000.

If you are giving back \$15 000 on a \$150 000 house, to an equivalent of \$11 million, you will have to build 500

houses at least to make a return of \$11 million, and that cannot be done in one year. Sir, to build 500 and give back a 15 per cent VAT on each, that will take a period of three to five years minimum. All of these are worked out based on an annual basis. That means that the revenue losses will not be \$82 million, but more like \$62 million.

Sir, if you take the fact that the revenue gains have increased to \$124 million, and the revenue losses decreased to \$64 million, the actual gain by the Government of this country, because of that tax grab is \$60 million. That is what all those on the Other Side are deciding to come to this Honourable House and support. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy is going to support a tax grab, where his constituents have to suffer by a \$60 million tax grab over and above all of the other taxes you have to pay in this country.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip South is going to support a tax grab where his constituents have to pay an additional \$60 million over and above all of the other taxes you have to pay. You do not have to take my word for it. Do the mathematics. It is straight mathematics. Do the mathematics and you will see what I am talking about is perfectly true.

Sir, I cannot believe that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central could sit down and agree that these onerous and vicious taxes should be levied on these people, over and above all the other problems.

Sir, on the night of January 15, the Honourable Member for St. John was interviewed and he said, cost of living, cost of living, cost of living. Sir, what we did not know is that he was going to increase the cost of living, increase the cost of living, and increase the cost of living. I did not understand it at the time, but I understand it now. That is why he said it three times, because he was going to triple the cost of living in this country. Sir, the mind boggles about it.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time when inflation in this country was 2, 3 or 4 per cent. Now we are approaching double figure inflation in this country. The Honourable Member for St. John has given impetus to it, like pouring gasoline on flames. Let the cost of living run rampant throughout this country. He is going to triple it because of the cost of living, cost of living, cost of living. Instead of trying to combat the cost of living in this country, he has now come with a major tax grab. It is absolutely ridiculous.

5.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of doing business in this country has gone up since the "black Monday" of increasing the price of diesel, and then turned around and gave us another "black Monday" in a Budget. Sir, what he

has done now is that he has given "black Monday" squared and he has increased the cost of doing business throughout this country. Therefore, nobody could say that the cost of doing business in Barbados is coming down because it is not. It is going up.

Sir, the cost of diesel has gone up due to an increase of 77 per cent. The fact that diesel went up means that the cost of every single delivery that you would receive at your business has gone up.

Then he turned around and increased the cost of professional fees and the cost of every small shop licence to sell liquor. Mr. Speaker, the cost of business is through the roof. Sir, you and I know that if you have a cost and you have to put on a profit, if you increase something by 1 per cent and you put on the profit, the eventual final resulting cost is not going to be 1 per cent plus cost. It is going to be 1 per cent plus profit, which ends up to be 2 per cent.

Therefore, it means then that even an Environmental Levy, when you put on a 1 per cent and then a person puts profit on top of that 1 per cent, the increase becomes 2 per cent and 2½ per cent. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy knows what I am saying is true. Mr. Speaker, to come back to it, I am very surprised and extremely disappointed in what we were subjected to here on "black Monday".

Mr. Speaker, when you get a registration it is \$2 500. I am going to quarrel about that, but my other colleagues in the various professions reminded me that there are some young practitioners who have difficulty in their first year making ends meet. Mr. Speaker, on top of that, you know that if you do not pay your registration by January 31, what happens? You have to pay double. Sir, it means that all of a sudden now, instead of having to pay a registration fee when, say for argument sake that you did not make enough money to be able to meet the \$2 500 commitment, and January 31 comes, it is not \$2 500 anymore, but it is \$5 000, double \$2 500. This is what a new accountant or lawyer would have to look for, if they did not have enough funds to make the registration by January 31. I find that extremely onerous.

Then, on one hand to have the gall and the audacity to come and foist upon the people of Barbados such a great tax grab is one aspect to it and then, on the other hand, give way to what I could call nothing more than a cop-out. Sir, for the Honourable Member for St. John to have completely washed his hands of the pricing of diesel, gasoline, LPG, and natural gas in this country, I would name that straight and simple a cop out.

They have made a decision that the first "black Monday" they spent two months political capital. Therefore, not only did he have to come back and reverse himself on

the matter and give subsidies, which I was against, but then turned around and so as not to have to go through the horror of another “black Monday” he has now passed the buck onto to the Ministry of Trade, saying and I quote:

“The price of petroleum products and LPG will be adjusted monthly by the Ministry of Trade, on the advice and vision of energy, based on the prices paid for these products by the importers.”

Sir, do you know what that means? The average person in the street may not understand what that means, but I am going to make it clear to them. It means every single time there is a price increase, it is going to get passed on to them. It means that Government and Cabinet has decided to act in a manner some people would call irresponsible.

Instead of trying to protect the people of this country from the ravages of the increases in oil, gas and LPG, the Ministry of Trade would set it and however the price increase goes, they set the price and it goes through. Sir, that is what that means and that is going to be a further problem for the people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, another reason why I would have to say this is a vicious tax grab is because as prices increase in this country, the greatest beneficiary is the Government.

Asides.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, if any Member in here does not know that Government is the greatest beneficiary of increases in prices in the country, they might as well leave now because they do not understand anything about economics, running a government, or running a country.

Sir, as prices increase, the Government takes a greater cut. That is a fact. The cut remains the same but the value is based on a percentage, so Government is the greatest beneficiary of price increases. As the cost of living increases, and prices continue to increase, Government continues to do well, in terms of its tax take. Then, further to come and take an additional \$60 million on top of increased income, could only be a vicious tax grab. I am going further on the matter.

Sir, on the matter about NPC - I heard the Honourable Member for St. John say that the NPC will be taken out of the Fair Trading Commission. I have mixed feelings about this because, first, as you know, I was the Chairman of NPC, and I know that the NPC struggled by not having the resources to be able to expand the grid. The reason it did not have the resources is because by being under the Fair Trading Commission, it could not get an increase in rates even though it was having to pay a lot

more for the product, which is the natural gas that it bought from the BNTCL.

Sir, my concern is, who will regulate the standards of service, if the Fair Trading Commission is not to regulate the NPC? I put the people of this country on notice. From the time the Fair Trading Commission is no longer regulating NPC, and we now have the Ministry of Trade setting the prices of NPC, I guarantee you that the price for natural gas in this country will go up. Sir, this means that there will be an additional cost of living problem for the people of this country.

Do you see the irony of all this and the energy prices? Mr. Speaker, the increase in gas and diesel prices has meant that people have used their cars less, but now the Highway Tax means that you have to pay more to register the car. Therefore, you are now having to pay more in road taxes, when you are actually using your vehicle less, Sir, that is the absolute irony of the matter. When people should have increases, 30 per cent, 40 per cent, 50 per cent on a car that they are now using less because of high gas and diesel prices. I think something is wrong with the system.

Sir, for the Honourable Member to come and raise or expect to raise - but, I think he is going to raise more - \$46 million from those increases to pay for a highway that cost \$114 million, is essentially raising the cost, just from that tax grab in two years, an entity that this Administration had hoped to pay for that in a longer time of 25 years, which would have made a much smaller increase, and a much smaller tax burden on the people of this country.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, that presentation really smacks of a hopeless nature. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member did not give people in this country any hope whatsoever. Sir, sometimes the people in this country want to hold on to some hope and they would go and buy a Lotto ticket and play a slot machine with the hope that maybe they could hit a jackpot.

Mr. Speaker, he has even now taken that hope away from them because if a person were to hit a Jackpot of \$100 000, they have to give the Democratic Labour Party \$25 000 out of that \$100 000. Mr. Speaker, many people I have talked to told me it makes no sense playing Lotto anymore.

Mr. Speaker, the lady that won \$2 million yesterday was double lucky. Mr. Speaker, she was double lucky because she was lucky to win \$2 million and she was lucky that the onerous tax has not kicked in yet, so she is a double lucky woman. Mr. Speaker, that woman would have had to hand over \$500 000 to the Democratic Labour Party Administration if she had not been lucky enough to win it

before that measure had kicked in, so I would have to commend her on being a double lucky person.

Mr. Speaker, the betting and gaming industry in this country represents the employment of some 2 000 people. The Honourable Members for St. Michael South Central, St. Michael South and Christ Church West, those surrounding constituencies of the Garrison Savannah, would understand how much and how intensive an employer that facility is. Many young men in those constituencies surrounding the Garrison are employed by the Barbados Turf Club.

Mr. Speaker, if you decide to go down to the Turf Club and buy a Forecast or a Trifecta and you win \$1 001, not a \$1 000, you have to give \$250 to the Democratic Labour Party Administration for your \$1 000 win. Mr. Speaker, this is taking hope away from the people and adding a sense of hopelessness to a situation that they have continued to persecute on the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I will give you another example. The Honourable Member for St. John made a whole public relations campaign, that is what I have to call it, of these special interest groups going up to Illaro Court to have consultations and so on. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that he did not share with the public service vehicle people that the first thing he was going to do was to take away all of the school children's business which, to some of them, is their core business, as well as to carry up the price that they would have to pay for their road tax because I know those public service vehicle suppliers...

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. John never indicated that he is taking away the business of the school children from the PSVs, neither did he indicate that the road taxes for the PSVs have increased.

Mr. SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on. It was not only on the public service vehicles but the people who rent cars in this country. The people who rent cars in this country who often meet people at the Port, who rent a car for a day, are complaining today that nobody is going to rent a car for three or four hours and pay a \$100 just for a licence. Sir, that was 1 000 per cent increase. Sir, a \$90 increase was put on top of \$10, a ninefold increase. Mr. Speaker, those people would complain.

Mr. Speaker, if those people were invited to this public relations campaign at Illaro Court, because that is what it could only have been, there is no way that those people could have gone there and heard all of the onerous tax grabbing, vicious measures that the Honourable Member for St. John was going to impose on them...

Mr. Speaker, the Small Business Association would have given all sorts of suggestions. Instead, what they got is an increase in doing business. Mr. Speaker, all across the sector we have had problems and difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John, in a presentation in this Honourable House, said that in the first 100 days the Democratic Labour Party Administration would introduce an Agricultural Protection Act that would require a two-thirds majority of both Houses of Parliament for a change of use of any area over two acres of land for agriculture. Now we are hearing that it is not two acres, but 100 acres. Mr. Speaker, that is rubbish. We might as well tear that up.

Mr. Speaker, he went on to say also that in the first 100 days he would remove the VAT from building materials on houses valued up to \$400 000, now we are hearing up to \$150 000 and all sort of conditions. That is rubbish again. Tear that up.

Mr. Speaker, he went on to say that while a full Democratic Labour Party energy policy would be unveiled in the weeks ahead, I am moved this evening to tell Barbadians that on electing a new Democratic Labour Party Administration we will commit to removing the VAT on utility bills for households. That was not done. Tear that up.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, we understand the point you are trying to make, I suppose, but you also know that it is unparliamentary to accuse another Member of talking rubbish and such like. You know that is the case.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I am just quoting from my notes, but I will continue.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes more in which to conclude.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, a picture of this house came to my attention and I want to make it a document of the House. This house, Mr. Speaker, is an interesting one. It is a house built by the Urban Development Commission since January 15 and it was almost in an expedited manner. Mr. Speaker, I am surprised about it and I will tell you why.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John got up in here and made a whole issue about integrity and accountability and how integrity legislation and accountability legislation would be introduced into this Honourable House, and it would be done in quick work in 100 days.

Mr. Speaker, how could it be that the Honourable Members on That Side are supposed to be so full of integrity, and so in tune to accountability, and a house in Santo Domingo Lane could be built by the Urban Development Commission, I guess within the same 100 days, that the Honourable Member said?

Mr. Speaker, when they talk about housing for our people, as he said in the Budget, we now understand which of our people they were talking about. They were talking about their people, not the people of the country. They were going to find housing for the people from Santo Domingo Lane.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that I hear people asking and calling for resignations, people who say they grew up in Santo Domingo Lane too. Mr. Speaker, the question is: What is the connection between this house and the owner of this house and the Junior Minister in the Ministry of Social Care? What is the connection? I will make it a document of this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just let me understand you. What are you making a document of the House? A photograph of the house?

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: What is the connection...

Mr. SPEAKER: Just a minute. How are we going to be able to refer to that with any specificity and particularity?

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: I am just asking a question: What is the connection of a...

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: It is a photograph of a house in Santo Domingo Lane built since January 15, I guess in the first 100 days. Mr. Speaker, I want to know what is the connection between the Junior Minister of Social Care and the Urban Development Commission, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown and the house built by the Urban Development Commission in Santo Domingo Lane? Where is the accountability? Where is the accountability where you could have within the first 100 days of an Administration a house built which, certainly, has some sort of connection with the Junior Minister in the Ministry of Social Care and the owner of this house?

6.10 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, let me make two observations. Of course, you know how you need to ask questions and I suppose you would do that at the appropriate time.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Of course. I am hearing that it is his father's House.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, are you going to listen to my ruling? I will not tolerate the disrespect of Honourable Members continuing to speak while I am speaking.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I will move on. Sir, I walked all...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat temporarily. I am still addressing the question of the photograph, which, as I understand, if you are making anything a document of this Honourable House, that document must be capable of being referred to with sufficient degree of specificity and for identification and so on. I do not understand how you are going to be bringing a bald photograph and say this is a photograph of a house somewhere, and make that photograph a document of this Honourable House. That is the difficulty I have at this stage. Please continue.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, it is a house that the Urban Development Commission has built in Santo Domingo Lane.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your time has almost expired.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I have looked all over this Honourable Chamber and all through this precinct and I have not seen one picture of you but do you know that a Minister in this current Government has ordered \$60 000 worth of pictures of herself? Sir, do you know how many houses that money could have built? That money could have built about two houses or could have repaired about four houses. Sir, I find that very disheartening and disconcerting.

Mr. Speaker, I would like that when the integrity and accountability legislation comes to this Honourable House that those Honourable Members would be the first persons to be hauled before it, because I believe that shows no accountability whatever.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, in 1994, I came to this Honourable House and the people of St. Lucy returned me on four occasions. I have been here long enough to know that any increase, as was stated by the Honourable Members on the Other Side, cannot relate to

any increase that was given to this Honourable House in 1997/1998.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to take your documents and look at the taxes on goods and services, you would see that between the years 1996/1997 and 1997/1998, in those years, the taxes on goods and services increased by over \$234 million. That is not all. If you were to compare the revenue between 1996/1997, to the year 1997/1998, you would see the difference in taxes was \$226 million.

Mr. Speaker, I am being told in this Honourable House that the difference in tax this year, \$40 million, is greater than \$226 million. I do not know from where we would have gotten this new math, but it seems that in this Honourable House, \$226 million is less than \$42 million. Sir, I lay my case on that particular issue.

Mr. Speaker, what is even more ridiculous is that this Government has increased the reversed tax credit for every person for \$15 000 or less, by more than \$500; the same poor people they are speaking about in this Honourable House. Sir, I am being told that if you were to give a man \$500 and increase his road taxes by \$135, that \$135 would be more than \$500. Sir, it has nothing to do with the busfares.

Mr. Speaker, in a family of five, the possibility exists there could be one car owned by that entire family but in that family of five, the possibility exists that each of those five persons could be getting that reversed tax credit. Sir, the point that must be made is that Government has given back more to poor people than it has taken from them, yet I am hearing that last Monday was a black Monday. I know that any black Monday has to be a good Monday because I am black and I am good. Sir, I am not saying that anybody who is white is not good.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying when one looks at the increase in road taxes, the biggest increase per day is \$6.85 for a commercial vehicle. Sir, am I to believe that a big, long truck transporting goods for everybody in Barbados is going to charge persons \$6.85, or would that cost be divided among everybody? Sir, we are here quarrelling about \$6.85 per day for a commercial truck. Can I believe this?

Sir, everybody in the world knows that inflation has increased. The price of oil has increased, and the latest projection, as I said some time back, is that oil might reach somewhere in the vicinity of \$200 per barrel, yet that Opposition would expect the Democratic Labour Party to absorb the cost for foreign owners of oil and tax local goods to ensure that we balance the budget.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is not going to do that. We are saying that where there is an imported cost, we

would protect local manufacturers and keep out the imported goods. That is why we have focussed on agriculture. Sir, we have focussed on agriculture because while being the Opposition, we warned this Government the way they were giving tax incentives to farmers was wrong. Sir, the same thing we said when we were the Opposition, we are now living it today. We said farmers should get it up front, and farmers are now getting it up front. Mr. Speaker, we are not hypocrites. We are not saying one thing while we were the Opposition, and now saying something else while in Government.

Sir, a few weeks ago, I was across Barbados telling the boat people of Barbados that we would invest in a crane for them. Sir, if you would look in this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals you would see that it is there. Sir, we had to do that because this year the fisherfolk of Barbados have ensured that the protein cost to every Barbadian was lowered. Therefore, any Government that has persons who have contributed to that significant reduction in protein cost, had to do something for that group of people. Mr. Speaker, I say tonight, this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals is about the fisherfolk of Barbados and that we have kept our promise to them.

Mr. Speaker, this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals goes deeper, and I want people to understand what is happening in this country. In the 1930s, there was a group called the "O'Neales", who brought social programmes to this country. Sir, those social programmes were opposed by the Mottleys, the Millers and the Adamses. Mr. Speaker, in 2008, now that we are giving free busfares and ensuring that poor people's children could get to school, we are again seeing opposition by the Mottleys. What is interesting is that while we are looking after the poor people of this country, some people are saying that everything is good, once you could declare assets as high as theirs, but that you should not look after the poor people.

Mr. Speaker, we are saying that the Democratic Labour Party, which I have supported since 1971, has always been in the interest of the masses of people in this country and that these programmes fit my policy. Sir, I will support them because they are mass-based and are in the interest of the country.

Mr. Speaker, furthermore, this Government cannot be a reckless Government. It would have been a reckless Government had we ignored the energy cost of this country. Sir, we cannot have a company where we have delayed looking at the losses that have been accumulated by the oil company, under the belief that we could simply allow debts to accumulate.

Mr. Speaker, let me say something to this. There is a fundamental process in this Financial Statement and

Budgetary Proposals. Sir, I heard a lot of people criticising the Honourable Member from the Other Place for his contribution to this Budget.

6.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, let me say something to this. There is a fundamental process in this Budget. I want to stop here because yesterday I heard a lot of people criticise the Honourable Member from the Other Place in what contribution he has made to this Budget.

I want to say to this House, that he has my full support because we, in this House brought these accounts under the accrual system of accounting and this is the first time that these Financial Statements were prepared based on a commercial basis, that is, and one has to understand that if you are running a business that your current revenue must exceed your current expenditure so that you have a contribution to fit into your capital account.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard the Honourable Member on the Other Side saying that this in this Budget the revenue was under-stated and that the expenditure was over-stated. How in heaven can anybody who understands anything about accounting criticise that principal? Anybody who read the Minutes of Hansard would see that I have always made the point that any good accountant will ensure that he uses the accounting principals to the maximum to ensure that you do not over-state a positive but you ensure you overstate a negative.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I hate to have to interrupt him because he did not interrupt me.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not understand the point of order.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, let me make it clear again. Sir, if you did not understand it. I will make it clear.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I have not spoken, so it cannot be another point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am saying that....

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Let me go back through it again. If....

Mr. SPEAKER: One moment, Honourable Member. As you are aware....

I do not see the difficulty. I hear the explanation but I cannot put that interpretation on it.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Sir, I give way.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that the Honourable Member would have raised a point that I could have educated him on the principals of conservatism or objectivity but seeing that I did not come close to the door, I will not waste my time on him.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just for future reference. Having made my ruling on the point of order, that is the end of it and you must move on. Those are the Rules by which we will proceed.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, that is exactly what I did. I introduced the principal of conservatism and objectivity.

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is said that this Budget is a St. Lucy Budget and it has always been said in this country that we are behind God's back and we do not have a problem. We said we are behind God's back because he can trust us and that is why he put us behind his back.

Sir, I want you to know that the time has arrived that everything that we have requested of this Government and of the last Government that has been ignored is not being ignored anymore. Those persons who walk around and say that we spend more time thinking, raising animals and looking after the development of St. Lucy recognise that the time has now arrived for the true development of St. Lucy.

Sir, I am proud to say that no other Government could have developed St. Lucy than the Government of the Democratic Labour Party because it is the Government that would understand what is needed by that parish and how to do proper development in that parish.

Mr. Speaker, when I spoke in Opposition about an airport, I was laughed at. I was laughed at to such a stage that one day an Honourable Member was speaking in this House and the Honourable Member said this country needed more airport space and that somewhere on the west they had to put a runway.

Sir, I got up on a point of order and told the Speaker that the Honourable Member was misleading the House by giving the impression that you can put that runway at Sandy Lane or Royal Westmoreland, because the only place that had available space would have been those two areas and the Honourable Member said she never said that but, Sir, the Honourable Member could not tell this House that the time was ripe for that airport to go to the North of the country.

Mr. Speaker, if you look under deniskellman.com, under "Northern Development" you would be able to identify not only with the website but you would be able to identify with the Manifesto of the Party, and also the Financial Statement of the Party today. Sir, I am saying that we in the north need not worry because we understand that in order for Barbados to be developed, that St. Lucy has to be developed. I have always said on political platforms and also in this House, that if you do not want to develop Barbados then you need not come to St. Lucy but the point is that we have what it is to develop Barbados and this Government has recognised it.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that this foolishness that is sometimes said by people and not in this House. Sir, we have to recognise that the belief that you can continue to throw scratch grain at poor people and give them the impression that they can only live on gambling, drinking, smoking and behaving bad on ZRs or public service vehicles that it is not part of the Democratic Labour Party's culture, but we recognise that they are productive people and we are going to ensure that we provide productive things for them to do to help develop this country.

Mr. Speaker, people have to understand that when one looks at the culture and what is happening in Barbados that somebody had to put the stop to our young people going to Dodds because when one looks at the statistics, all that has happened within the last 14 years that this country, instead of building an airport and an additional seaport, built a larger prison for young people in this country and introduced gambling, smoking and all those negative vices for them.

Sir, we are simply saying that we are going to reduce it and we are going to ensure that we produce and provide those productive things to ensure that our young people can be decent citizens and be productive once more. We will ensure that when the roll is called every day at the Court, that they will not report to the Court but will be reporting to Court. This Budget is about putting young people back to work again.

Mr. Speaker, I also want the taxi drivers to understand that they spoke to me and I said to them in Independence Square, in Oistins and all over Barbados not to worry about it that this Government will deliver and, Sir, what has the Government done? It has delivered. Sir, the taximen had one request. They wanted the right to have a gasoline vehicle with duty-free status and they have received it.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe that not only the Crane but we must find an area suitable, or more than one area suitable so that, during the hurricane season, that fishermen can get their boats hauled up instead of having to wait on one another and rotate turns on land, that we provide the

facility that they can bring their boats out of the water, that workmen can work on them and that they can get back in the water at a reasonable time.

6.30 p.m.

Sir, I also want you to observe that we have not been having - I heard an Honourable Member making the point that we should not have a relationship with Trinidad, but we should with Venezuela. I want the Honourable Member to know he does not understand that statement. We have no hostile relationship with Trinidad. Trinidad is not claiming anything that we have. Trinidad is not offering us a delayed cheap payment on fuel so that we can run up our debt with them and some day they could come back and claim Barbados.

People have to understand that there is a history within the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. We have a relationship with some people, but some people would give the impression that they are good, because of their aid and cheap loans, so they are doing you a good turn, but they only want to imprison you in debt. Remember Bird Island.

Sir, a lady was flown in to give birth to a child, for people to get maritime rights in the Caribbean. A lot of countries in the Caribbean have to understand that the cheap fuel has a cost, and at some point in time there will be a pay-back day. Sir, when they do not pay back, somebody might claim their territory. Sir, people are saying that our policy is wrong. The Right Excellent Errol Barrow said that we want trade, not aid. We are not beggars on the world market. We want trade, not aid. We will associate with persons who are prepared to trade for this country, to provide work for our people.

We are not beggars. We have never been beggars. People must understand that even though we have 166 square miles of land mass, we also have a lot of wealth and a lot of square miles in sea mass. Sir, in this day and age it is not the land mass anymore, it is the sea mass that is important.

Sir, the hydrocarbons are important and must be recognised by people. We are not going to sit idly by and allow anybody to come with a carrot and trick us into believing they are our friends, when we know they have an ulterior motive. We will ensure that we protect the interest of Barbadians, because, as I said, our land space is small, but when you look around us, we have square miles of water. That is important. It is not the water, but what is under the water that is important.

Sir, this Government understands how to develop Community Tourism. There was a time in this country when people felt that tourism was only for rich people, but

we have demonstrated without a shadow of a doubt, that tourism is now for every single soul in this country.

With the intervention of the Internet Services and so on, you no longer have to depend on outsiders to promote Barbados. Poor people are now able to tap into the tourist market. We say, if you have additional space in your house, ensure that you develop that space, put it on the Internet, and market that project so that you too can be part of the tourism market.

Sir, a lot of people said that Community Tourism is about eating, drinking and music. That is foolishness. Community Tourism in the beginning stage involves the community in tourism, where you attract people to an area. When you get them attracted to an area, rooms of accommodation are introduced and because of their attraction to the area, they would stay and enjoy its services.

Sir, I say to Barbadians, the time is right to get on board, because the Democratic Labour Party is here again to represent your interest. We have been in the wilderness for 14 years, and we have studied exactly what has to be done to correct all of the bad policies. We will ensure that investors are happy, workers are happy and a better Barbados. This country needs a change, and the old time ways of doing business must change. The Accrual System would demonstrate without a shadow of a doubt that we must change procedures in order to develop.

Sir, no country can continue to live on borrowed earnings. Any country that wants to develop must be productive, and that is exactly what the Other Side was saying to us, continue to borrow. The time is ripe for us to start producing in order to pay our way in this country.

I also want to say that Barbados is now a major player in the world, because in the next 10 years or so, once the research is done, and we do what we have to do, we will ensure we deliver the goods to this country and remain a major player.

Sir, we have demonstrated, without a shadow of doubt in the Caribbean, that we are masters at service. We also have to ensure that culture is not unique to this island. It must have to be a Caribbean thing. The CARICOM desk must be utilised to promote the whole of the Caribbean, instead of Trinidad promoting Trinidad, Barbados promoting Barbados and St. Vincent promoting St. Vincent.

The same way a desk has been allocated for tourism, the same method must be used for culture because we have shown the capacity to attract people to the Caribbean, and must approach it with a united front.

We also have to understand that there has been a lot of talk about contingent rights. People have been saying that we in Barbados have been doing the wrong things. I am saying that Barbados and Trinidad have been doing the right thing. If Barbados and Trinidad open their gates tomorrow, the other countries would not have anybody to live in them, study that.

If we were to open our gates tomorrow, everybody would come to Barbados and Trinidad and all the other countries would not have any people. Sir, Barbados and Trinidad have to recognise that they must provide some capital to encourage businesses not only to remain in Barbados, but to tap the resources of the other countries, while keeping people at home to develop their countries. That is what is needed.

Sir, people look at things one way, but this progressive, Government, would understand that we are our Caribbean brothers, and we support Caribbean ideas. The belief that money - you can provide aid and handouts, but that must stop. We must provide capital for our people to invest in other Caribbean countries to develop the economy.

Also, the foolishness that you must have one currency is nonsense. You need one production. Then the spoils are divided by your contribution to the product. You will never see countries coming together with one leadership, so forget about it. You will never witness a one currency. You need an approach where all investors in the Caribbean countries can identify projects and ask people to buy into them. If that occurs, you could easily solve your Stock Exchange problem. You can easily develop a stock exchange without realising it. I am saying that the time is right.

Sir, no matter what you read, inflation is up all over the world. The Opposition would want you to believe that inflation is going up all over the world, but we in Barbados can reduce prices, utter foolishness. If the prices are going up all over the world, Barbados is part of the world and we must buy into it.

Sir, as we walk the streets of Barbados, we are being told by Barbadians that they understand. We have television, education and we understand what is happening in the world. We do not expect you to provide any magic wand, but they expect us to ensure that policies are in place for them to work the land again.

I want to say to Barbadians that the best opportunity occurred, when prices increased worldwide, because our agricultural land is now important, again. People have to understand that once food prices increase worldwide, our local products would also have a value.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you need to conclude shortly.

Mr. D.ST.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I have to conclude?

Mr. SPEAKER: Your time essentially was up to ten to.

6.40 p.m.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: No problem, Sir.

Sir, we have to understand that we, in this country, have to ensure that our young people cannot see gambling, drinking, smoking, or bad behaviour as the excuse but they must utilise their education to help develop this country.

If we do not have good young people, we will destroy this country and that is why we are saying to the minibus and PSV operators that we will not keep you out. All we are asking you to do is to come on board. The Opposition is telling them not to come on board, do not change your behaviour, continue to do what you are doing and punish the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, they are not punishing the Democratic Labour Party. They are punishing every young person in this country and the country. We are saying to them that we have the olive limb out there for them and we are prepared to talk to them. It is for them to come on board. We have offered them the incentives to come on board. We are not here to destroy the PSVs. How can I be in Parliament and allow the Democratic Labour Party to destroy the PSVs? Sir, the PSVs must ensure that they do not destroy themselves. If they destroy themselves, they destroy young people and the country.

I know that the gentleman who made the statement, on reflection would have realised that he misunderstood the policy of the Democratic Labour Party because we said to them to come on board and you will have some of the school children, but you must ensure that nobody working for you will corrupt the minds of young people.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: To the people of St. Lucy I say, I love you.

Asides.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister for a budget that, Sir, was thoroughly thought out with respect to preparing Barbados for the potential risk of economic decline, as a result of international economic difficulties. The Budget in its proposals offered to set in place in Barbados, a set of contingency measures so that we would start preparing Barbados to gradually reduce our burgeoning fiscal deficit by making sure that our revenue gains were always beyond that of our expenditure.

This is about reversal of the strategies taken by the previous Administration, where for every single aspect of the previous Administration's Budgetary Proposals we were worsening our fiscal deficit positions. We were worsening our national debt positions. We were worsening our external debt positions, as well as our external current account positions.

Therefore, it was necessary for the Democratic Labour Party to evolve a budget that would gradually start to look for what is known as primary surpluses. Mr. Speaker, it is from that premise that I give the Prime Minister my wholehearted support.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I am bold to say that the measures that were given to this Honourable Chamber and, in particular, the ones that relate specifically to the health sector, I am indeed very pleased. I can say, Sir, that the hospital can definitely utilise the \$60 million that we are going to raise in two bond issues to help recapitalise that institution.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: I can say, Sir, that we desperately need the monies that will come from the divestment of the shares in the Barbados National Bank and the Insurance Corporation of Barbados.

As I pause at that point, Sir, I want to say that money cannot solve the problems at the hospital entirely. After six months of having the opportunity to evaluate the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, what I have now come to fully recognise is that there is a three tiered approach that is necessary. We need to enhance the funding of the hospital, but there needs to be critical management changes at the Hospital as well.

Mr. Speaker, there are individuals who are deliberately trying to do their effort best to make sure that institution does not function. Mr. Speaker, whether I am sick or I am not sick, I am going to say what I have to say in this House here tonight. I do not care who is vex or who is not vex. Let me say a few things.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to hear anything from anybody over there. That is the first thing.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: The people of Barbados rejected all of them. They were voted out of power, and do not tell me that Barbadians are so politically daft that Barbadians would vote a government out of power, and would want this Administration to leave their pimps, sycophants and their yardfowls in places to compromise this Administration. It does not make sense. We are not that politically dumb.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: We are not that politically daft in this country. Barbadians understand politics very well.

Sir, I can speak about one day when I was in St. Thomas up at a woman named Doris, that Tom Adams used to go and get pudding and souse from. I was in Doris' bedroom.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: ...and then the former Prime Minister came in there and Doris, who would collect all the information about who got jobs and who did not get jobs, and all that sort of talk; I heard Tom say: "Not that job. He should not have that job. What is he doing with that?" Now, we are to hear in this country that we are supposed to allow people who were placed in specific positions by that Administration to stay there.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, let me make a few critical statements.

Mr. Speaker, I will now speak specifically to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's industrial relations matters. I am going to be very deliberate in my statements. Sir, this has to do with the threat of industrial action by the NUPW and the Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners (BAMP).

Sir, what I find to be absolutely incredible in this particular situation is that every trade unionist knows that in order to deal on behalf of any individual, or class of individuals in an organisation or workplace, there needs to be a collective agreement in place. Mr. Speaker, more specifically, there must be recognition by the organisation of the bargaining rights of the particular category.

6.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, neither the Office of the Director of Medical Services nor the Office of the Director of Human Resources fall in any recognised bargaining category by the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, let me go further and delineate this matter for those uninitiated. The holders of those posts belong to what is known as the top management cadre that was specifically created by the Board. By operations, Mr. Speaker, there are excluded from both bargaining agencies.

Sir, that is not my statement. That is the Law in the country. Sir, if that is the Law of the country, why is Dennis Clarke running about Barbados trying to give people the impression that he has a legitimate authority and a right?

Mr. SPEAKER: Just be careful, Honourable Member.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that.

Mr. SPEAKER: I will remind you about calling names and so on. You need to be careful.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I will therefore want to find out why is the National Union of Public Workers' purporting to be representing the interest of the Director of Human Resources at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital when the Director of Human Resources is senior management, a category where the National Union of Public Workers' has no authority under Law.

Mr. Speaker, what this is saying is that the pretended actions of both unions are ultra vires of the collective agreements and that the unions have no standing or status to approach the Board on behalf of these individuals as their bargaining agents. I will therefore ask the question again: Why today I am being told that people were being called out from various departments at the Hospital on a wildcat strike? If that is the case, Mr. Speaker, I want it explained. The unions cannot rewrite the Laws in this country. I will continue.

Mr. Speaker, the admission of any such union activity by the Board of the Hospital would be industrial relationship nonsense and managerial stupidity. Mr. Speaker, these are the facts. I will say them tonight as they are and those who do not like it, that is their business.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals leading those organisations can offer individual representation in their personal capacity. They cannot represent the collective interest as bargaining agents in those cases. Mr. Speaker, I therefore ask the question: Why is the Hospital being put through this continuing turmoil all the time?

Mr. Speaker, I want to find out if it has something to do with the fact that the Hospital may very well have had to disagree with a potential decision that the General Secretary of the National Union of Public Workers' wanted the Hospital to make? Mr. Speaker, I hope that the action of the General Secretary of the National Union of Public Workers' is not one where he is attempting to get back at the Hospital in a malicious way. Mr. Speaker, if I have to speak on that in a more specific way, I will do it.

Mr. Speaker, let me get to two elements of the fundamental facts here now. Mr. Speaker, we spoke to the Director of Human Resources. Mr. Speaker, do you know that the Director of Human Resources at the Hospital that is now the centre of contention was a Research Officer at the National Union of Public Workers? Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that the recommendation for that individual for the job was made by the same General Secretary?

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that this individual, after having been got rid of by the National Union of Public Workers, went down to the Arawak Cement Plant to work as a junior officer in the Human Resources Department, but lo and behold, under the former Minister of Health and the then Deputy Chairman, that person took up the top post in Human Resources at the most complex institution in Barbados with 2 500 workers? Mr. Speaker, Barbadians have to understand what I am trying to say here tonight. Sir, it is a matter of whether or not you are competent.

Mr. Speaker, let me go on now to the level of incompetency we are talking about. Mr. Speaker, I did not hire Mr. Collymore, the Chief Executive Officer. The CEO of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was hired by the former Administration. The CEO was allowed to work without signing a contract for almost three years. Mr. Speaker, I have inherited a situation where I have had to ask for legal consultation from Carrington and Sealy. I also got consultation from the former Chairman sent to my office.

Mr. Speaker, you have a situation where the Human Resources bungling occurred under the former Board and the former Minister of Health, that has now got this Administration locked into a position that we would have to pay out the CEO. Sir, all of a sudden now, you are hearing all of this talk that the CEO's pattern of governance is so different.

Mr. Speaker, this is where a little learning is a dangerous thing. Mr. Speaker, when the legal consultation was had, it was made clear that the fact that the Barbados Labour Party and the Ministry of Health under the former Administration allowed this man to work for two and a half to three years without signing a contract, it was tantamount that you agree to the terms and conditions. Mr. Speaker, I was locked into that scenario. That is the type of human resource bungling that occurred.

Mr. Speaker, let me go further with the more bungling that has occurred. Sir, could you imagine that the now Director of Human Resources, or the former one, was sent a formal letter of acceptance of a job? The letter stated quite clearly that she would be subject to signing the official contract and she would be subject to all of the terms and conditions and the termination clauses in that contract. That is in the law of the letter.

Sir, what is even more ridiculous is that the booklet "Terms and Conditions of Service" for all employees of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, agreed to by the National Union of Public Workers and the Board, has in it on page 7 clause 1.7 that the probationary period for all employees on first appointment shall be six months with the possibility of an additional three-month extension. Sir, let me read that again. Sir, this is the document that guides human resource activity and behaviour at the hospital. It was not applied to when the CEO was hired.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. The Honourable Member just quoted from a document. He has to make it a document of the House.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have made your request.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to make a request that after the Honourable Member suggested that I have stupid sayings, that remark be struck from the records.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, you did not hear that? *Asides.*

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, as I understand it, it is not every document that has to be made a document of this Honourable House. Honourable Members are entitled to quote from any document, as long as Honourable Members are able to identify it with a sufficient degree of specificity for the record. The Honourable Member has done that. Honourable Members may, however, choose to make a document a document of this Honourable House. Now, I do not know where the difficulty lies, so could we move on?

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I will read the document that governs employment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. This document has been agreed to by the National Union of Public Workers and by the Board. This is what it says at page 171:

“The probationary period for all employees on first appointments shall be six months, with the possibility of an additional three months extension. However, the probationary period shall not exceed nine months.”

Mr. Speaker, it goes on at page 174:

“The appointment and/or probation of an employee may, at any time before the employment is confirmed, be terminated on one’s day’s notice in writing on either side and payment of all vacation leave which is due.”

Mr. Speaker, this governs all employees. This is now the issue with the Director of Human Resources Department. She is saying that she has never had a contract. Sir, you being the Director of the Human Resources Department and you are going to tell me that you never had a contract? Are you telling me that you being the Director of the Human Resources Department do not believe it is your responsibility to make sure that you have a contract?

Mr. Speaker, what is even more ridiculous in this scenario is this. could you imagine the contract advanced to the Director of the Human Resources Department is one that had in the probation clause as agreed to in the document and that person refused to sign it? Sir, that is the reason we are having industrial action in this country.

Mr. Speaker, what is even more ridiculous, let me go to the final clause. This is what it says:

“The legal effect with respect to the services of the Director of Human Resources Department are defined as such:

(1)the services of the Director of the Human Resource Department are terminable by

(a) one day’s notice or;

(b)three months’ notice on either side; or

(c)three months’ pay in lieu under either termination clause of offence or probation;

(2) the Administration of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital could terminate unilaterally within three months’ notice with pay.

Mr. Speaker, the National Union of Public Workers is trying to give people the impression that this Administration is trying to railroad an employee. Sir, what is incredible is that the former Director of the Human Resources Department is now saying the contract she was shown by the Chief Executive Officer was a contract that did not include any probation or termination clauses. Sir,

what nonsense am I hearing? How could it go counter to the terms and conditions agreed to by the National Union of Public Workers and the Board? Are you going to tell me that does not go to competency?

Mr. Speaker, let me go to the other issue which relates to the Director of Medical Services who is my friend, a very good doctor and a very competent physician. Sir, I know the doctors who are good, but being a good doctor does not mean that you are a good manager, and that is the mistake that is being made. There are some physicians who believe that as long as they are consultants, that it automatically makes them good managers.

Sir, what the Hospital needs now is a critical mass of doctors to service this country. I propose there will be a number of doctors on whom I am going to ask to accept a non-practising allowance. I want them to be there to provide service to Barbadians. There are some who would want to go into private practice, who would still want to work at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, I would not have a problem with that but I would be asking for the 21 hours for which those doctors would be contracted. Therefore, if those doctors do not work the 21 hours for which they would be contracted, then I would have a problem with it.

Sir, for those persons who are plotting for me, let me sound a warning. They have one plot for me but I will have two plots for them and, by the end of tonight, for every one plot they have for me, I will have 16 plots for them.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes in which to conclude.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, sometimes it saddened me to have to speak to this matter but when the Board of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and I as Minister of Health are being attacked, as though the Board has done something wrong for trying to make sure that the doctors, who are contracted to perform certain services do perform those services, I will stand and defend their interest because I have a responsibility to the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, this is the situation I found at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in relation to the Director of Medical Services, and Barbadians must judge for themselves. The job of Director of Medical Services is a complicated job, one that requires almost full-time attention, but the former Director of Medical Services, who is now seeking to take legal action, is the Prison Services Coordinator.

He is involved with the Department of Emergency Management. He works with CEDERA. He works for the

Barbados Defence Force. He is an Associate Lecturer at Ross University School of Medicine. He is an Associate Lecturer of the University of the West Indies. He is involved with Sandy Crest Medical Centre. Sir, what is even more ridiculous is that it has to do with whether one has the time to devote to the job one is hired to do on behalf of the people.

Mr. Speaker, I will now speak to the fact that this Administration had to terminate the services of the Medical Protection Society in this country. Sir, this is a brokerage company. The same Director of Medical Protection Services was a Vice-President and only resigned from that Board two weeks ago. Mr. Speaker, when we recognised there was no relationship between the premium charged and the claim history, we knew something was wrong.

We were being charged almost \$4 million every year for premiums. When we put this matter out to tender and the regional entities got involved, I have now got a scenario where we are paying \$1.1 million in premium annually, instead of almost \$4 million. Sir, even though that was the case, the Medical Protection Society offered a rebate of \$2.5 million over three years. Mr. Speaker, how could an entity give me a rebate of \$2.5 million over three years and could still reduce the premium? Something is wrong. Let Barbadians judge for themselves.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, I am not looking for friends at the Hospital. My friends are in St. Philip, home at my house, and here with me. I am going to do what I have to do in the interest of the people of this country. I am going to ensure that when I see things that are wrong, I will endeavour to put them right in the interest of Barbadians.

7.10 p.m.

I am going to ask my colleagues at the Hospital that since they are employees of the Board, that they should treat the Board with respect. Sir, when the Board took the decision to change the carrier for the insurance company, the Board was inundated, and they wanted to know why the insurance was changed.

You want to tell me, Mr. Speaker, that if you were working in town at Cave Shepherd as an employee, because that is what they are, and Cave Shepherd changes its insurance, that you have the right to ask Cave Shepherd why it changed its insurance? Sir, the audacity and the arrogance of themselves, individuals, that is the problem.

Mr. Speaker, I, as Minister, am going to put the issues correctly in the interest of health care in Barbados. Sir, I am very sorry if some of them think the tourism

industry is the wrong thing to do. The critical mass at the Hospital that would be built up are: We will hire about eight consultants within medicines. We will hire new radiologists. We will hire new neonatologists. We will hire new persons to function in all aspects of medicine and we will also ensure that in doing that, we create centers of revenue generation. We have been in discussion with Dr. Moseley, who is our podiatrist and he has assured us that we can generate close to \$0.5 million to \$1 million out of rehab services out of the Hospital once we can put the equipment in place. We will work towards that.

We are also expanding the Accident and Emergency Department to start by January. We are expanding the Outpatients Department to ensure that the nurses and patients operate in a better environment instead of having dressings being done next to somebody, taking blood pressure with no privacy or confidence. We are even going to the point where we have purchased all the equipment for the new cardiac suite at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, so they cannot say that we are not doing what we have to do.

Mr. Speaker, there are some forces who want to make sure the services are outsourced. I am going to stop it and I want Barbadians to stand with me. Give me their confidence and let me do the job they have asked me to do. Sir, I want them to just stand with me and give me the confidence to stand up and do what I have to do on behalf of the health system in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I know you have given me a bit of latitude and I want to thank you very much for that latitude. Sir, I appreciate it.

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

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals presented by the Honourable Member for St. John and the Prime Minister on Monday, July 7, 2008.

Mr. Speaker, a lot was bandied about by the Honourable Members of the Opposition when they talked about transparency and integrity. Sir, I listened to the Honourable Member for St. George North and tonight, I will not be sparing the Honourable Member for St. George North. In fact, there was a former Minister of Housing, who carried a name with a nickname, I heard it all about the street. The name was "wuk for wuk" and I think the Honourable Member for St. George North is familiar with that name.

Mr. Speaker, I was very disappointed last night by the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. George North, a former teacher. The Honourable Member skated all over the place and tried to criticise this Government's

proposals on housing and they have no moral authority to criticise this Government on housing.

In fact, the Honourable Member for St. George North criticised the Administration when he made a surprised visit to St. George Parish Church a Sunday morning and he came out and said that the money they spent on GEMS could have built many low income houses. He was condemning his Administration, a man that sat in the Cabinet and adhered to the principal of collective responsibility, when he had a duty to get up and say that he no longer sided with the Government because the Government was wasting the money of the taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, only today, there was a judgement in the High Court, where Al Barrack was awarded \$58 million and \$3 million in interest per year. Sir, it was not this Administration that placed the National Housing Corporation in that debt. It is the Administration on the Other Side and, Sir, I am very sorry that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew is not here. I realise that his good friend, the Honourable Member for St. George North here...

Asides.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, I have documents here. The Honourable Member for St. George North had the audacity to say that Workhall, Marchfield and French Village were their projects but, Sir, the land was there idle. You had three Ministers of Housing. When Barbadians were hunting up and down in this country for house spots and houses, the land remained idled.

Sir, on the first day of Parliament, the Honourable Member for St. George North, said to me that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East and the Honourable Member for St. George South did nothing, that there is so much land there, they did nothing and that he is prepared to get up from the Other Side and say that they did nothing.

Sir, we took the land and in the space of six months these lands are now ready to be built on. If you look at the weekend newspaper, tender documents are out to satisfy the demands of all Barbadians who were starved by the Barbados Labour Party out of land and out of house. Sir, it is a criminal act. It was like a parent keeping food or milk away from a child, or from a crying baby dying of hunger, and they must be condemned for that, Mr. Speaker, they have no moral authority to speak about housing.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George North his performance in housing, I have some names of some females who requested housing and they informed me that they were asked certain questions by the then Minister of Housing and I cannot reveal the questions they

were asked at this time. Sir, all Barbadians know that to get a house under the regime of the Honourable Member for St. George North, when he was Minister of Housing that certain conditions had to be met.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Member said that as Minister of Housing, I had certain conditions. Can the Member state these conditions? The Honourable Member should state the conditions that were set by the Government of the day. He cannot come in here and say he has these things. He has to produce the facts.

7.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this is no laughing matter. The Honourable Member is a Minister of the Crown, and he must behave as an Honourable Member in this Chamber. Sir, I have to protect the rights of the Opposition. I am saying to you that the Honourable Member, who is Minister of Housing, must produce the facts. What are these conditions? He is playing to the Gallery and the public.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I can find no mischief in what has been said. The Honourable Member said that we all know there were certain conditions which applied at the time you were Minister. I cannot see what is the mischief. Honourable Member, please proceed.

Asides.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North is misleading the House deliberately.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. For the third time you are rising on the same point. The Honourable Member is repeating what he just said, and I have ruled on that, with respect.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, everyone knows that the Barbados Labour Party Administration had a number of ministers, about four from 1994. When we look at the performance of the Barbados Labour Party in the area of housing, I would want to go directly to a programme that was launched on September 4, 2004, called the Primary Homes Programme, and the record shows that from 2004 to 2008 they only built 60 houses. So over a four-year period only 15 houses were built per year. Now in six months of this Administration, this Administration has started to construct 185 houses, beginning in the month of August.

Sir, we will not be like the other Administration, who allowed Barbadians to rush to the National Housing Corporation, to fool Barbadians and say to them that they have the cheapest houses. They were told that land was

available. They were told that finance was available. They said to all Barbadians, come and get your Butterfly, Lady Bird and Sparrow houses. Sir, it seems as though all flew away. Sir, the promises that they made to Barbadians were not fulfilled during their tenure in office.

Sir, I want to refer to the matter of integrity and transparency, because they made a lot of song and dance about it last night. I want to state to this Honourable Chamber, that a contract was made between the National Housing Corporation and a company that had connection to a former Minister of Housing, to remove asbestos roofing from the Kensington Lodge units. The contractor had no experience in the removal of asbestos.

Asides.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: The former Honourable Member for St. James South.

Sir, bad work was done by the contractor. The National Housing Corporation did the repair at its own expense.

Asides.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, since I became Minister in January, I requested the file to peruse it. Do you know the file disappeared like Winston Hall? I searched up and down in the Ministry of Housing for the file, and up to this date I cannot find the file to peruse the facts, to see why the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Corporation, did not put in a claim against the then contractor. Sir, they speak about integrity. That is an indictment on their political integrity. I will go further.

Sir, on January 14, 2008, the day before Elections, the Board of the National Housing Corporation awarded a contract to a company to the tune of \$92 000. Do you know what the contract was supposed to do? It was given to a company to put up plywood around Country Park Towers. It came in at \$92 000, just to put up plywood around Country Park Towers. Sir, I had to step in to say it cannot work, but allowed the National Housing Corporation workers to go and put up the plywood at a cost of \$30 000, saving the taxpayers \$60 000.

Asides.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition talked about highway robbery. You give a company a contract to put up sheets of plywood around Country Park Towers for \$92 000, but the National Housing Corporation put it up for \$30 000, and the Leader of the Opposition is talking about highway robbery? This is highway robbery. How could the Barbados Labour Party

Administration turn a blind eye to this matter? Sir, that is not all.

Sir, under their watch, particularly the Urban Development Commission, for building houses, money was given to contractors to build houses, and when officers from the Urban Development Commission went to look for the houses, the houses disappeared.

Aside

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, and I would try to explain it. First, if you hire a private contractor to do work for you, there would be a cost for materials and labour. If, on the other hand, you do the work in-house, your labour component would be zero, and your only cost would be the materials. Therefore, for the Honourable Member to suggest that when it was done in-house it cost only \$30 000 as opposed to a private contractor doing it for \$90 000, it means that he is forgetting to add for labour component to the cost, and in so doing, is misleading the House.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, the fact is, we saved the taxpayers \$60 000.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is this a further point of order, Honourable Member?

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Sir, a new point of order on his last submission.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, subsequent to my ruling, the Honourable Member said that he saved the taxpayers \$60 000. Unless you are able to bring figures to prove that right now, I cannot make a decision on that, so I really do not see how it could be a point of order.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: I am again surprised at the Member for Christ Church West Cental, but I will move on. We talked about transparency and last night talked about contractors. No wonder we have to look at the Auditor General's Report. Sir, do you know the criterium that is set to be a contractor? This is what the Auditor General's Report says. This is the Urban Development Commission, under the Barbados Labour Party Government, and I quote:

"The Commission (Urban Development Commission) conceded that it erred in allowing persons to remain in its register of contractors, including those persons whose only claim to being a contractor was that

they were unemployed, unemployable, homeless, vagrants of Bridgetown, criminal deportees and those who frequented the Parliament yard. Those are the conditions set down for the contractors.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, these are the contractors that were given work and they are talking about transparency and integrity? There is no moral authority for that, Sir, but I will move on.

Mr. Speaker, everything that they promised in housing failed. They then went on and established Hardwood Housing Factory. They injected some \$2 million into Hardwood Housing Factory. How can you take up millions of taxpayers' monies and put it in Hardwood Housing, a factory set up to provide low income houses and, to this day, Sir, we cannot count 15 houses that Hardwood Housing Factory built, although millions of taxpayers' monies were pumped into that company. In fact, the former Member for St. Michael North West said to Barbadians that if you want a house to bring your money and come.

Mr. Speaker, I will now turn to our policy. Sir, a lot of song and dance was made about our transfer of the Units. We believe that as a government, the Barbadian's dream of owning a house must be realised. With respect to the housing units, we responded to our Manifesto pledge, and within 100 days, we gave out offer letters to persons who lived in the units for more than 20 years, only to pay minimal legal fees. Sir, \$1 725 families were given offer letters.

Sir, one lady said to me, it is like a dream come true. She said that under the former Administration, she applied for a loan to purchase a unit but did not qualify, and had to continue paying rent, and she lived in that unit for 25 years. Sir, that was their policy.

The Barbados Labour Party made tenants who lived in units, some for 30 years and some for 25 years, to put themselves in financial debt to pay for their units and to repair them. Under their policy, a pensioner, and even the disabled who lived in a unit for 20 years, would have to either use up their savings, or borrow money to own the unit. This was the policy of the Barbados Labour Party Government.

Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with allowing working-class Barbadians living in units for 20 years or more, in the Pine, Deacons and the Ivy to own their units? What is wrong with that? The only payment is the minimal legal fee. What is wrong in allowing a gardener, living in a unit for 30 years or more, to get it transferred to him and only pay, the minimal legal fee?

Sir, where is the mercy, the heart, the conscience from the Opposition? Sir, when a Party like the Democratic Labour Party is seeking to uplift the underprivileged and the poor, they would criticise it from their petty bourgeois class because they do not want to see poor people own a house.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: They do not want to see poor people own their unit. Where is the heart and where is the compassion?

Sir, in April 2008, from the time our programme was launched, one of the conditions was that if you lived in a unit for 20 years and you are in arrears of rent, you must pay off the arrears before you qualify for transfer of ownership.

I want to announce to this Honourable House that we have collected \$100 000 in arrears from April up to this date. The rapid rate at which the delinquent tenants responded by paying off their arrears is a manifestation of how they view the Democratic Labour Party's policy. They are naturally attracted to it, therefore, no amount of bad mouthing from the Opposition will stop this Government from pressing on with this policy.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, no amount of bad mouthing would stop the Government from pressing on with this policy and ensuring that the thousands of NHC tenants reap the benefits of their sacrifice.

Sir, I would read the waiting list of outstanding applicants that was left by the Barbados Labour Party Government. Low income earners who want land, 8 834; low income earners who want house and land, 18 552; total outstanding applicants 29 231. Sir, they were in power for 14 years, and all this time, the Barbados Labour Party and the Minister of Housing at the time were sitting on land at Parish Land in St. Philip, 146 lots; River in St. Philip 776 lots; Coverley in Christ Church, 910 housing solutions; Fairy Valley in Christ Church, 46 lots; Constant in St. George 70 lots; Greens in St. George, 50 lots.

Sir, I could go on with the list. They had the land and they did nothing, and it is a shame. This is gross negligence. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North would agree with me that they had the land, so there was no excuse whatsoever.

At the same time when Barbadians were looking for house spots, land and houses, they were busy developing land on the West Coast, selling land to foreigners, selling land to the rich and famous and setting up golf courses for

their friends, while 29 231 Barbadians were asking for help from this Government. This is what I found, but I would move on further.

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go to the National Housing Corporation's financial position. The Corporation's long-term debt currently stands at \$150.3 million.

7.40 p.m.

I have not added in the \$58 million that we have now to pay out, which will bring its long-term debt to over \$200 million.

Sir, the National Housing Corporation's short-term debt currently stands at \$42.6 million. Sir, \$4.2 million is due to consultants and material creditors. Sir, that is how they left the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, we have to look at the role of the National Housing Corporation. We have to restore the National Housing Corporation to its philosophy of providing low income housing. We cannot expect the National Housing Corporation to make a profit on the backs of poor people. Sir, the project at Country Park Towers was designed to assist in housing low-income earners in this country. I was appalled when information was brought to my attention that the Barbados Labour Party - if you give me permission I want to read - on May 29...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, from what are you reading?

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: I am reading from my notes, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: You do not need my permission to refer to your notes.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, at a PPC meeting on May 29, 2006, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, then Prime Minister, said that no subsidy would be provided for the project, Country Park Towers and that the project must be designed to be profitable on a commercial basis, and to please have the National Housing Corporation generate both a rental price and a selling price for the units which would meet the Prime Minister's directives, not the Cabinet directives.

Mr. Speaker, we have a project that was supposed to start in 2000 and the directive was to make it profitable on the backs of low income earners. Sir, they recommended that the rent at Country Park Towers should be increased to \$600 per month. Mr. Speaker, that was their policy for the gardeners and maids who wanted to live in housing units. Mr. Speaker, if Barbadians had returned them to office and they had built Country Park Towers, a gardener would have to look for \$600 per month...

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Country Park Towers was designed for middle income earners and no rent was set at the time, so the Honourable Member must not mislead the House. The Honourable Member must produce the facts.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, there was a proposal that the rents would be \$600 per month for a three-bedroom unit and \$550 for a two-bedroom unit based on the Prime Minister's directive, which was, that it must be profitable.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member does not understand the...

Mr. SPEAKER: I am not going to permit your point of order for two reasons. The Honourable Member has not said anything else since I made the ruling. What is really happening is that the Honourable Member is saying I have a note here, this is my interpretation. You are giving it a different interpretation. I do not accept that it is a point of order for you to maintain that your interpretation is to be preferred to his. I really do not accept that as a point of order.

Honourable Member for St. Philip North, you need to be concluding at this time.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, this Administration will move with haste to house those Barbadians on the waiting list. In the space of six months, we have restarted Country Park Towers after it was stopped by that Administration in 2000 because we have a caring attitude toward Barbadians who want houses.

Sir, permit me one minute more because I have something to say as an Honourable Member of the House and as an attorney-at-law on a document that was presented to this House. Mr. Speaker, a document was laid in this House by the Leader of the Opposition purporting to be a declaration of assets. This document was not subjected to any scrutiny. It was not independently verified. No Accountant signed it.

Sir, was the document prepared by a friend of the Leader of the Opposition? I have to question the integrity of this document because, even in a court of law, this

document would be deemed inadmissible. The former Attorney General knows that. Who was it prepared by? Barbadians do not know who this was prepared by. Was it an independent accountant? Was the accountant the friend... Sir, this is nonsense. That is foolishness. Sir, it is my view that any declaration of assets should be subjected to scrutiny either by a body or by a one man panel.

Mr. Speaker, that is my contribution to this debate.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 8.45 p.m. today.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to second that.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 8.45 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

7.50 p.m.

RESUMPTION

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, any delight that I have in speaking on this Resolution, stems only from the fact that I have been charged with and have accepted the solemn responsibility of representing the people of St. Joseph in that Constituency, but I have no delight in speaking on this Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals that arises out of the document.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that having had the opportunity to pour over it for the last two days, it is full of flights of fancy. It runs the gamut from offshore islands, to airports in St. Lucy. I have looked through it carefully and I see there are incentives with no names. There are other incentives with names but no substance. Then, of course, there are some incentives that are promised but would likely remain a thing written in water.

This Budget was the project of consultation with over 40 groups. The Honourable Prime Minister said so himself, but that leaves me to wonder what were the contents of those consultations.

8.40 p.m.

:

It has led to the increase of fees to ordinary Barbadians; it has led, without dispute, to an increase in the

cost of living. I wonder what is the content of those consultations, when I see that there is nothing in this Budget for the small man, a group of people that would have been championed by the Other Side, when they sat on This Side of the House.

Sir, I see nothing in it for the police, a group that was courted by the Opposition at the time. The only thing that I see in it, in relation to those interest groups that they promised help for, would have been the nurses. It surprises me, and I believe it surprises everyone on This Side of the Chamber that what is in it for the nurses, is an increase in registration fees from \$50 to \$750. That is what the nurses have got out of this Government.

Mr. Speaker, if that was all, it might not be so bad. Sir, the auto machine fees have gone from \$50 to \$750 too, Sir, auto part dealers, commission agents, customs brokers, even something called a "gauger" - I have a feeling that there will have greater difficulty in collecting that particular increase - interior decorators as well as freelance journalists from \$50 to \$750. Sir, photographers, scattered all over Barbados taking pictures for weddings, birthdays and funerals have gone to \$750 as well.

Mr. Speaker, what concerns me is the fact that the Honourable Prime Minister was at great pains to mention a few of those professions where the registration fee has been increased, but failed for some peculiar reason, or failed for some reason peculiar to himself, to mention all of those other professions whose fees have gone up.

Mr. Speaker, the matter of lawyers has been canvassed in this Chamber earlier today. I want to make the point that I think that in increasing the fees for registration of a professional at a point in time where he is now starting off his career is hardly the decent thing to do. Young doctors are going to qualify some time in the next few months but, come January, they are going to have to pay \$2 500.

Mr. Speaker, you are a member of the legal profession and you and I both know what it was like coming out of law school, qualifying and trying to find the \$500 we were asked to pay then. I can only imagine what a difficulty it would be for those individuals who now have to pay \$2 500, but that is what is in the Budget, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that at the end of the entire exercise we will have to admit that there is very little in here for anybody. Sir, the Prime Minister has thrown a few gimmicks in while, at the same time, sowing seeds of distress among Barbadians. Yes, school children no longer have to pay bus fares; yes, we will now have the benefit of summer camps in the summer and we now have added to that Easter camps and Xmas camps as well. We are going to be a country now where all of our young people take to

camping. Sir, as a scout, a wonderful thing but it strikes me that is the message that is being passed on to Barbadians today.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister when he gave his missive to the people on Monday, he had his usual loud pronouncements, "Enough is enough". He pronounced loudly that he is going to terminate the contract with 3S with immediate effect but I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that every single Barbadian who travelled the length and breadth of this country to hear the Government during Elections would say that they do not understand and wonder how he is going to terminate the contract with immediate effect when they won the Election on the platform that there was no contract to begin with. Sir, that is a curious thing.

The Leader of the Opposition has made documents of this House, two Memoranda of Understanding. The Other Side has the benefit of several attorneys-at-law and those apart, they have the benefit of several erudite Barbadians and I believe if they avail themselves of the opportunity to look at any of these documents, they would immediately recognise that these documents are contracts.

It is trite law but for those who may want to challenge it, I went into my small library and brought out Cheshire, Fifoot and Firmston on "The Law of Contract", to remind them that a contract is nothing more than a legal obligation to provide a service or a good for which consideration is provided. Mr. Speaker, in common parlance, there must be an offer, acceptance and consideration.

Mr. Speaker, the Election is over and the members of the Government can now say to the people of Barbados yes, there was a contract; not one but two. Sir, five months ago they could hide and say they did not have the file. Well, we happen to know they had the documents. The very thing they complain of now but the time has come for the Honourable Member for Christ Church South to tell the people of Barbados the truth and to tell the people of this country that the widening of the ABC Highway was governed by a Memorandum of Understanding, a contract, as well as by supplementary agreement and that, moreover, the works were being constructed in accordance with the FIDIC terms and Sir, the time has come to let the people of this country know this.

Mr. Speaker, let us not fool ourselves. Memoranda of Understanding have been used, certainly, by this Administration to great success in Barbados but the Government wants to "pooh-pooh" and demonise the concept of a Memorandum of Understanding. I remind them that the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector in this country, a centre that is worth hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars was proceeded on the basis

of only a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Barbados and Cable and Wireless, and we have liberalised the sector today.

Mr. Speaker, I remind Honourable Members on the Other Side that the construction of the Coast Guard headquarters proceeded apace without a hiccup and was governed by a Memorandum of Understanding. Sir, the construction of the Judicial Centre, that I believe the Honourable Attorney General is expected to open, if not later this year, early next year, is also governed by a Memorandum of Understanding.

The construction of the Prison is also governed by a Memorandum of Understanding. Sir, Tamarind Hall, the civic centre is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding and I think he is being decent by letting it continue. Mr. Speaker, in each case, they are well-run projects, within budget, employing Barbadians and bringing lasting value for Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister slipped into the Budget a little statement about unemployment on page 27. I do not know if it is he sees unemployment as being a little issue because, on Our Side, we certainly did not think that it was. Sir, on page 27, perhaps the single largest issue that will concern Barbadians in the coming months, the Prime Minister sees it fit only to slip in these three lines.

8.50 p.m.

"I could continue to fool myself that unemployment is not a problem in Barbados, and take comfort as the former Government in the published unemployment and inflation statistics." There is another line where he slipped in to say that unemployment in Barbados will go up.

Sir, what is curious is the fact that the entire Government across the length and breadth of this country, before Elections and after Elections, proclaimed that the unemployment figures were wrong. They were grossly understated. There were thousands more Barbadians, according to them, who were still unemployed in this country. Yet, still the Prime Minister could say that unemployment will go up, but he still hopes to keep it within single digits.

Asides.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: You should read the Budget that the Prime Minister read.

Sir, implicit in that is the idea that it is already in single digits. Therefore, the entire Election platform has been rendered nugatory.

Mr. Speaker, in a climate where it is argued by the Government that unemployment will go up, I believe that a reasonable response to expect from them would be that tremendous emphasis is placed on our productive sectors. Sir, there are a lot of pages on agriculture. I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central is pleased at the number of pages. I think that is what delights him, the quantity, but what has eluded us is the quality. That is what has eluded us.

I invite the Honourable Member to be truthful to himself, and to be truthful to the agricultural sector that he champions, and you could almost say he represents, and break down for them each paragraph and identify how that benefits in any material way, the agriculture sector.

Of course, the Prime Minister proclaims that the Agriculture Protection Bill is being drafted. We know it is being drafted. We asked to have it drafted. The policy that informs the draft, is a policy that this Barbados Labour Party approved when we were in Government. To tell us that it is being drafted, is to tell us things we already know, and to tell us things we have already told the public and Parliament. Like so many things you grasp them to your bosom, and proclaim them as your own, but I am concerned about agriculture.

I am not an agronomist but I do know that St. Joseph was once considered to be the bread basket of Barbados, and I do not see a single thing in this Budget, that helps a man in St. Joseph who is growing yams, eddoes, limes or seasoning, not a single thing.

Sir, the Scotland District, an area that has enormous agricultural potential for Barbados, but not a word in it, not a word, but we are not surprised, because we know that while we were the Government we committed our resources, we committed over \$30 million to a Scotland District project that has vanished. Sir, it has vanished just like all of the other projects in the Scotland District. It has vanished just like some of the projects in my Constituency that were started and that have been unceremoniously dumped. It has vanished like the pavilion in Proute's.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, spoke about challenges experienced with the Rural Development Commission in terms of roads. I identify with the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. Three roads in Coffee Gully, started by the Rural Development Commission, but not a piece of marl has been turned since Election. Do you know why? I would tell the Honourable Member for Christ Church South it is because the Barbados Water Authority never went to Coffee Gully to pressure test the pipes.

All these months, they never looked at the roads in the Honourable Member for St. Thomas' Constituency to pressure test the pipes. Sir, image that. I am not surprised

when the Government shows scant regard for the Scotland District. I believe it is part and parcel of their nature.

Sir, I have searched this Manifesto, this Budget. I called it a Manifesto, perhaps, as a slip, but it reminds me so much of a Manifesto, because though it says: "We will do, we are going to consider", everything is: "We will", not a policy, not we are doing. I could refer them to any of the Budgets of the Honourable Member for St. Peter, and the Budget will say in every case, this is what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the reference to Industry and International Business it says, "more urgency will be place on". It says: "Work will be intensified." It says: "We will placed more effort on." It says: "Appropriate systems will be identified." It says: "appropriate resources."

Sir, a sector that provides 65 plus per cent of the corporation taxes in this country, is reduced to those empty platitudes. Look for them. The Honourable Members on That Side have not read it, otherwise the Honourable Member for St. Philip South could hardly get up and talk about International Business in glowing terms.

I saw representatives of BEPA in the Gallery during the Prime Minister's presentation, and I believe they left this Chamber with heads bowed and heavy hearts. Sir, 66 per cent of our Corporation Tax is reduced to five paragraphs in mere 19 or 20 words and not a single incentive mentioned, not a single initiative, not one.

Sir, if that was not bad enough, he was inaccurate too, because the Honourable Member refers to relaxation of exchange controls on capital transactions while referring to the National Business Sector. I believe that the Honourable Member for St. James South would tell him that exchange control regulations do not apply to the International Business Sector. So how do you relax something that does not exist? But, perhaps, it is because the Honourable Member for St. James South did not get the chance to make an input, because having been a practitioner, and a very successful one in the area, I know that is one of the first things that the Honourable Member would have pointed out to the Prime Minister. How could he get the chance when the Ministry is substantially that of somebody else.

Then, of course, the Minister with the day-to-day authority is not him or the other person. It is a Senator. So I am not surprised that the Honourable Member for St. James South did not get the chance to correct something as fundamental as this. Sir, 66 per cent of our corporation, and it is reduced to empty platitudes.

Sir, manufacturing fared no better. The Honourable Member for St. James Central glanced at manufacturing when he was speaking, but not a fellow on That Side has been able to stand up in this Chamber over the last three

days and say to the people of this country that there has been a firm initiative for manufacturing. An initiative is where you take the lead. That is what initiative means. You take the lead.

Sir, once more we see that the strategy in relation to manufacturing is this - for those of you on the Other Side who have not troubled to read it, I would invite you to look at the last paragraph, Page 67.

“We expect that the local furniture industry would receive a fillip from development in housing, office and hotel construction, and in this regard we will be working within the next year to create incentives for hotels and restaurants, shops and real estate developments that use or sell more locally manufactured goods.”

9.00 p.m.

Sir, that is the strategy that this Government has for manufacturing. I am surprised that the manufacturers are not themselves picketing this House now. I imagine they are one of the 40 who had the benefit of sitting in Illaro Court over tea and, perhaps, a glass of Sherry with the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, this is what is called happenstance. This is not initiative. The strategy is reduced to nothing more than saying that because we expect to build hotels, houses and offices, so the manufacturing sector will be able to sell more chairs.

Mr. Speaker, nobody in this country doubts that there has been a construction boom over the last 10 years. If this premise is correct, then it must mean that the last 10 years have been bumper years for the manufacturing sector.

Mr. Speaker, even if that was so, we as an Administration still took great pains to put mechanisms in place to benefit the manufacturing sector. We did not rely on happenstance. We did not say that you built more houses, so Courts will sell more beds and the manufacturers would get to make more beds. We did not see that, Sir, as a prospect. We did not think we could sell that to the manufacturers.

Mr. Speaker, we told our manufacturers that we wanted them to export. We do not want you to concentrate on a domestic market alone. You have not moved anything. You have not done anything and Lord knows, you certainly have not said anything either.

Mr. Speaker, you will be working on incentives within the next year, but the manufacturing sector deserves to have them now. This is exactly what the Member for St. Philip South said, when he spoke. He said that we do not want to wait for another year. We want to see the

incentives now. He is not in his seat but he said so, and they are right to demand it now.

I want to know what the plans are. I do not want to hear that you are going to develop plans because that is to tell me nothing. This is akin to making promises to a fool. I want to know what are the initiatives.

The only step that this Government has taken in relation to manufacturers is to carry up the cost of diesel. It is difficult to imagine, Sir, that they would take manufacturers and imperil them in this way.

Asides.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: I am sorry. That is not the only thing they did. In this Budget they have also increased the Environmental Levy and imposed it on locally produced products. Therefore, our local manufacturers are now paying the higher price of diesel even though it was brought back down. They are now exposed to difficulties in the market, in relation to competition, because the Environmental Levy now applies to them and, therefore, the cost of their goods would be higher. Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that is the kind of emptiness that the people of this country expected.

Mr. Speaker, in our previous Budgets, we reduced taxes for manufacturers. We provided technical assistance funds so that manufacturers could upgrade their plants and retool their enterprises. We provided export promotion assistance. We funded, for five years, a “Buy Local” campaign that saw unprecedented increases in sales from our domestic manufacturers. We established, in our Budgets, a Basic Industries programme.

Mr. Speaker, it is easy to hide and say that we will do this, and over the next year, we will consider. I do not want that kind of planning for me, for my constituents or for any Barbadian.

Mr. Speaker, over the past few years, the manufacturing sector has been a sterling success for this country. It has recorded double digit growth in 2005, 2006 and 2007. It currently employs about 10 000 people and contributes 8 per cent to the GDP. This is a sector that has a right to more concrete ideals.

Mr. Speaker, when the Barbados Labour Party was in Government, we provided millions of dollars to the Enterprise Growth Fund, Fund Access, and the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme. We are now to be treated this week to the following from the Minister of Finance. The Barbados Quick Response Revolving Seed Capital Fund, and he is giving them half a million dollars per year for three years. As quick as they respond, the money will be gone.

Then we are going to get the Barbados Quick Response Venture Capital Fund with no commitment for funding. Not a penny has been promised and likely, not a penny will be given.

This is what we are treated to today. I would like to submit to you, Sir, that the title is everything. The title tells us a lot about this programme.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Thank you, Sir.

Sir, instead of a well thought-out Venture Capital Fund, which is in existence, which has provided opportunities for scores of Barbadians enterprises, has been capitalised jointly by SAGICOR, other private sector agencies and the Government, and so it is a public/private partnership arrangement, what is going to be thrown into the mix now with EGFL, Fund Access and the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, is the Barbados Quick Response Revolving Seed Capital Fund - if you can get through all of that without biting your tongue - and then the Barbados Quick Response Venture Capital Fund.

Mr. Speaker, all these things indicate to me that, notwithstanding 40 groups have been consulted, the Prime Minister really did not take the opportunity to discuss with his Ministers what he was going to be putting in here, because I believe that any reasonable Minister of Finance would say that why am I trying to 'guild the lily' by adding to an already profitable and well capitalised Fund, a Fund for \$500 000.

Mr. Speaker, we have come to a realisation after 14 years in Barbados that the quick-fix approach to our problems is a thing of the distant past. We need well-thought out solutions. We need solutions that have serious potential to get ahead.

Mr. Speaker, we could not fix the sugar industry with the Barbados Quick Response Venture Capital, "bla-bla-bla". We could not fix any of the challenges that beset this country with any quick responses, but that is what we are being offered now - Quick responses, Constituency Councils, promises well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, with time running out, I would like to say that housing is one that I feel I should speak on briefly. Sir, 25 000 Barbadians are in a line for housing, that is according to the Prime Minister. The Minister of Housing said it is 29 000. He boasts that 1 725 people were within 100 days given a letter. Now, these 25 000 Barbadians are in line to rent or to buy and he proffers this 1 725 as a solution. I do not understand it because those 1, 725 are already in National Housing Corporation units, so it could

not have gone anywhere towards reducing a demand for housing. Sir, that is what they wish to boast about, so let them go ahead.

Sir, I am worried that the Government says that they can identify 500 tenantry lots across Barbados and they are going to acquire them. The Tenantry Freehold Purchase Act would apply. They are going to acquire them and then sell them to people.

Mr. Speaker, this Barbados Labour Party Administration acquired land in St. Philip North, the Carpenter's Trust, nearly 100 lots. This Government titled the land and sold the land to the tenants at .10 cents per square foot. This Government committed to selling the lots to the tenants at Parish Land St George for .10 cents per square foot. This Government has committed to selling the land to the 200 tenants on Joe's River Plantation for .10 cents per square foot. Therefore, I am begging the Minister of Housing not to touch any of those places and acquire and then sell it to the people for \$5.

9.10 p.m.

I am begging him, Sir, to leave those things alone.

Mr. Speaker, I am not one who is immersed in the social care side of things, I certainly do not shadow it, but several of my constituents have met with me and said: "Mr. Marshall, we are concerned because we have disabled children and relatives and we want to see a caregiver allowance being provided as of right to any caregiver of a child who is disabled." They have said to me that they also want to see an automatic qualification for welfare assistance.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget is one that I think one famous Latin scholar would refer to as a Brutum fulmen, a thing full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Mr. Speaker, we on This Side rejected the Budget and I expect that all of Barbados will sound their rejection of this Budget in one voice. We start the process here tonight.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East

Dr. The Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate to compliment the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, for having treated this country to a set of Proposals that represent vision, responsiveness, insight, and a commitment to restore the hope of those Barbadians who were left along the way.

Mr. Speaker, one cannot have it both ways. On the one hand, you cannot say that the Government has not done enough, and on the other hand say that the Government

should do more while you make the argument that doing more would result in heightened inflation. Mr. Speaker, I think people need to make up their minds what their perception is of what this Government should be doing.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is not about to accept any advice from individuals who would have had the opportunity to govern this country for 14 years. Mr. Speaker, at the end of it all, they so enraged the public, that the public in a resounding fashion, decided for the Democratic Labour Party as their Government and rejected the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I suppose that anyone could argue that more could have been done. Mr. Speaker, anyone could make an argument that, perhaps, we could have done a little bit more here and a little bit more there but, at the end of the day, our Honourable Prime Minister is committed to prudent fiscal management of this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John is not going to be led down any road by any suggestions by individuals who were silent for so long, like the Honourable Member for St. Andrew. As a matter of fact, it has been noticed that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew does not sit or speak in the Chamber when the Honourable Member for St. Peter is in his seat. Mr. Speaker, we do not understand why.

Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, yesterday, when they were listing a parade of previous Barbados Labour Party Prime Ministers, it was sad to note that they excluded the Honourable Member for St. Peter. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Peter would have made his contribution and the public would have spoken to that contribution.

Mr. Speaker, suffice it to say that if they have not realised it, the Election has come and gone and the Democratic Labour Party is the new Government of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that no one individual is in possession of all the answers, that no one individual is in possession of all that is required to fix anything, and that no one individual is in possession of all that is required to ensure that everything turns out right, but I will tell you this.

Mr. Speaker, I know of an individual in the person of the Honourable Prime Minister of Barbados who is willing to accept that no one individual is in possession of all of the solutions that is why he consults with Barbadians before he makes decisions.

Mr. Speaker, that is important because Barbadians must have a say in the governance of this country.

Barbadians must have a say in how this country runs and how it works. Barbadians must be given an opportunity to tell the Government when they hurt and what hurts and ask the Government to give considerations to those needs. Barbadians must always be at the centre of why Government exists, and at the centre of why Government acts because the actions of the Government should always reflect the needs, the concerns, the hope and the dreams of the people we govern.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see this evening that the good people of Christ Church East have given me an opportunity to be part of this Government and to serve them in this hallowed Chamber and that they are willing and ready to support the measures presented by this Government. Mr. Speaker, I have been out and about and I have heard what they have had to say.

Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation not to continue business as usual but to take this country to the further mile. We have an opportunity to now take up what was given us and to take it to the next level. Mr. Speaker, it is our commitment, by the grace of the Almighty, to ensure that we do the very best job that we can do with the help of the people of this country to make this society a better society for one and all.

Mr. Speaker, managing a country is not simply about managing an economy. We accept that the economic realities of a country are critical to ensuring that those social and cultural needs are met and are fed by a strong economy. We understand, Mr. Speaker, that what is driving economic realities, particularly in Small Island Developing States, is a global network of challenges that all economies are facing and that the bigger economies now are trying to join with the smaller economies to see how they could enable and support small economies to survive in this very difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that there is an oil crisis so that the problems in Barbados relative to energy cannot be locally born problems. We understand that there is a food crisis around the globe. We understand that countries, all sizes, are now looking at land space and seeking to grow more of their food, particularly in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we do not have a lot of land space, but what it means to us is that we are going to have to use our land more carefully now and we are going to have to preserve space to grow food to feed our people because, at the end of the day, a nation that cannot feed its own is a nation that has failed its people.

Mr. Speaker, we intend to ensure that whatever we could do, we would try to stimulate agriculture. The Honourable Prime Minister has demonstrated in this document that we would give more to agriculture because

we have to enable agriculture to do more in feeding the people.

Mr. Speaker, we have to reduce our food import bill, therefore we have to make sure that we target small farmers all across the country to ensure that they have a better opportunity to make their contribution in this regard.

9.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we understand there is global warming and therefore what we have to do is to ensure that our environmental measures are critical. Sir, we are six months into office. They have declared that the honeymoon is over, although the one who speaks of honeymoon may not necessarily have the experience of a honeymoon. Sir, that is okay, but what is real about the circumstances is that this Government is not folding up and shirking. This Government is not folding up and getting afraid.

Mr. Speaker, we know what are the challenges and collectively we are going to face them. We are going to steer this ship safely through those difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, that is our commitment and therefore we do not mind those who hurl stones and accusations at us, or those who try to belittle us. We are confident this collective of individuals have what it takes, by the Grace of the Almighty, to fight this battle. Sir, we are going to take this country to another level because if the Barbados Labour Party could have done it, we can do it too.

Mr. Speaker, they have accused us in this debate of recanting on our philosophies. Some Honourable Members on the Other Side said that the Democratic Labour Party Government of the day no longer embraces or connects with the philosophy. Sir, they did not tell us what theirs was, which is curious enough, but let me say, this Democratic Labour Party Government continues to stand firm on the philosophical creeds of the founding fathers.

We still believe it is important that as we move this country forward, that every Barbadian, regardless of the circumstances into which he or she was born, regardless of the circumstances of his or her present life status, has an equal opportunity to succeed in this society.

Sir, this Democratic Labour Party begins to rebuild the society by building the man from the bottom and allowing him to rise to the top, because many of us in this hallowed place this evening stood on the shoulders of those who were deprived of a secondary education. We stood on the shoulders of those who would have wanted more for themselves but these people were prepared to sacrifice in order to build a society which could stand in any part of the world, and be proud to say we are Barbadians and we are proud of our heritage.

Sir, we intend to continue that journey. We intend to continue to be faithful to the philosophy that tells us that the most arduous journey of any people, is the quest to achieve social and equal justice in a society.

We are not going to be a Government for the rich and not for the poor, but we will be a Government that would not persecute the rich for their riches, but would encourage them to come back to the society and to enable those at the bottom to rise, just as they would have risen in the society.

Sir, that is the commitment of this Government., therefore, when someone says that we have lost our philosophy, we are about building ordinary lives. We are about taking people who would ordinarily be rejected. We are about taking those persons who, in another type of political system, might not be acknowledged or admired for what they bring to the table.

Sir, we have always believed and will continue to believe that this Democratic Labour Party is about reaching down where the ordinary man dwells. We believe in taking that ordinary man, full of his infirmities, whatever they maybe, and saying to that man that as long as he dares try in this Barbadian society, there will always be an opportunity for him to maximise his human potential and to become involved in his self-determination.

Mr. Speaker, that is what the Democratic Labour Party believes, and any society anywhere in the world that fails to understand where it has been and where it is going, would be a society that is unable to pass on its legacy to the next generation.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, perhaps that is the problem because when the Democratic Labour Party begins to talk about what are the tenets of its Government and good governance, we talk about standards of accountability, standards of stewardship, standards of morality and about standards of efficiency.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Sir, I heard a voice echoing from somewhere across the way, but if anyone wants to speak of morality, that voice should be silent. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about morality, we are not simply talking about moral values, but about moral virtues. We are talking about how people live, how they act, and how they respond to the needs of people who need them the most. When we talk about morality, we are talking about not exploiting the circumstances of the weak, as we saw in this Honourable Chamber this evening.

Mr. Speaker, let me pause to talk to that, because the Honourable Member for Christ Church West did what I consider to be a heartless act, when the Honourable Member brought a picture of a man living in an indigent position, who requested help since May 10, 1999, where someone had done an inventory on that man's circumstances and it was determined that man should have been given a house.

Sir, it was in the most callous and regrettable way that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West paraded a picture in this Honourable Chamber and then tried to impute negative motives on the Minister of State in the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, when the role is called up yonder for accountability, I hope the Honourable Member for Christ Church West would be there.

Mr. Speaker, what is so wrong if an old man, who waited since 1999 for assistance, could finally get it now that the Democratic Labour Party is in office? What is wrong with that?

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please, we still need to hear the Honourable Member. Please keep the noise down.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a Government that anchors its commitments to this nation in the social developmental aspects of its people. Mr. Speaker, we do not have to bring photographs to prove anything. Sir, we do have photographs too and a time is coming when those photographs would be revealed. Sir, what happens to us on This Side is that we do not believe we should turn these hallowed halls into a place for dog- fighting or cock-fighting, although there are some who might prefer cock-fighting over dog-fighting.

Mr. Speaker, we have watched, for many years, to see how the reputation of persons have been dragged through here, as though it was a place for blood sport. We have seen how the reputations of people and their characters were sullied, because of the insensitivity of some. Sir, our commitment to Barbadians is that we intend to build upon what has been handed to us and make this place a better place for all Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals marks the return of a people-centred process. It

marks the return of Government and governance, where people are at the heart of our thinking.

9.30 p.m.

Sir, what drives this Government is what people have to say about their own experience. What drives this Government is what people are feeling in the society because I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East speak in this Chamber today and talked about walking a walk that is best reflected in his disposition towards service to people.

Well, he might have been summoned and, perhaps, he will be executed. I do not know, but I say this to you. It has gone out in this whole public that there are persons on This Side and that there are persons on That Side who believe in the same basic tenets of good Government and governance that this Government advocates.

Mr. Speaker, why should it be an issue of contention if the Government decides to put our school children on a bus to ride free? What is the issue? Sir, when we said free secondary education, it was an issue for the Barbados Labour Party. When we said we would do school meals, I believe one would have said they would have preferred to punch holes in the ...

Sir, the message from the Member from That Side who spoke today so eloquently was this, that unless you have walked the walk and lived the life of the holy and the lowly; unless you have been there yourself, you may never be able to understand what the journey of the poor and the downtrodden might be.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Honourable Member for St. Peter is one who prides himself in his humble beginnings. I know he is one who would say that he did not grow up as a child of privilege, but because of the work of the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, the Honourable Member was able to achieve a fantastic education and make his contribution to his society.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that not by his own doing but obsolescence seems to be setting in and it seems to me that there is an effort now to minimise his contribution because he does not fit within the culture, he does not fit within the mores of that institution, but you cannot diminish the experience of a man. You cannot take from a man his own contribution.

I am here because I understand what it is to be a first generation college graduate in my entire family history. I know what it is to sleep under cellars, to be without food, not to have friends. I know what it is to be like that. Therefore, my journey now is to be a disciple for those persons who would otherwise be left out there unless the

Government had a heart for the people, so it is people-centred.

We want to make sure that our people, our children are protected from the vices of the society. We did not make the society like this. The Barbadian society has deteriorated over the last 14 years and whether you want to accept it or not, one of the reason is perhaps because some of the things they observe happening right here on the Floor of this Parliament.

Sir, that is the reality. Therefore, it is the commitment of this Government to ensure that we rescue our youth and that any social virulent vices out there that would impact negatively upon them, we are going to protect them from those vices. Sir, we will do whatever it takes because an investment in our children is an investment in our future and if we have to put them on the buses and take the PSVs out of circulation, we will take them out unless they are prepared to ensure that they fall in line and join the Government as a partner in preserving the well-being of our children.

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

Dr. the Hon. D.S. LOWE: Sir, I would like to have one hour, or two because I have a lot to say. Mr. Speaker, social care. We talk about a social safety net and sometimes I wonder what we understand by that. Sir, a social safety net ought not to be a trap to hold people in a state of dependency. It ought to be a point of transition from where they are found in that state to where we want to take them as a society.

Therefore, we believe that while the social safety net is vital in helping to preserve those persons who would otherwise fall outside the net, that the net must be constructed within a framework where people understand that welfare, the social safety net is not a holding bay forever, but that we would have to move people from that first phase of their social inadequacies, whatever they are, all the way up to a point of empowerment where we enable them through education and training and we move them to a point where we can sustain a reasonable quality of life in this society.

Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest to you that this Democratic Labour Party Government is intended to reform our social care system in this society. We want to make them better, we do not want to leave anyone on the outside but we want to make sure that when people come into that net that it is not a holding bay, but rather, it acts like a trampoline that would move people from there to a higher level of functioning because every single human being would prefer to enjoy the kind of quality of life that they should have.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about increasing, for example, child welfare assistance from \$25 to \$35, a 40 per cent increase; children over 16, a 25 per cent increase from \$28 to \$35 and able-bodied adults from \$28 to \$33, a 20 per cent increase, when we talk about the low disabled and the medium disabled, we are talking about persons who we are committed to ensuring that they are enabled in this society.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Joseph talked about the disabled. We have to do everything we can do to make life in this country for disabled persons better but what have they done in 14 years and how could he come today and advises us as to what we should be doing when, in truth and in fact, they had 14 years? They had \$300 million in VAT surplus. The Honourable Prime Minister of that year said that the country was batting like Sobers and rather than stroking runs, all the Honourable Member incurred as the Honourable Prime Minister was cost over-runs.

Mr. Speaker, if you are batting like Gary Sobers you should be stroking runs, not over-runs.

9.40 p.m.

Sir, we have Greenland. We have St. Leonard's. We have the bath at Silver Sands, the "Golden Shower", 3S and other S's on the Highway, and the list goes on and on. Then we have the Urban Development Commission. I want to say to this Chamber, in my closing minutes, that the Urban Development Commission would be a full-fledged debate in this Chamber. Just let me say that we are still searching for 10 years of house building in this country, and cannot find 20 per cent of the houses.

Sir, we have a case where Hardwood Housing was paid on three different occasions to build houses, then the Urban Development Commission had to turn around and pay to get the houses built. We have a case where, in the records of their finances, a house was supposed to be built and was paid for in St. Michael North East. I took a tour to the site and the house that was supposed to be a brand new house is a broken-down house with four children living there because the mother died waiting on the house, and the money was already disbursed.

Sir, we have a case where there are no financial records for the month of December and January, and those are the months where this Parliament approved a Supplementary for over \$8 million. Sir, when people begin to talk about accountability and transparency, I think we need to be honest. "Let him that is without iniquity cast the first stone." If you live in a house that is made of glass, if you are going to throw anything, throw fur balls. Do not throw rocks. This is no joke.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you need to wind down at this stage.

Dr. The Hon. D.S. LOWE: Sir, I have a very long wind, so let me wind down.

Mr. SPEAKER: Your time has essentially expired. You need to conclude at this stage.

Dr. the Hon. D.S. LOWE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have to ensure that as the Government goes forward, it goes forward totally conscious that the building of a society, is not the establishment of monuments and highways, but it is the building of the lives of its citizens, one by one, family by family, and community by community.

Mr. Speaker, I am much obliged to you.

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

The Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I have spent the last 22 years of my life as a servant of this Parliament, in the capacity as the Shadow spokesman on Finance, and 14 years as the Minister of Finance of this country. Those 22 years constitute essentially the core of my life's work.

You must believe me when I tell you that in addition to an intellectual interest in the Barbadian economy and society, that after giving 22 years in those capacities, I feel that I have a vested psychic interest in the success of Barbados and the success of our economy. I mean that wholeheartedly.

Mr. Speaker, during the years that I have been in Finance, I feel that I would have given an opportunity for my generation, not just me but my generation, to make a contribution to the development of this country and its economy. I say my generation meaning those of us who saw the attainment of Independence of this country through the eyes of either teenagers, as I was, or through the eyes of young adults.

This Budget debate in which we are engaged has a historic dimension, because in every real sense, the mantle of leadership for this economy and this country has been passed from my generation to those whom I would want to describe as the children of Independence, and it is that historic significance of what we are about. I do not, in any respect, begrudge those who assume the leadership of our country. I wish them every success, and I would frame my remarks in this debate and all my debates in this House, within the context of that transition that is being made, both

in respect of the leadership of the country, but also in the paradigm shift that Barbados now has to make.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, the generation that assisted me in helping me to manage this country's affairs over the last 14 years has left a good heritage. Everything obviously was not perfectly done, but I believe that on balance the record is one of which the generation can be proud. There was never a year, and there will never be a year, where a society of Barbados will not face challenges that must be confronted. We will never be in a position of some countries, like the Arab countries, where we are so flushed that decisive decisions will not have to be made.

Sir, I remember in 1995, leading a country, coming away from recession, where the rates of savings were too low, and to prepare the way for growth for the future we had to find the way of stimulating savings and investment in this country. I remember 1998 as a transition year, where in one year we had to bring to account, for the first time, new WTO Rules in this country, that asked our domestic and agriculture sectors to face international competition at home for the first time.

While we were doing that, beginning to fit our economy into a single market by reducing the CET to 20 per cent, facing our domestic producers with intense competition from the Region; while we were doing that, bringing to account a Value Added Tax (VAT), and while we were doing that, facing the OECD threat to our second largest enterprise. Sir, by 2000 we had to grapple with the challenge of dealing with the post September 11 consequences.

Sir, after that was finished, we had to grapple with the fact that our balance of payment current account was too large, and had to deal with the hardest thing in a small society, how to raise the ratio of exports and private capital to GDP in the shortest period of time.

Sir, we had to face what I regard as part of a paradigm, unprecedented increase in energy prices, food prices and competition in the global economy coming from the rest of the world. Sir, there will never be a time in this country's economic circumstances where they will be facing challenges to be faced and addressed. Sir, I want to say to this Honourable House that my generation, who had the opportunity to lead, did as good a job as could be done in the circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, we set goals that Barbados must begin to feel that it has a right to full development. We may not get there immediately, but we must accept that it is a goal that Barbados should abolish unemployment in our time and, that Barbados should abolish poverty. We have not got there yet, but we set those as goals and the progress towards them were measurable. We left a country that used

to be fourth in terms of poverty eradication, at the top of the pile.

Sir, in relation to unemployment, I know a country when unemployment was 27 per cent. Now we are importing labour and unemployment has dropped to record low levels. I know of a country where there was, with respect to evaluation, reserves were \$247 million. The reserves are now at \$2.7 billion, and I could go on.

Sir, if you were to ask me what was that greatest legacy, the average Barbadian believes that home ownership should be a private matter.

9.50 p.m.

The National Housing Corporation has been the residue and it has been so through our history. Sir, giving Barbadians the opportunity to become involved in home ownership is not just a national housing corporation thing. It is a thing that really should engross economic policy.

If you ask me what was my generation's contribution, it would be home ownership. Sir, between 1986 and 1994, mortgages extended by the private banking system increased from \$29 million to \$31 million. Between 1994 and 2007, it increased from \$31 million to \$1 222 million.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, when I speak of my generation, I speak of persons who came out of poverty too, but came to leadership in the public sector and private sector through the education. I speak of people whom I had to teach at the University. I speak especially, Mr. Speaker, of the leadership of the Trade Union Movement whom I want to salute this evening for their contribution, such as Sir Roy Trotman, and the leadership of the private sector.

Sir, you must allow me to do what former Prime Ministers do. There were two especially, whom I want to thank for their support. I thank them because they did not have to do it and I thank them, Sir, because in 1994, before I became the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister, they were my two harshest critics on the Democratic Labour Party platforms, two men of the University and two fine minds, Dr. Frank Alleyne and Sir Hilary Beckles. They gave of their worth to Barbados because they were genuine patriots. I want to thank them, Sir, as I speak this evening.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, the mantle has been passed to what I call, the children of Independence. I say that we will leave them a goodly heritage. I wish them all the best, Mr. Speaker, in how they proceed to deal with the

country's future. I want to suggest in my presentation that we are off to an invidious start in the way in which the new leadership is seeking to treat to the problems and the challenges that confront this country.

I will frame my brief response by trying to ask and answer a series of very simple questions and answers. In the Proposals that have been presented in the House as Budgetary Proposals, and as representing the embodiment of Government's economic policy, are we doing the right thing, using its own logic and using ordinary test of a reasonableness:

Firstly, is the Government doing the right thing? Secondly, are you doing the things in the right way?

Thirdly, are you doing things for the right reasons?

Fourthly, are there better things that could have been done, given the circumstances that you have been faced with?

I start with the first issue - Are you doing the right thing, using not my logic, not my standards of reasonableness, but you own logic and your standards of reasonableness?

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance purported to make available a Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals to the House. It did not contain a financial statement. I would imagine that was an oversight that would be corrected. Sir, he said enough to enable us to understand what is his perception of the prevailing economic circumstances of Barbados and the challenges to which Government policy should respond. I shall not invent anything other than to refer to what he said.

He said enough to indicate that we are faced with a situation of declining growth in the economy, and given the sharp nature of the international environment within which our development is now framed, there is a possibility of further stagnation. He also, Mr. Speaker, pointed to the fact that prices have spiked and may continue to rise in the future.

Taken together, a declining economy and rising prices amount to a situation of stagflation. It is not something that we must throw up our hands about, Mr. Speaker, it is objectively what is before us.

The question is if that is what you have to face by your Administration, how should you deal with it, and what should be the package of measures that you should bring to Parliament if the objective facts that face you and the objective circumstances are one of potential stagflation.

Mr. Speaker, what the Honourable Member has brought to the House by his admission and by admission by most commentators now is a tax increase package. The tax increases are going to be certain and most of the potential benefits are nebulous so that we know that there is going to be a heavy increase in taxation in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, let me use the numbers and use your own logic. The measures are intended to enable the Government to fulfill what the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has set as the basis for policy. There was a lot of consultation but, at the end of the day, there is an IMF Press Release that says fiscal policy should focus on creating space for targeted groups of vulnerable people - hence the busfares. The IMF has agreed to it while bringing the public debt ratio on a firmly declining trend, over the medium-term. Mr. Speaker, that is what this Budget is about.

Mr. Speaker, I ask us to use the test of reasonableness. You say that your deficit is 1 per cent of GDP. I know of no aspect of economic theory I know of no experience in practice, where a Government faced with the potential of stagnation would want to increase taxes; and to increase taxes by the extent to which the Honourable Member has done. Mr. Speaker, I also want to say this. What is the context within which you now want to impose a tax increase on the people of Barbados and what are other countries doing?

Now, we have a deficit of 1.9 per cent of GDP and the Honourable Member said that it is not going to increase. Our policies are now to bring down the deficit and to bring down the debt. I would like Honourable Members to refer to the "Economist" of June 7.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at other countries. The United States of America has a deficit for this year of 2.4 per cent, bigger than Barbados, but there is no International Monetary Fund that could go and tell President Bush that he should be taking a deficit and reducing it, when he faces stagflation. In Britain, Mr. Speaker, the deficit is bigger than ours of 3.2 per cent.

Sir, we have a deficit of 1.9 per cent. We have reserves of \$2.7 billion. Sir, rather than now seeking to bring stableness to the economy, we bring to this House, a series of measures to clamp down. I do not understand it.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, can I go forward? France has a deficit of 2.9; Greece, 2.6; Italy, 2.6.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that by international standards there is no good reason why a country that has a fiscal deficit before it of 1.9 per cent

should be looking now to be increasing this large range of taxes, faced with stagflation to bring down that deficit further, when it has the cushion of \$2.7 billion to help it.

Mr. Speaker, it is my judgment that the best standards of reasonableness, the correct thing is not being done.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush is not seeking to increase taxes in the United States of America. He is looking to find ways of stimulating America.

I would support a series of measures carefully calibrated to continue to stimulate the Barbados economy, rather than doing what we are doing.

Secondly, are we doing them in the right way?

Mr. Speaker, I have been the Minister of Finance for 14 years. I used to tell folks in the Ministry of Finance that there is no way that anybody is going to get me to put on any clothes or whatever to go down to Parliament and deal with trifling things like imposing a bicycle fee and all those kinds of things. We have gone past that, Mr. Speaker. Sir, we have gone past it for a good reason.

Sir, the Value Added Tax has brought within the tax bracket, a large number of these very groups, who would hitherto not have been paying taxes, or would have been paying taxes at too low a rate.

Mr. Speaker, it was always my position that rather than coming to the House and fooling around with a little tax here and there, and troubling this person and that person, even persons on bicycles, to allow the VAT and the growth of the economy to raise the revenue for us.

10.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we thought that by introducing the Value Added Tax that we had gone past the stage where we would not have to come to the House and be involved in what I call trifling nonsense of requiring a bicycle tax to be moved from \$3 to \$25 to help to bring down the fiscal deficit, because that is all they are intending to do. Mr. Speaker, we have found the most clumsy and brutal way to carry out a function that needed not to be performed.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Democratic Labour Party to understand that the objective should not now be to reduce the deficit of 1.9 per cent, but it should be to help expand the economy, and I would support them in that.

Mr. Speaker, I made the point all through my professional career that the deficit should be around 2.5 per cent of GDP, and if you have to stimulate, go above that if

you need to contract. Mr. Speaker, this is now time for expansion. Sir, could better have been done?

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to use the test of reasonableness. In this very financial year, this Government has, in fact, given a bonanza. I would have spoken to the country about removing the tax on bank assets some time around 2000, but there were certain conditions that had to be met before I could agree to do that.

Mr. Speaker, it is costing the Treasury \$18 million because that is what I used to raise and that is what they have decided to do. In this very year when you are asking people to pay more money for bicycle fees, you have given the banking system, that is flushed, \$18 million back. Could better therefore have been done? I say yes, Sir. Rather than giving it to the banking system...

Sir, over the course of the last term, we carried out a programme of tax reform to raise the threshold to \$25 000, reduce the personal Income Tax rates, both from 40 per cent to 33 per cent and to 20 per cent. We dropped the Corporation Tax rate and the Land Tax rate.

Mr. Speaker, we needed to carry on that programme of tax reform this year, as proposed in the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto to introduce a personal income tax that would allow those persons who are earning up to \$7 000 a year to be able to pay tax at 25 per cent rather than to give it to the banks. That is a choice that they could have exercised.

Sir, we have also proposed in our Manifesto that part of the tax reform was to... We have a situation where pensioners do not pay taxes on their savings. Sir, it would not have cost them a lot of money to allow those persons who are getting the Reversed Tax Credit not to have to pay the withholding tax on their savings. That is in our Manifesto as well.

Could better have been done, Mr. Speaker? I believe that more could have been done for development. Mr. Speaker, the editorials have pointed to the fact that this is the minimalist in terms of development.

Mr. Speaker, I will speak about what is in our Manifesto. Our Manifesto says that Barbados has reached saturation point on the West Coast and we should open a new frontier for development on the South-eastern corridor of Barbados. My Manifesto that I helped to prepare says that our growth would come no longer from the West Coast - but not from offshore islands - but from opening up the South-eastern part of Barbados, including St. John, taking opportunity of the fact that CLICO and others were prepared to make investment to carry our development to

that area. We proposed in our Manifesto to make South-eastern Barbados the next frontier of development.

Mr. Speaker, we are now hearing the Honourable Member for St. John, who represents South-eastern Barbados proposing to carry the development into the sea 15 or 20 years from now.

Mr. Speaker, we say let us open up St. Lucy, not in the terms of an airport but by carrying services to St. Lucy. Mr. Speaker, we have put arrangements in place for a town centre to be built, for special development areas and for new housing for St. Lucy. Sir, those things would have stimulated Barbados' economy. They could have been done now and it would carry forward the growth.

I also feel, Mr. Speaker, that the initiatives that we set in train to raise the ratio of exports to GDP should have been accelerated and that greater resources should have been given to Invest Barbados and a greater set of initiatives should have been brought to bear to spur on that.

Sir, the last thing our Administration did was to create a Scotland District Authority because the Scotland District has the potential to be the food basket of Barbados. A first year implementation plan for the Scotland District to help generate food has been prepared. It is in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development but the Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs and Development; Labour, Civil Service and Energy refused to support it. Mr. Speaker, you cannot be serious about wanting to address issues about food security if you do not take initiatives like that seriously.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make the point that it is a necessity for the new leadership of Barbados to stop sending mixed messages and mixed signals and stop missing opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I was a leader of Barbados who had responsibility for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. Mr. Speaker, I really am disappointed that mixed messages are being sent first of all about that and that the enormous potential for our stimulation of this economy to deal with the CARICOM Single Market and Economy issues was not at all addressed by a Prime Minister who has lead responsibility for it.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people in this country who believe that I used to speak from a position of abstractness about the CARICOM Single Market and Economy where Barbados is concerned. Sir, I ought, perhaps, to have brought to Barbados attention the need for us to be unequivocal about charting Barbados' future development in the context of a strong CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

Mr. Speaker, let me give you some facts that I should have given the country before. Between 1995 and 2004, Jamaica's exports to CARICOM amounted to 3.4 per cent of Jamaica's total exports. For all the NDCs, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados, it was 12.9 per cent. For CARICOM as a whole, exports to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy was 13 per cent of their exports. For Barbados, our exports to CARICOM represented between 35 and 46 per cent of our exports per year.

Mr. Speaker, if the CARICOM Single Market and Economy fails, Jamaica is exposed only in terms of 3 per cent of its exports. In our case, since 1995, our exports grew to \$421 million and our CARICOM exports in 2005 was \$224 million. Mr. Speaker, 53 per cent of our exports go to CARICOM. In 2006, we had \$491 million in exports of which \$248 million was to CARICOM or 50.5 per cent. In 2007, our exports were \$513 million and our exports to CARICOM were \$253 million, 49.3 per cent. Sir, we cannot be equivocal about the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes in which to conclude.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, in addition to our exports, every year 100 000 of our tourists came from CARICOM. We exported \$418 million to the rest of the Caribbean. Many service providers in Barbados depend upon the Caribbean market for their growth and development.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing equivocal sounds coming from the leadership of Barbados about the future of our commitments to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. We cannot afford what other countries may want to happen to the Caribbean. As I said, Jamaica has only 3 per cent of its exports on the line. Mr. Speaker, neither can we send the signal that we want to sell the rest of the Region our goods and services, but we do not want them to have anything to come into Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am obviously not going to be able to address some of the other matters that I would like to talk about because it is not only a new leadership, but a new paradigm, and that is a different speech.

Mr. Speaker, I would have promised to support my leader in making my personal affairs available to the public of Barbados. I strongly support the introduction of Integrity legislation. I regret that we sought a way where we had a Special Envoy... We went to the UN and helped to develop the UN Convention.

We helped draft a CARICOM model log and we did not bring the legislation to the House, but I strongly support it. I feel it is going to make our public affairs better. I also feel that it is going to be good for politicians because all of us, Mr. Speaker, in every respect are the victims of the most scandalous rumours on our integrity.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make mine available first to you. Mr. Speaker, I do not believe in concealed disclosure, so I will share with the House what I am about to tell you. Mr. Speaker, you would find in this disclosure that my principal asset is a house at West Terrace that is now valued at \$683 000. Thanks to the Democratic Labour Party, my financial conditions have improved somewhat. Mr. Speaker, because I am now a former Prime Minister, I was able to get a gratuity and a reduced pension.

10.10 p.m.

That gratuity that I have now parked in the bank, a gratuity of \$384 000, was paid to me as a former Prime Minister. That is now among my assets. Sir, it is the second largest of my assets.

Mr. Speaker, I would have said before in Barbados that I have some shares that I bought, 20 000, in the Insurance Corporation of Barbados, which are now worth \$79 000. I have two life insurance policies worth \$161 000.

Mr. Speaker, I would just let the Other Side know I have some fixed deposits. Mr. Speaker, those of us in politics, from time to time, know what it is to have to bear when we have wounds and gashes inflicted on us by the media.

In my time, I have had to suffer, but my lawyers have intervened and there have been a little balm in Gilead because from time to time, I have been able to benefit from these libel suits, and I would urge all Honourable Members to follow suit. Sir, in every instance, I have put these funds into specially-termed deposits.

Mr. Speaker, I am here disclosing all of my assets. I have also liabilities. I have a mortgage of \$366 000 on my house at West Terrace. I have \$69 000 as a Scotia Plan Loan that I raised to help to send my daughter to university. I have a visa card credit balance of \$23 000.

There are two other matters that I am not in a position, I believe, to speak of. I have a special account which I help to finance my father's medical care. It is in his name but I am the signatory to it. I am in the process of concluding an arrangement to purchase a car, borrowing the full resources from Consolidated Finance.

Sir, these are what I have and these are what I own: a house, \$385 000 as gratuity, some savings, 20 000 shares in

Insurance Corporation of Barbados, two life insurance policies. I am making this available to you.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my presentation, we are involved in a paradigm change and it would have been a wonderful thing if, at a time when we had this paradigm change, the country would have been asked to evaluate a series of measures that address themselves to the paradigm change that is about to take place.

There was a time in Barbados when we spoke in terms of developing a country within the context of low inflation, low energy prices, low interest rates and matters of this character. That is no longer available to us and we have to chart a new development for this country, taking into consideration the fact that the future is one in which many of the assumptions of the past, including the recent past, would not hold into the future.

Sir, regrettably, the opportunity was not grasped to treat this as a change in paradigm which would require a set of new changes. Therefore, I must tell this Government that outside in the wider society, given the fiddling nature with which they have sought to deal with this country's formidable economic challenges - and they are formidable - and given the burden that is being placed on ordinary people, perhaps the words of Milton in "Paradise Lost" applies to what we heard, because this is what is happening over the rest of Barbados:

"He hears on all sides, from innumerable tongues

A dismal universal hiss, the sound of public scorn."

Mr. Speaker, we need change. The Democratic Labour Party promised change. What they have given to the country is a series of measures intended only to placate a series of small interest groups, but not to address the fundamental challenge of how you take a country out of stagflation, how you sustain the country's transition, and how you move a country from one position of development to the other.

Sir, for that reason I join with those who are raising this dismal universal hiss and tell the Government that by the standards as to whether it is the best thing to be done, if it is being done in the right way; by the standards as to whether better could have been done in the circumstance, and by the standards whether you are now carrying Barbados to a different level of development, I am not in a position to support what is before this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you. Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, the debate on the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for 2008 is inching towards its end and I rise to make a brief contribution to that debate. Sir, the contribution I am about to make could

only have been possible, of course, as a result of the confidence placed in me by the charming people of the Constituency of St. Michael South.

Therefore, I want to begin by placing on record, once again, my gratitude to them for affording me this opportunity to be their voice in the Parliament of this country. Mr. Speaker, I renew my pledge to be an effective voice in their interest, to rejoice with them when they rejoice, and to weep with them when they weep.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened to this debate over the last two days, and I have heard the speeches from Honourable Members on the Other Side of the Honourable House. Sir, as I rise to speak now, I am still asking myself, what is the case which this Government has to answer?

Mr. Speaker, I have not heard anything said in this Honourable Chamber during this debate, to suggest that the measures introduced by the Honourable Member for St. John are so out of sync with Barbadian reality that I should dissociate myself from them. In fact, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. John, for the thoughtfulness and imagination which the Honourable Member brought to bear on the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for the year 2008.

I have listened, with amused interest, to the Honourable Member for St. Peter, who has delivered Economic and Policy Statements in this Honourable Chamber for the last 14 years. As the Honourable Member for St. Peter spoke, I kept asking myself, if all the Honourable Member was saying were true, what was it that the people of Barbados were dissatisfied about during the month of January?

What was it they were dissatisfied about for the last three or four years in this country, if all of these solutions were within his embrace? Are the people of Barbados stupid? Do they not know when they are feeling pain? Do they not know when a government has divorced itself from their interest? Do they not know when the policies of a government are inimical to their ideals?

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to err with the people of Barbados rather than to get swept along by all that I heard from the Honourable Member for St. Peter over the last 30 minutes. The most reassuring part of the Honourable Member's speech, of course, was that no private citizen in this country had to fear tonight being abused from the Floor of this Honourable Chamber.

Asides.

10.20 p.m.

No civil servant has to endure today, although telephone calls were made over the last few days, had to endure any threats from the Honourable Member for St. Peter and for the very simple reason that he spoke in this Chamber tonight as a naked man, stripped down to the skin of all the arrogance and all the hubris that the people of Barbados had to endure, particularly over the last 10 years. He did not even speak in here tonight as a man with any particular motivation to see the Democratic Labour Party never rule Barbados again. Sir, even that was missing from the contribution which he made to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, if there is any lesson in all of this, it is that we should never forget the source of our power. We should always remember that power comes from the people. It is theirs to give and theirs to withdraw.

Sir, tonight this very lonely man stood up in this Chamber, can reach out and touch no one in Barbados really, not even anyone on his side of the House because when I survey, not the wondrous cross but the Opposition Benches, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North has no particular reason to love him since he had to throw a Cabinet position back in his face. He cannot expect the affection of the Honourable Member for St. Thomas since the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has pre-empted that affection.

The Honourable Member for St. James North has been treated like a football, abused and insulted by the Honourable Member for St. Peter for the last 10 years or so and, Sir, I know whereof I speak. Although the Honourable Member for St. James North is, perhaps, the most rounded and the most intelligent politician in the Barbados Labour Party, he has had to take insults and abuse from the Honourable Member for St. Peter for a good 10 or 12 years and, tonight, sits in his seat a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George North is, perhaps, the only friend that the Honourable Member for St. Peter has on That Side and for obvious reasons, their habits are not dissimilar. Missing from his seat is the Honourable Member for St. Andrew.

I have to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. John because whatever else this Budget did not do, it certainly made the dumb to speak, so the age of miracles has not ceased. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew stood up in this Chamber and made a full speech but he too, has been at the receiving end of the implacable ire, rage and spite, in some cases, of the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think anybody in Barbados rejoices more than the Honourable Member for St. Andrew that the nakedness of the Honourable Member for St. Peter

is now so cruelly exposed. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph, well he would follow anything. You do not have to bother about him because he would follow anything.

Sir, I know this. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, she too was at the receiving end of no small bit of undermining, abuse and backstabbing from the Honourable Member for St. Peter. Sir, again, I know whereof I speak, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East also knows whereof I speak. Politeness may make her nod her head and say "No" and I appreciate the politeness, but I know whereof I speak.

Mr. Speaker, tonight what we saw in here was the unmasking of power and I hope that all Barbadians looking on and listening to this debate would have learnt the lesson that he that humblest himself should be exalted, but he that exalted himself shall be abased.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I think it bears reminding the country that the Government responsible for the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for this year has been in office for 175 days to date and listening to the speeches coming from the Other Side with the exception, of course, the speech from the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, one got the impression that all of the Manifesto pledges of the Democratic Labour Party should have been satisfied in 175 days.

As the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East ended her 3 hours and 10 minutes speech, as she entered into her peroration, perhaps I should withdraw the word "peroration". That word, I think, is reserved for speeches that are well structured and eloquently delivered. I should say as she entered into her perspiration about how the policemen are not happy, the nurses are not happy and the teachers have been let down but the Democratic Labour Party has not fulfilled the promises it made in this Manifesto, Sir, in 175 days.

Mr. Speaker, we came to office on January 16, 2008. When we came to office, there were just under 30 000 people in Barbados waiting on the National Housing Corporation for either a house or a house spot. This Government is being chastised tonight, and has been chastised since yesterday evening, for not providing just under 30 000 houses or house spots to people in Barbados in 175 days. When we came to office on January 16, 2008, even using the figures relied on by Honourable Members on the Other Side, there are about 15 000 in this country trying to find jobs. Sir, every single member on This Side of the House knows that when you go to your constituency clinic, that is what you hear about, jobs, houses or house spots and, Sir, in 175 days, the Democratic Labour Party in Government was supposed to provide 14 000 or 15 000 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, when we came to office on January 16, 2008, the current account of the balance of payments was in deficit to the tune of about \$485 million. This Government in 175 days was supposed to wipe out that deficit so that it could attract the praise and the kudos of Honourable Members of the Opposition.

10.30 p.m.

Sir, when we came to office, the inflation rate was about 4.4 per cent. We left office in 1994 with the inflation rate of 0.1 per cent, came back and found it at 4.4 per cent, and we were supposed in 175 days to wipe out all of that, so that Honourable Members on the Other Side of the House, could stand up and say how great a government the Democratic Labour Party was. Mr. Speaker, can all of this be for real? Oh judgment, thou are fled to brutish beast and men have lost their reason.

Sir, the speech of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, which was the leading speech delivered on That Side of the House, lasted 3 hours and 10 minutes. If I have to confess, I am entitled to an opinion like every other Barbadian. I thought it was a very childish speech, and that is a trajectory on which I cannot make contact with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. I have always tried my best never to forget how to be childlike, but I frown on bringing childishness this far into my adulthood. That is why, with apologies to St. Paul, I have always felt able to quote that famous passage in its Corinthian letter, "When I was a child I spake as a child, understood as a child and thought as a child, but now that I am become a man I have put away all childish things." That is, perhaps, the fundamental distinction between the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and myself, because even though she may have become a man, she has not yet put away all childish things.

Sir, the policy of the Government revolves around two concepts, the concept of family and the concept of social care. You cannot understand what is contained in the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for 2008 unless you understand that and can relate to the concept of family and the concept of social care.

For the last 14 years we have had to listen to a politics rooted in arid arithmetic that had very little to do with the hot immediacies of people's everyday lives, and what the Democratic Labour Party has tried to do, and it does not even have tried, because this has been our policy ever since the inception of the Democratic Labour Party. It was to restore politics to its human dimension where we can get back to the use of power, not to satisfy abstractions, but to deal with the real concerns of actual men and women.

Sir, we start from the position that in any post colonial society you have to deal with an inheritance, a social contradiction and an economic contradiction, an inheritance of colonialism. In all post colonial societies, certainly the ones in the Caribbean, and it still is manifested even in the great United States of America, the subject peoples.

In the case of the Caribbean the subject peoples are the demographic majority in the society is at one and the same time not just a numerical majority, but it is also an economic and sociological minority, and the demographic minority is an economic and sociological majority. That is a fact of life in all post colonial societies in this Region, whether the colonising power were the French, British, Spanish or whoever, that is the reality in the Caribbean, and in Latin America as well. Sir, public policy therefore, has to target the vulnerable wherever the vulnerable can be found.

Sir, for the last 14 years we have had a version of economics, I do not call it economics, I call it arithmetic which, starting from the position that as long as you fatten people at the top, there would be a spill-over and people at the bottom would necessarily get the crumbs from their table, the so-called trickled down theory of economics.

I believe the liberal economist J.K. Galbraith put it beautifully when he said, "trickled down economics is another way of saying if you want to give the birds more feed, you have to give the horse more oats." That is what has really governed Barbados for the last 14 years, give the horse more oats so that the birds could get a little more feed.

Sir, this Party has always repudiated that approach. It is not the kind of economics it has ever practised, and the Honourable Member for St. John is on very good ground. He is in sync with this Party's history when he targets the most vulnerable people in this society for the bounty and the benefaction of the Government.

Sir, in 1962, on the first working day of 1962, this Party made a historic announcement in Barbados that all school fees in Government secondary schools were going to be abolished from that day. I can still remember the contours of relief that took shape across my mother's face when she heard the announcement. We were hearing that it could not be done, but it has been done and it has made men and women of large numbers of working-class children in Barbados, who have taken their place in this society and who are contributing to the Treasury of this society.

Sir, I was in this Chamber as a spectator in the Gallery, in 1974, when this Party in Government announced the free Text Book Scheme. I feel privileged

tonight to be part of this debate where this Party has announced that school children in Barbados will not have to pay busfares anymore.

10.40 p.m.

Therefore, I do not know what case it is the Government is being called upon to answer. Sir, let me give credit where it is due. We did not originate the Student Revolving Loan Fund but it has now outlived its relevance, given the social and economic realities in the education system.

Once again, it is the Democratic Labour Party, through this Budget and through the Honourable Member for St. John that is increasing the loan limit for Student Revolving Loans, so that the sons and daughters of working-class people in this country can access loans and can make their tertiary education more certain, make their tertiary education more secure, so we have nothing as a Party to be ashamed about, Sir.

Vending has been one of the most contentious issues in Barbados since Independence, over the last, almost 42 years. This Budget targets vendors. It consulted with them first and you cannot find a better policy anywhere, in any Budget delivered in Barbados over the last 14 years - so far as any mention is made of vendors at all - that can eclipse or can lay claim to being superior to a policy that commits itself to finding a plantation for ordinary black barefoot vendors to own, to work and to produce the crops and vegetables, which they would sell to earn their livelihood. This is what you call a Government that is humanistic.

The Democratic Labour Party does not believe in what I called in here a few months ago, the white noise of statistics. Benjamin Disraeli as long ago as the 19th Century reminded the world, through the British Parliament that there are lies, dammed lies and statistics.

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

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Thank you, Sir.

This white noise of statistics that has led Barbadians to believe, over the last seven years in particular, that all was well around here. Sir, although you were meeting people every day who were teary-eyed, and whose pain was manifest, evidence of whose pain was etched across their countenances, the Government was still telling people all was well and the people are all right. Therefore, you were being put in a position where you felt that the people could not be right, because the Government was saying the very opposite of what the people were experiencing.

Well, we are here in the realm of reality now. It is not a myth that well nigh 30 000 people are waiting for houses and house spots in Barbados. This is a reality. It is not a myth that well nigh 15 000 are looking for jobs and, of course, I do not think the figures include those who have left school at the end of the last school year, and who now come on to the job market as well.

Then, there are those who get benefits under the National Insurance Act, such as the disabled and the aged. This Government that has sipped off the milk of human kindness, this Government that understands the pain of those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable has in this Budget targetted that group for improvement as well.

Sir, all you are hearing from the Other Side is that the Democratic Labour Party has not kept its Manifesto pledges. Sir, 175 days in office and you are supposed to do every single thing that you promised in your Manifesto and if you do not do that, you have betrayed the people.

Well, let me say to this Honourable House and to the people of Barbados, the Government that was elected on January 15, is a Government committed to truth. Let us get that very clear. Truth. We also believe that policy should aim at the creation of beauty in people's lives and that all of this should take place in a context of freedom for all individuals.

Sir, the trinity: truth, beauty and freedom are not atoms that may collide with each other in the atmosphere. These are three ideals that go together, because truth without beauty and freedom will lead to a withering of human vitality. Beauty, as we all know, without truth and freedom is downright poisonous, and freedom without truth and beauty is a recipe for social and economic anarchy. Therefore, the three go together.

Put differently, it is truth and beauty that make freedom real. It is truth and freedom that make life beautiful and it is beauty and freedom that make truth live. This Government, led by the Honourable Member for St. John, is committed to the pursuit of those three ideals, and public policy will be informed by those three ideals for as long as the people want to have us in office.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: We say, away with the world of arid statistics. Away with the world of political double speak and cruel political manipulation. A Government of the people is in office now and the people will feel the effects of our policies over the next five years.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John and Prime Minister.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

First of all let me say what an honour, a privilege and a pleasure it was for me during the course of this debate to hear all of the Members of the Democratic Labour Party team, except the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, the Leader of the House, who is currently under the weather to speak in this debate. I am certain your constituents will be extremely proud of all of you, both in your capacities of Members of the Cabinet of this country, and also as Parliamentary Representatives.

Budget - House A14, Sequence 129, 22:50:19

Wednesday, July 09, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, when these Budget debates draw nigh, there are hundreds of Barbadians who for the past 14 years have been turning on their televisions waiting with bated breath to hear which unsuspecting defenceless member of the Barbadian public is going to be paraded before all 270 000 Barbadians under the guise of the Parliamentary Privileges and Immunities Act. Mr. Speaker, we have seen some outstanding citizens in this country torn to shreds in Budget debates.

Sir, I was amused today when I heard that my Budget was not a Financial Statement. The only way you can deliver this Statement is if you call it a Financial Statement. Sir, whether it is a fireside chat, as the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow had years ago, that was not any financial statement, it had to be called a Financial Statement because the Rules required it.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have to take dictation from anybody except the people who elected me to be in this Chamber. I came here on their behalf on Monday and delivered a presentation which I felt would impact on their lives in a meaningful way against the background of the challenges that Barbados face.

Sir, I have children and they probably have put on the television tonight to watch me so I had to make a judgment whether I would follow bad examples or whether I would seek to lift the standard of public debate in this country and restore this Parliament, which I visited as a young man, like the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, to a level of debate unrivalled, to my mind, in other Parliaments in the world, and we are the third oldest.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of those people who provided me with information today, files, cheques, letters, copies of Minutes, conveyances, copies of bank accounts;

and the name of companies on which people appear as directors but have not declared. Mr. Speaker, I have put all of that away. I am not interested in that and this Parliament is not interested anymore and will not be subjected to that level of debasement by the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I do have a document though that I was given today. It is put out by Price Waterhouse Coopers and is called "Tax News". I will make it a document of the House. Sir, you do not have to read the whole thing. Sir, I was impressed with the title of their analysis of the Democratic Labour Party's Proposals. Mr. Speaker, do you know what they called our Proposals? I say "ours" because all us in this room on This Side and, to some extent, maybe one or two on That Side who spoke during this debate, can take some credit. They put, in inverted commas, as the headline for our Budget, "Our Brother's Keeper".

Mr. Speaker, I taught "Paradise Lost" to Sixth Formers and there are parts in it I could quote. Maybe the Honourable Member for St. Peter has not read those parts yet. He quoted very selectively, unabashedly, reserving some parts of that Treaty that perhaps he should go and read when this debate is over. I consider that to be a compliment and I take it in the spirit in which it was given, and I will tell you why.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate, serious allegations were levelled at persons who have, what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East called, an accounting mentality. This is an accounting firm. Mr. Speaker, when they are presented with policies that are meaningful, that are humane, that are just, that are fair, that encourage those who have to help those who do not have, they recognise it.

Sir, I am not taken by this perspective that people have in here, as I said, that you have to deliver a Financial Statement and you have these three criteria that you must meet and if you do not meet those criteria...

Mr. Speaker, we have had Budgets in this Chamber, since I have been in here for 20 years, in which Ministers of Finance have projected all kinds of things. We had a Budget in which the VAT was supposed to be revenue mutual. It was not to raise any money at all. It was simply to replace taxes that existed. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, my colleague in Parliament, say that the VAT is going to raise millions of dollars and have a negative impact on the Barbados economy.

Mr. Speaker, all of the accountants and the economists and the people who went through the three criteria; could it have been done better, are you doing the right policies, and all of that nonsense that is now supposed to be set up there as the statesman's credo for economic standards...

Mr. Speaker, \$200 million was extracted out of the pockets of poor Barbadians because there was no basket of goods and no Reversed Tax Credit then. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard that a Budget that would extract an additional \$22 million from the public of Barbados was the largest tax take by any Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, in one year, nearly 10 years ago, 10 times the impact of my Budget was inflicted on the public of this country. Mr. Speaker, the VAT generated \$200 million more, even though it was a Budget that was supposed to be revenue mutual.

Sir, I do not really get excited. There are people who have to justify their profession. I have mine. The Honourable Member for St. Peter has his. He is entitled to make economics appear like some mystical science. He has to live off of being an economist. Part of the tradition of professions is to elevate their profession so high that the ordinary man in the street should pass them and bow down and scrape because they are so brilliant and so lofty.

Mr. Speaker, we apply a little increase that comes to \$6.80 a day for the average lawyer in this country and people say, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, that they would have to pass it on. If the Honourable Member wants to pass on \$6.80... Any lawyer who has the time to sit and work out how he can pass on \$6.80 a day to people who come in his office, let him spend time doing that.

The Honourable Member for St. Andrew took up the defence of attorneys-at-law. There are others who took up the defence of all kinds of other professions, those who have them and those who do not.

Sir, I sought to present a Budget that looked at the reality of Barbados as we found it, but even that reality changed.

11.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I was quietly sitting in my seat today, listening to the presentation and the Honourable Member for St. Philip North came and announced to us that a judgment had just been handed down in the Courts in Barbados that will add another \$58 million, plus interest of \$3 million each year that I am going to have to look for as a result of the total incompetence by the previous Administration, in respect of the National Housing Corporation building at Warrens.

Mr. Speaker, I have to go back to the drawing board again, not because of anything I did or because of any decision taken by anybody on This Side. Do you know what I could do with \$58 million? Do you know how many houses could be built for the 30 000 applications who are looking for houses in Barbados? Do you know how many roads that could build?

Do you know what kind of assistance we could target at the police, nurses and teachers in this country? Sir, instead of that, we have to go back to the drawing board, to try and accommodate expenditure not anticipated because of the total incompetence - and I say corruption - that infected a public authority in this country, and nothing was done about it.

Mr. Speaker, when people come here and paraded and declare their assets, after they had been in office for 14 years... Sir, the whole purpose of declaring assets is that you declare them at the beginning of your term, so that people could compare it to what happens when you leave.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this. I was the attorney-at-law for the executors of the estate of the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow. If I had followed or had been guided by what little I saw Errol Barrow had when he died, I would have stayed away from politics.

Sir, these declarations of assets here, if only a man who had given 15 years of his life to this country, then 10 years in Opposition, and then died in office after one year, if he had a fraction of this wealth when he finished with politics... Sir, based on this declaration of assets that I have seen, this is a profession to get into. I am saying this is not all, this is the tip of the iceberg.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to set transparent procedures in train for the analysis, the scrutiny and the investigation, in relation to the assets of those who come to public life in Barbados. This idea that I could go in a rum shop and take a pencil from behind my ear and write down two bank accounts, three credit card balances, a house somewhere with a valuation that nobody knows whether or not it is true, and then say: "O, this is going up to the Governor-General." Sir, I would not want to put His Excellency in the position of receiving any documents like that. Therefore, we are going to put a proper procedure in place.

There are also those who are pressuring us to do it quickly. They are talking about what we promised at the beginning. Sir, I am going to admit that what we promised was ambitious but that it was not capable of being implemented in the way we had anticipated.

Sir, in addition, I am going to admit that we followed a model of legislation that we circulated during the Election which has caused immense problems in the jurisdiction where that legislation was introduced. That country is going to have to repeal that legislation because of the problems it created. It would have made no sense for us to follow that particular model because, in the end, it would have defeated the whole purpose of us getting people of integrity, people who have standards and people who are opened to accountability, to come into public life.

Mr. Speaker, that is the genuine reason. There is nothing to hide. Sir, I did not come into public life to make money. I certainly do not know of anybody on This Side who has given the impression that is the case. If anything, people are complaining because we are undertaking forensic audits in some statutory entities.

Further, this Government has not given out any new contracts, neither for schools, road works, nor for any major public works in this country. This is the first set of tendering for the houses that is being done, because we had to clean up a mess that we came and found.

Mr. Speaker, the idea that we are now doing the same thing the previous Government has done is a baseless and unfair allegation. There has been no new contract given out for any major public works in Barbados. There has not even been any major decisions relating to the Town Planning Department. There has not been a single decision made by me as Minister who has that portfolio, that would breach our policy in relation to the 100 acres. Even if we carried that 100 acres down to less than that, we still would not be breaching the policy.

Mr. Speaker, we have been cautious because we want to get the system of transparency in place but, at the same time, we have to recognise that the Barbadian economy must grow. Therefore, we have to make investment decisions and they are going to find transparent ways of achieving that.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I was so disappointed - and I was not surprised by it because I know there are some people who get a lot of titillation and excitement in these debates from the way in which people's characters are disparaged. There are some people who pander to that class of individuals, who only wait for this debate so that they could say the most outlandish of things.

Mr. Speaker, I always wondered if there are some people in this country who think we are last class politicians; who think that the Barbados Labour Party has the divine right to rule; who think that it has all of the brand named persons in it, so that a few weeks after this Government won the Election, suddenly we were hearing that Illaro Court should be sold, or that it should be a hotel, or that it is not worthy of a Democratic Labour Party Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, there was also talk about what mode of travel this Government uses. Sir, I came to office and found a travel schedule set for me as Leader of Barbados, as the Prime Minister with responsibility for the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. Sir, every month I have to travel to summits that have already been committed to, for example, in Washington. There is one tomorrow where I have to go to Madrid because we are trying to sign a Double Taxation

Treaty, where they have to talk about the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Mr. Speaker, these schedules were already set for the Leader of what the Honourable Member for St. Peter has said is an important country that leads the way in CARICOM. Sir, despite all this, you still get a lot of mealy-mouthed criticism because, apparently, it seems as though that as a Democratic Labour Party Leader, I am a lesser mortal and so too are the current Attorney General and the current Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. I heard it all in yesterday's debate.

11.10 p.m.

Sir, because they were treated than a lesser mortal than a previous Minister of Foreign Affairs, they now feel that the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, because he is not a brand name politician, does not match up to their perspective on who should be the Minister of Foreign Affairs in this country.

Sir, I am frankly alarmed by it but it has not diminished my resolve to keep the flag of Barbados flying so I resent any comment that suggests that our position on the Caribbean Single Market and Economy is not unequivocal, the suggestion that we seem not to be sure about what we want. We are very clear about what we want, absolutely clear. We do not want what the Honourable Member for St. Peter wanted, but not many of you would know what he wanted because these things were not discussed with the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I sat down next to the President of Guyana and I made it abundantly clear what this Government's position was in relation to freedom of movement. The Honourable Member for St. Peter may not like it but I want to say this. The Democratic Labour Party spent decades in this country building up the social services of Barbados. I grew up in a Barbados that had no under class, no slums that people could compare to other slums in the Caribbean. Yes, we had poverty but we were our brother's keeper.

Sir, vagrants were something that developed when I left secondary school. You may have had a few people about town that we called vagrants, some of whom ate three square meals a day but, Sir, the Democratic Labour Party worked on the National Insurance Scheme, social services, education services and we cannot invite people to come to Barbados to live among us unless we can provide them, to my mind, with the same standards to which we are accustomed.

Sir, that is the Barbadian way. You do not invite people in your house and you are eating peas and rice and chicken and you give them a cheese cutter. You are

drinking brandy and they are supposed to drink - I do not want to be critical of white rum so let us say rubbing alcohol. I do not wish to cause any offence.

Mr. Speaker, let us understand it. We are simply saying we are not yet ready to accommodate the levels of persons who want to come into Barbados, but we are going to work towards it. We are not saying no, we are saying yes but we will work in a more leisurely way towards it. I have started to see in St. Philip where I live, 15 adult people living in a three-bedroom house, renting rooms with one water-borne facility. I have seen pig pens converted in Barbados to accommodate illegal immigrants. In fact, it was mentioned in here, but nothing happened. It was not investigated.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Was it in the newspaper too? Sir, these are things that we are not accustomed to. I am not xenophobic but I believe there is also a Barbadian way and that goes for the East Coast.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Peter say he used to go down Glenburnie, sit on a rock and read Brewolf and Paradise Rock. There are applications before the Government of Barbados to convert Glenburnie into a condominium development and so on, not under me. There are other parts of the East Coast of Barbados where people like to go, simply relax and enjoy our Barbadian scenery. Sir, not only Barbadians and this is the reason why our policy is not xenophobic because what we are trying to do is to preserve what made this country unique in the first place. Sir, all these things about opening up other parts, once you start to encroach, it does not stop.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have to have the leadership and the courage to say no and we have said no. It will be enshrined in the Constitution and those who want to change it can do it, but I believe we owe it to our children to protect what is ours and let others enjoy it. Sir, that also goes for other aspects of development that we are concerned about.

Mr. Speaker, the minibus culture - Sir, I am sorry but I am trying to go through a natural progression here. We have all witnessed an erosion in the values of our children and, yes, it is a combination of factors. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said that it is not only the minibuses and we know that.

When the Honourable Member was Minister of Education, she had a literacy competition, went to the Gymnasium, gave the school children a day off, played calypso and jump-up music at the Stadium and got criticised for it. Sir, not by us but I have seen a progressive reorientation. Sir, I am not a prude. I believe children

should be children and should enjoy their childhood. Sir, adulthood kicks in at a certain point but we have a duty to protect our children.

Mr. Speaker, I said in the debate that we may be unpopular and, as far as I am concerned, sometimes you have to be unpopular in doing things to start to arrest the decline. I am only starting there, but there are going to be other things that will happen over time. There are members on the Other Side who have young children and I am going to help them ensure that their daughters and mine grow up in a Barbados that helps them to enjoy their childhood in a safe, morally upright, acceptable, social environment because we have to be their keepers. Sir, those who are vexed about that, they can continue to be vexed. Mr. Speaker, the cutoff date is September. We have given them time to improve that environment.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget is, therefore, focussed on people. There are people who want us to focus it on statistics; others who want us to focus it on all kinds of trivia and said we did not talk about the EPA. Mr. Speaker, Sir, there was a consultation on the EPA. I went to Trinidad and said what our position was on the EPA. We have not yet signed the EPA. We are going to have a debate in Parliament.

The Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Affairs said it would go to Cabinet, then it comes to Parliament, then it will be made into Law and then we will sign. Sir, we said so, but I am to inundate my Budget presentation because there are people in Barbados who like to just throw around words.

11.20 p.m.

They want people to know that they were on the international circuit, so they understand what it is about, fair trade, sustainable development and global warming. They get a kick out of that. I have been in politics long enough to know that these words change according to what the international institutions place their emphasis on. So it would provide some consultancies for former members of Government if they appear to be up-to-date on the latest trade issues and the latest global issues, and the latest fad that comes about. This is not a new criticism either.

Sir, in 1994, I was criticised for not saying anything about GATS. In the next Budget the Honourable Member for St. Peter never said anything about GATS. Nothing was said about GATS by the then Minister of Finance. The next Budget I had been locked into commitments made by the Honourable Member regarding GATS. He never said anything about GATS, other than what I did not say. He did not say the terms of the commitments I made. The then Government followed slavishly those commitments, never came to the people and said they disagreed with that

fundamentally. They were wrong. All they said was you did not discuss it.

Sir, I am discussing in this Budget matters that I think are most relevant to the development of the people of this country. I make that judgment along with the Honourable Members on That Side. If the Honourable Members on That Side want to debate the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, we will put it on the Parliamentary Agenda.

If they want to discuss Economic Partnership Agreement, we will put that on the Parliamentary Agenda. Give us the list of issues that you want on the Parliamentary Agenda, and we would put them on, but it is not for the Honourable Members on That Side to tell us what we have to put in our development agenda.

Sir, I am not waiting for any "Misery Index". The "Misery Index" was January 15, 2008. Everybody who could vote in Barbados went and exercised their legitimate view about their level of misery under a Barbados Labour Party Government. As the Honourable Member for St. Michael South said, they have stripped the Honourable Members on That Side of their trappings of power. They now seemed alarmed, agitated and upset. Sir, some people are better off when I look at the declaration of assets.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East now earns more money than the Prime Minister of this country every month, \$25 000 a month. Sir, there are only a few people on the Other Side who would quarrel about having been stripped of the trappings of office. There are some who have been elevated and enhanced in their status by that exercise.

Sir, in this Budget we sought to respond to the people's needs. It is a Budget in which we have determined that we in Barbados need to be our brother's keeper. We sought to help the pensioners, the disabled, the school children of this country, the persons who receive the Reversed Tax Credit, and then we also gave concessions to each of the productive sectors in Barbados.

Sir, I want to say that I was extremely disappointed, by not the speech of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, because I expected what transpired, but I believe that when one becomes Leader of the Opposition there is always an attempt to demonstrate that you can take on issues and take on people, even when people are listening to you. I know what it is like to have gone through those lean years.

I was younger than the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, therefore I should have been more giddy-headed, but I found that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East launched a tirade yesterday on

certain people, and made some allegations that were totally baseless untruths, and misled the House. She should apologise for making those allegations.

Sir, one of the allegations the Honourable Member made was that a gentleman had received \$2 500 for installing a lock. That was the allegation, and documents were supposed to have been presented to prove that fact, but the Honourable Member only got some of the documents. I have the information.

The money was paid to the Managing Director of Precision Contractors and Maintenance Limited. It was for relocating a lady from her current location in Maynards, St. Peter, to another location in St. Peter to facilitate the building of a new three-bedroom house, and it included the following: I am going to give you the list.

He was awarded a contract to effect major repairs to the lady's house, but in order to commence work, it was necessary to relocate her to the duplex. In addition the figure of \$2 500 also includes transferring her furniture and fixtures to the duplex, and the removal of debris to the dump. This called for five trips, three to the dump and two to the duplex apartment at Maynards. Further, a lock had to be affixed so that Miss Payne could safely occupy the duplex. All of that came to the sum of \$2 500.

Sir, I have the document which the Honourable Member has, but there was an attachment to the document. The Honourable Member did not have that. It is a pity because it is that level of recklessness.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member sees an invoice to provide and install an entrance lock. The cost of the above is \$2 560. If that is not here, then the Honourable Member must tell me what he is reading from, other than that he is misleading the House.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: If you just come in here with a document and throw it around, I thought that you had a greater duty to try and get to the bottom of it, because attached to the document is a note which the accountant or whoever would have provided or paid the money would have had. Sir, I am not even going to get into that. We have not spoken about the Auditor General's Report. If you were to read the Auditor General's report for 2007, and I presume we would have a chance to do that, you would see a whole range of issues.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, full of innuendo and political low blows drops a remark about the insurance at CBC. What are the facts? It went out to tender. The Honourable Member said that we should ask the Honourable Attorney-General if it went out to tender. It went out to tender, CBC's All Risk Insurance Policy,

through the brokers, Insurance General Services Limited. Sir, ICB quoted \$612 569.69; CLICO quoted \$537 523.97 and CGI quoted \$535 998.00.

11.30 p.m.

The previous year's premium by ICB was only \$554 000 but the quote for this year was \$612 000, so the Board took the view that they would split the insurance between the two lowest bids, half to CGI and half to CLICO. All transparently done but it is that level of a low blow that titillates people, Sir, even if it tears down the status of this House, and even though it tends to damage reputations. Sir, I said I am not going to do that in this debate. I have answered the questions asked.

In this debate, Sir, we heard about people employed as consultants, a person who is supposed to be the cousin of somebody, employed as consultant. We employed four persons to work for six months at the sum of \$50 000 each to design four components of the project for the sum of \$200 000. The same person that the Member refers to was employed by the previous Government to design a new National Youth Service, but because the Government changed, and his cousin is working with the Democratic Labour Party, all of a sudden...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: He is the former Director of the Commonwealth Youth Programme. He is an expert in social policy, but because he is now the cousin, the innuendo is that because they come from Ellerton, they are nobody, so there has to be something low about the transaction. This is really what is being said to the public of Barbados.

Sir, if that had come from Sandy Lane...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: We heard, Sir, about political operatives who had been given contracts. After every General Election, the gentleman who was the chief strategist for the Barbados Labour Party who is a Trinidadian, was given a contract to review the operations of the Government Information Service (GIS). I am now getting the amounts totalled up that he was paid.

Now, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter is asking if that is true.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am not bringing any documents in here. I said so from the beginning, but I would provide the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter

with the documents. A study was done on a review of GIS, which had just been reviewed.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Exactly, a review of the review. The person who had just advised the Barbados Labour Party on its Election campaign. No Parliamentary questions were asked in here. He is not a Barbadian. He is a Trinidadian, so he is untouchable, but a Barbadian, springing from the bowels of Ellerton, St. George, who advises Governments throughout this entire Region, who has just left Grenada producing a victory for the Opposition Party, who is talented and hardworking, Sir, is not part of the process.

Sir, that is why I tell you that I am not going to accept that anybody on This Side is any last-classed politician.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: There are those who get up in here and want to talk as if their families have a long history of political lineage, as though those who do not have that history behind them, are less than them. Once they have political lineage, people of less ability than them...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is worrying about what people said about people, and I am not going to get into that. I think you should be the last person to talk about what people say about people. A lot has been said about you and it did not originate in the Democratic Labour Party. It originated from the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, other Honourable Members on That Side, and one that you now have in the Senate.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to say that is not what today's debate is about. The point, at the end of the day, is that there are people in here who seem to think they have a certain lineage so there are things that are good for them, but are not good for others.

Therefore, when we give a man who had no house, an opportunity to own a house of a value less than \$150 000, by removing the VAT, that is nothing. Sir, that is nothing to somebody who can declare that they have three houses. If you have a choice between which air-conditioned house you can sleep in when the night comes, which condominium you can sleep in, which resort you can

sleep in, which car you can drive then you do not worry about those things, but I have to worry about them, Sir.

This Government has to worry about the people in Barbados who do not have a house or a car. Therefore, I am not going to be tutored. I do not think anybody on This Side has to be tutored by people who believe that they have greater lineage and whose circumstances do not bring them into contact with people who are suffering and need some form of assistance. This is what, as I say, is the focus of this particular Budgetary Presentation.

Sir, there were some genuine concerns raised about the Budget. I know that the concern about the increase on visitors' licences has impacted quite negatively. I understand the concern and we are going to make an adjustment in that regard and waive the fee for a certain period in respect of those licences for a very short term and thereafter, then the person would pay the cost of the licence.

There were questions about the savings in the Credit Unions and this is a concession over and above that which comes within the \$10 000 limit.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, this is a more flexible concession because the \$10 000 concession was put in place to discourage Credit Unions from being like commercial banks. We are saying that we would like to see the Credit Unions moving to a more expansive role, even to owning their own commercial bank, so we are not going to restrict them. We are giving them this additional allowance, so that you can get your full \$10 000 and then if you put \$3 000 more in a credit union, you can get that as well as a result of our decision made in this Budget.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: We have had some concerns about the liberalisation of exchange controls. I specifically opted in this Budget not to announce the recommendations made to me by the Governor of the Central Bank, but there is going to be some further liberalisation in terms that had been recommended. We gave undertakings to the CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting. I believe by the end of the week that liberalisation will be announced. We said we will adopt a more cautious approach, in relation to liberalisation of foreign exchange controls in this country. I think that is an important development, and we are going to follow that particular development at a pace that is consistent with our obligations to CARICOM but also consistent with what we think is necessary in the context of Barbados.

Sir, at the end of the day, a budget is about judgments. I listened to all of the speeches and I liked the last few words of the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter because, having said all that he said, just before he went to quote John Milton, he announced with much gusto: "We need change."

Asides.

11.40 p.m.

Sir, I wrote it down. Sir, we just had a change six months ago. I do not know where the Honourable Member for St. Peter was when it happened, but there was a change and this Budget reflects that change.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Resolution which I read when the Financial Statement was presented do now pass.

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

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

ORDER NO. 4 – RESOLUTION THAT THIS HOUSE
RESOLVES ITSELF INTO COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY TO
CONSIDER THE GRANT OF SUMS OF MONEY FOR
THE SERVICE OF THIS ISLAND.

*On the motion of Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, seconded by
Hon. F. J. STUART, the House resolved itself into
Committee of Supply, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY in the Chair.*

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$15 000 000 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2008-2009 AS SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 1 2008-2009 WHICH FORM THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION.

HEAD 52

MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
AND ENERGY \$15 000 000

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, the House's concurrence is being sought for this sum of \$15 million, which relates to the rebates that would be given to

manufacturers, farmers, fisherfolk and the public service vehicles in respect of subsidising diesel.

Consequent on the decision of the Government to pass on certain increases in respect of diesel and gasoline, the Cabinet agreed to provide a price offset of 0.23 cents per litre to manufacturers, farmers and fisherfolk and 0.8 cents per litre in case of public service vehicles on the cost of diesel.

This has been implemented in respect of the public service vehicle operators by permitting them to use the facilities at the Transport Board for refilling.

In respect of the manufacturers, farmers and fisherfolk, they would be able to claim a refund which would be administered by paying a rebate through the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Development, Labour, the Civil Service and Energy. The oil companies would submit invoices for diesel sold to the Energy Division who, in turn, would submit them to the Permanent Secretary with responsibility for Finance, and then the Permanent Secretary would send them to the Treasury for payments to be made to the registered fisherfolk, farmers and manufacturers.

Mr. Chairman, we have estimated that this would cost about \$13.3 million for the remainder of the financial year. In respect of the public service vehicles, the payments paid to the major oil companies would be \$1.3 million for the remainder of the financial year. Therefore, the total sum of \$15 million is being sought from the House to facilitate the payment of this rebate.

I beg to move that Head 52 stand part.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I am sensitive as to the time and as to the fact that the staff of the House have been here since 9:00 o'clock this morning and therefore do not propose to engage in any serious debate at this hour. Mr. Chairman, I would simply ask the Government, especially given the recent comments of the Prime Minister in his last speech a few minutes ago that we have a soon opportunity to debate an energy policy as a whole and therefore in that context we would hold our comments tonight.

Thank you, Sir.

The question that Head 52 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ORDER NO. 5

RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$4 809 359 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2008-2009 AS SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 2, 2008-2009, WHICH FORM THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION AND THAT THE EXPLANATORY NOTES TO HEAD 13 BE AMENDED AS SET OUT IN SCHEDULE II TO THE RESOLUTION.

HEAD 19 TREASURY \$4 809 359

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, this relates to payment associated with the award of the IDB contract under Head 43, Ministry of Education and Human Resources to carry out work on the Education Sector Enhancement Programme (ESEP). This relates to funds that are going to be used for a restructured programme and to facilitate the execution of activities associated with the ESEP in the 2008-2009 financial year.

I believe that this was spoken about during the Estimates, but what we are really talking about is the fact that the contracts totalling \$89.7 million have already been awarded and as of April 30, 2008, 38 schools would have been completed. The number of schools under construction include the George Lamming Primary, Christ Church Girls', St. Martins Four Roads Primary and the Grantley Adams Memorial School, which are due to be completed by the end of this month. That is what that part of it is about.

Mr. Chairman, regarding the amendment to the Explanatory Note, this year there will be no reception at Illaro Court for Independence, instead of that we will be having another national event. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of persons from the Diaspora who would be visiting Barbados during this month. We have the National Association of Barbadian Organisations' Conference which will be about 400 persons from the United States, and then we have another 80 from the United Kingdom and some others.

11.50 p.m.

In addition, all of the worldwide St. Lucia Associations, for example, the one in London and in New York, are all meeting here in Barbados. Every year they meet whenever there is a St. Lucia Association, and this year they have opted to meet in Barbados.

We decided to host a reception that would combine the usual Independence Reception along with those Barbadians who are visiting from the Diaspora. Funds were provided but, obviously, they were provided for an Independence Reception. We are bringing that Reception

up to July and we will hold a different activity, which is now in its planning stages, probably on the Garrison Savannah at Independence time instead.

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

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

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

Mr. CHAIRMAN left the Chair and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now adjourned until Tuesday, July 29, 2008.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, in speaking on the Adjournment, I want to thank all Honourable Members for their contributions to this very important Budgetary debate. I want especially to thank the Clerk and Staff of this Honourable Chamber, who have been taken on a marathon, I am sure, this evening. I want to salute their resoluteness and their steadfastness. I want to salute the Police Force and all those who provide security and refreshments. I want also to thank the Press who made sure the country is provided with information on what goes on in this Honourable Chamber.

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, in seconding the motion for the Adjournment, I would wish to associate myself with the words of the Acting Leader of Government Business, and to thank all those who would have assisted us for the last three days.

Mr. Speaker, the public sees those of us who speak but do not remember there is a whole system of people who make it possible for us to do our work. I am particularly conscious that the ones who perhaps would carry the

largest burden today are the Hansard Reporters, who have been here since 9.00 a.m.

I am not sure I could recall when last this Honourable House would have met for 15 hours straight. Sir, to that extent, I think we would particularly want to thank them for their continued strong service in ensuring that the work of this Parliament continues apace.

The question that the House be now adjourned until Tuesday, July 29, 2008, at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

11.56 p.m.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

Q1. Opening, Resolution on the Financial Statement.

The source opens with the heading ‘RESUMPTION’ and goes straight into the resumed debate; no Order number or title is given for the Resolution on the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals that is passed at the end of the debate. Printed as in the source.

Q2. Speech of Hon. F. J. Stuart. The speech heading reads ‘Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you. Hon. F. J. STUART’; the opening words appear to be the closing sentence of the Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur’s speech, joined to the next speaker’s label. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Speech of Mr. D. St.E. Kellman, take-slip 6.20 p.m.. The paragraph beginning ‘Mr. Speaker, let me say something to this. There is a fundamental process in this ...’ appears twice, in slightly different wording, either side of the 6.20 p.m. take-slip, possibly an overlap between reporters’ takes. Both versions are printed. Please confirm.

Q4. Take-slips. Several take-slips carry times out of sequence: ‘10.14 p.m.’ among the morning slips (between 9.00 a.m. and 9.20 a.m.), ‘12.10 a.m.’ between 11.50 a.m. and 12.30 p.m., and ‘14.20 p.m.’ between 2.10 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Members’ names and constituencies. Mr. G. W. Payne is once labelled ‘Mr. G.W.A. PAYNE’, and Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley is labelled ‘Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY’ on the Adjournment. The source also has ‘St. Phillip South’ and ‘Christ Church West Cental’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Wednesday, 9th July, 2008 at 9.00 a.m., Mr. Speaker presiding, for the resumed debate on the Resolution on the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals presented by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, on 7th July. The Sitting was suspended three times and continued until close to midnight.

Mr. H. F. Lashley dedicated his contribution to the late I’Akobi Maloney and said his conscience obliged him to support the Budget’s social programmes, citing \$35 a week for children and \$36 and \$116 a week for disabled

persons. Government Members Mr. J. D. Paul, Hon. E. G. Hutson, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, His Honour K. St.C. Best, Dr. the Hon. E. R. Byer-Suckoo and Hon. S. D. Blackett supported the Resolution, speaking of free bus travel for schoolchildren, agricultural incentives, summer camps and housing; Mr. Blackett said some 25 000 people were on the housing waiting list and 500 lots had been identified in six months. For the Opposition, Mr. R. C. Eastmond asked where the promised new schools would be built, and Mr. R. St.C. Toppin argued that the cost of living was rising and tourism declining; Hon. R. L. Sealy’s point of order on the tourism figures was not upheld, and Mr. Toppin withdrew an accusation of lying.

Mr. G. W. Payne was rebuked for referring to a newspaper and criticised the dismissal of the General Manager of the Urban Development Commission, where Hon. P. M. T. Todd said a forensic audit was under way. Miss C. Y. Forde defended the Barbados Labour Party’s record and contrasted the pledge to remove VAT on building materials for houses up to \$400 000 with the Budget measure. Hon. D. O’N. Inniss said removing VAT on the first \$150 000 of housing costs would save about \$7 500; Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley raised a point of order and of privilege over his remarks on her declaration of assets, and Mr. Speaker ruled there was no point of order.

Mr. A. D. Brathwaite praised the Student Revolving Loan Scheme. Dr. W. F. Duguid said the Environmental Levy at 1.5 per cent would raise \$40 million, warned of double-figure inflation and tried to make a photograph of a house in Santo Domingo Lane a document of the House. Mr. D. St.E. Kellman called it a St. Lucy Budget. Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick spoke of the dispute with the National Union of Public Workers at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and said insurance premiums had fallen from almost \$4 million to \$1.1 million. Hon. M. A. Lashley cited a \$58 million court award to Al Barrack against the National Housing Corporation and drew repeated points of order from Mr. G. A. Clarke and Dr. Duguid.

In the evening Mr. D. D. Marshall said the Budget had nothing for the small man or St. Joseph farmers; Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe cited child welfare assistance rising from \$25 to \$35; the Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur questioned a deficit of 1 per cent of GDP in a time of possible stagnation and urged commitment to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy; and Hon. F. J. Stuart said just under 30 000 people were waiting for houses when the Government took office. Replying, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson answered allegations about consultants and an invoice for a lock, announced a temporary waiver of the fee for visitors’ licences, explained the Credit Union concession and further

liberalisation of exchange controls, and the Resolution passed without division.

In Committee of Supply, with Mr. S. A. Lashley in the Chair, the House approved \$15 000 000 under Head 52 for diesel rebates to manufacturers, farmers, fisherfolk and

public service vehicles, and \$4 809 359 under Head 19 for the Education Sector Enhancement Programme and a reception for visitors from the Diaspora; both Resolutions passed all stages. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce and Hon. M. A. Mottley thanked the staff, and the House was adjourned until Tuesday, 29th July, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.