
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

At a meeting of the House of Assembly at the Parliament Buildings on the March 11, 2008, pursuant to the adjournment.

PRESENT

HIS HONOUR M. A. CARRINGTON, B.A., LL.B.,
(Speaker)
HIS HONOUR K. St.C. BEST, LL.B. (Hons.),
L.E.C. (Deputy Speaker)
Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.)
Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.)
(Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Economic
Affairs, Labour, Civil Service and Energy)
Hon. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C.
Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., LL.M, LL.B (Hons.)
(Lond.), B.A., (Hons.) Dip. Ed., (Leic.)
Hon. G. A. CLARKE, J.P., B.Sc., Dip. Ed.
Hon. H. F. LASHLEY
Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.)
Hon. D. St. E. KELLMAN
Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B.,
(Leader of the Opposition)
Hon. C. Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P.
Hon. R. D. JONES, J.P., M.A. Ed., B.A., (Hons.),
(Minister of Education and Human Resource
Development), (Leader of the House)
Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, M.B., B.S., B.Sc.,
(Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social
Security)
Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, Q.C., LL.B. (Hons.),
L.E.C.
Hon. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.) (Minister of
Housing and Lands)
Dr. the Hon. W. F. DUGUID, J.P., FDRCS., F.D.S.,
B.D.S. (Comm.),

Hon. R. L. SEALY, M.B.A., B.Sc., (Minister of
Tourism)
Hon. F. J. STUART, LL.M., B.A., (Attorney
General and Minister of Home Affairs)
Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, MRAC., (Minister of
Transport, Works and International Transport)
Hon. E. G. HUTSON, FCCA, CA, (Minister of
Trade Industry and Commerce)
Hon. S. D. BLACKETT, (Minister of Community
Development and Culture)
Hon. J. D. PAUL, B.Sc.
Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, Ed.D., M.Ed., B.A., Dip.
Theology, (Minister of Social Care, Constituency
Empowerment and Urban Development)
Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, LL.B (Hons.)
Hon. S. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.) B.Sc.
L.E.C. (Chairman of Committees),
Hon. P. M. T. TODD, B.Sc., (Minister of State,
Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and
Urban Development)
Hon. D. O'N. INNISS, M.B.A., B.Sc., Dip.,
(Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign
Trade and International Business)
Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, M.Sc., B.A., (Minister of
Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business)
Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO, M.B., B.S.,
(Minister of Family, Youth, Sports and the Environment)
(10:17:25)
*Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan
Harewood.*

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House is now in
session.

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday,
February 15, 2005.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to
move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of

Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, March 4, 2008, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I beg to second that, Sir.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: MESSAGES FROM HIS HONOUR THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: PAPER

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

1. Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2008/2009.
2. The Revised Estimates of Expenditure for 2007/2008.
3. The Actual Revenue and Expenditure 2008.

H/A4:10:20

Sequence 2

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PAPERS

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

1. The Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 2008-2009.
2. The Schedule of Personal Emoluments, 2008-2009/
3. The Revised Estimates of Expenditure (Dying Heads), 2007-2008.
4. The Actual Revenue and Expenditure 2006-2007.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to give notice of the Appropriation Bill, 2008-2009.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

On the motion of Hon. R.D. JONES, seconded by Hon. Dr. D.C. ESTWICK, the Appropriation Bill, 2008-2009, was read a first time.

CONGRATULATORY/OBITUARY SPEECHES

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the stalwarts of early Barbados passed just over two weeks ago, at the age of 90, a lady by the name of Matilda Elise Best, the Honourable Deputy Speaker's mother, and it is only fitting that we pay some tribute to her this morning.

Sir, when one recalls the history of our country, one sees etched in the soil of Barbados the work of such great women, and if by extension, one can say great men as well. These were the people on whom this country relied to till the soil, to ensure that the fields and hills across Barbados were maintained principally for the production of sugar cane, the growing of yams, potatoes, other fruits and vegetables.

These were the people who took care of not only their children, but the community. They were the mothers of the communities from which they came. Sir, they had strength, vigour, a vitality which can be found in many. We seemed to have forgotten that early strength and passion that reverberated in the bosoms of those matriarchs.

Sir, one can argue, and may be well, that the development of the country was built primarily on their sweat and tears. They worked with their children to ensure that many of them did not have to go through the same struggles that they went through. They saved for the rainy day. That was a phrase borrowed from the culture of the village and society, people who did not have much, but in the end they scraped together what little they had, to ensure that their families survived.

Sir, Matilda Best fell within that kind of rubric, a lady of strength, a lady of purpose, a lady who ensured that her children, even in a situation of scarcity, never went to bed hungry. Sir, even in a situation where money was never ever plentiful, they were in a position still to go to church. She was a lady who ensured that she could have reached out to other persons within her community, to whom she gave sustenance as well.

Sir, this society depends now on more persons like her, who would move beyond their own selfishness, who would move beyond their own greed, to embrace not only their families, but to embrace the poor, the downtrodden, the under privileged, those who are really in need. Sir, they are some still, and we congratulate and embrace them all, but as I said, we need more and more of these persons.

Sir, a lady from the hills of Barbados, and I have always been amazed how persons, coming from the flat lands of Christ Church, born, bred and still there, how persons could have existed in the rugged Scottish terrain of St. Andrew. I have found out one thing as I have journeyed across Barbados, there is a passion, pride and resilience in those people as they walk the hills.

There is a determination to be excellent human beings in their own way and in their own right, and, of course, there is a plentiful supply of fruits and vegetables. Sir, when I travel across those areas, St. Joseph and St. Andrew, sometimes St. Thomas, if I am allowed through the constituency of St. Thomas, some fruits and vegetables

would be sitting next to me, provided, without asking, by persons who greet you. Do you want a shaddock, Sir? Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a lover of fruit I would never say; "no". I could well understand why your mother, Sir, would be held in such regard and with such respect.

May her soul rest in peace.

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

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition, I would want to associate This Side with the same remarks of the Honourable Leader of the House. I did not know your mother, but I certainly have known you and your family for some time and, suffice it to say that much of what the Honourable Leader of the House has said about the character of many of our old Barbadians, has forced us essentially to rely on character more than material resources in order to raise families. I think that this country has been the better for that.

Sir, certainly, the person whom he described in his tribute just now, is one that I can recognise across Barbados in my dealings with many of the elder persons. Therefore, I believe that it is only appropriate and fitting that we should pay tribute.

Sir, death is never easy whenever it comes. I therefore can only but imagine the grief that you and your family have felt. I know that you have had to deal with other immediate grief within the last few years, and to that extent, even though you have been there before, it is never easy whenever it comes, particularly when it relates to the loss of a mother.

Sir, in the circumstances, I think that it is fair to say our prayers are with you and to trust and hope that even though your mother is not with your family, that her memory shall live long in your hearts, and that you, by your living, will do justice to her training as a young man. I am sure that you will not in any way disavow that which would have been instilled in you from an early age. Our sympathy is with you, Sir.

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too would like to join with Honourable Members in this Honourable House in paying condolences to yourself and members of your family on the passing of your mother. She had been gifted with long life. She had reached the age of 90, and would have seen many changes in this country over the years.

A4 10.10 a.m.

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House A4, Sequence 04, 10.30 a.m.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Certainly, as a young girl growing up, she would not have had the educational opportunities at that time, which our young women have today. She would probably have been limited, to just primary school education. As Members know at that time, opportunities for young girls were very much non-existent. Opportunities existed again for a select few.

During her time she would have seen those social changes in Barbados where today, our young women are able to focus on careers in tourism and industry. They may even aspire to being members of this Honourable House or to being Prime Minister.

Therefore, she would have seen in her time, the physical development of our country, the transformation from being plantation oriented villages, to a country where our primary focus is on tourism and its by-products. She would have witnessed other industries such as manufacturing, which provide several opportunities for our people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as she began her final journey through the valley of the shadow of death, I think our Almighty Father would be there with her to lead her to that land beyond. I close by saying again that I pray God's strength and fortitude on yourself and other members of your family at this time.

Thank you, Sir.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to join the tributes to yourself, on the passing of your mother, especially given the circumstance where I was not present to attend the funeral service. I want to join the comments of the Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition and the Members on Both Sides, as they spoke volumes of the characters of these ladies and gentlemen, who would have nurtured us in our formative years.

I am minded at this time to thank God that some of us, and I count in that number, have the great fortune of still being able to continue to meet our parents or one of our parents regularly, or every Tuesday. Maybe, we should take good guidance that it is important that we maintain that umbilical cord and learn as much as we can and provide for them as much as we can, and make sure that they are comforted.

I too, was born in the country of Barbados in St. Peter, so I know the special hardships which attended persons who were brought up in that Barbadian countryside, the challenges of rural Barbados in the

formative years, on which we are reflecting. Indeed, my parents are from the Baltic in St. Peter, which is just a stone's throw from the St. Andrew terrain, and very similar circumstances would have prevailed.

I, therefore, want to join in the tributes and personally convey the condolences of my family to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and your family.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to express condolences to you, and the Best family and indeed extended family, on behalf of your deceased mother. I understand the pain that you and your family endure because the matriarch of your family has passed on. I think God has richly blessed her because 90 years on the earth is really a very long time. She lived a good life. I can speak, Sir, from the background of having heard many comments in the Eulogy, which all resonate with rural women and the quality life they lived.

Indeed, I understood that she was a very hardworking woman, as would have been the case with most of the rural women in Barbados. She operated as a hawker. I think that is an extremely important aspect of knowing that she grew, sold and, of course, gave away some of the produce. This is something that is lacking in Barbados. It is indeed an important aspect of her life that she has left behind. You grow; you give away some and you sell some and, therefore, keep the community spirit going.

Sir, I recognised as well that she devised a number of strategies to raise her family. Of course, the supplementing would have taken place, such as throwing a meeting, to ensure that the money remained within the household.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was very touching to have learnt that she ensured that all her children received a formal education. Indeed, that was a privilege she herself did not have. I think that is really the joy of most parents to want to give their children a better opportunity than they had. Therefore, she strove day and night to ensure that her children received quality education, and to make sure that they would be empowered.

I was indeed touched to have learnt about her comments for her children to own a piece of the rock. She encouraged every one of her children to make sure they saved and buy a little property. Sir, from what I remember, that has been achieved I think that is one of the most wonderful achievements that any parent would want to see for their children.

I am happy to know that she was a God-fearing woman. I learnt of her experiences, both in St. Andrew and then I think she had gone to a church in St. Philip. I believe that helps to show the strength of character and the God-fearing values that she has upheld which, I believe, have also been passed on to her children, as far as I recognise.

Sir, I want to say how happy I am that there has been a generational link coming through, where your children and, indeed, the children of your other brothers and sisters would have been able to touch her life, and she touched them, in order to pass on some of the strong values and the mores of this society, so that they could also become rounded citizens.

I believe that more of our people in Barbados who have made outstanding contributions of the kind that Mrs. Best made, should really be registered so that our young people could understand that it does not take anything off you to work hard. Once you work hard and take pride in doing what you do, you do not wait for handouts. Your mother did not wait for any handouts. She made sure she strove day and night to raise good children. I think that is really the hallmark of a very outstanding woman of Barbados.

I want to take this opportunity as well, Sir, again, on behalf of my family and I, to extend deepest condolences to you and your family and I ask God to have her rest in peace.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me this morning to be able to say a few words, even though albeit one might think on a sad occasion, such as to pay tribute to your mother.

I believe there is a calypso that says that we must know who our heroes are. I have no doubt, based on my interaction with your mother, Matilda Elise, and based on the time that she and I spent together, and based on what I have heard over the last couple of weeks that, indeed, she is one of our unsung heroes.

House A4, Sequence 04, 10:40:14

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Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: We recognise that there are many hardworking Barbadians such as your mother who go without notice. Therefore, it is indeed a pleasure for me to be able to stand here this morning. I am sure that if she is looking down from on high, that she is smiling with the knowledge that we are recognising her hard work.

Indeed, as a hawker, she worked hard for many years. She worked toiling the soil. She sold vegetables and fish. She worked as a domestic. Her time working on this earth was one filled with hard work, which in listening to her, she never complained. She instilled in you, I am sure, and in your brothers and sisters the value of hard work and sacrifice.

I am satisfied, based on my relationship with her, that she recognised that her time on earth was drawing nigh. I recall that she asked me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, to ensure that I look after you in these Chambers. Sir, even though I said to her: "Ma, I have no experience in these matters", she said: "look after my son for me". It was almost like if she knew that her time was drawing nigh. Maybe in some ways her time was indeed drawing nigh because as far as she was concerned, she had accomplished all that she wanted to accomplish, because her last son, her baby son, had reached the epitome of his career.

You may recall, Sir, how happy she was on the afternoon of the State Opening of Parliament. She was a bit nervous but she was very happy because she was entering the steps of Parliament. No doubt in her 90 years she never thought that was possible. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you brought a joy to her heart that afternoon, a joy that I am sure that we all wish we would bring to our mothers and fathers. I am satisfied that from on high she is looking down and is saying, thank you my son, thank you, for making my life worthwhile.

Sir, I want to echo the sentiments which I believe were made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, which is, that you now have a responsibility to ensure that you carry on her legacy to ensure that when your day comes that your children could also say that they learnt from you and that they understand the value of hard work and sacrifice.

Sir, I wish you and your family well. It was indeed a pleasure knowing your mother.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I received the news of the passing of Mathilda Elise Best from your Honour on the evening of March the 3rd around 6:30 in the evening when we were both attending a meeting of the Parliamentary Group.

Although I did not know her personally, the shock and grief I felt were great. She died at the age of 90. It is therefore not within my competence or my right to say that she died in the full bloom of a young and robust womanhood. It is not within my competence to say that the flame that was her life flickered to extinction before its noon. It is more accurate to say that Mathilda Elise Best died in the embrace of the lengthening shadows of a blood red sunset.

To have been born in the year 1917 was to be born in the year of the Russian Revolution whose seismic effects are still being felt across the world. Mathilda Elise Best would have been the witness to many much quieter revolutions in the country of her birth for the duration of her life. She would have been age 20 when the disturbances of 1937 occurred which launched in effect the modern Barbados which we know today. She would have been age 26 when the Representation of the People Act was amended in this Chamber to give the right to vote to women. She would have been age 49 when this country went into Independence in 1966. She has witnessed many revolutions of a much quieter nature in Barbados during her lifetime.

As a product of early Barbados, she understood better than most would understand now the importance of hard work and sacrifice because she was born to none of those privileges which wealth and status are known to bestow. There was only one route to survival and to success for Mathilda Elise Best, and people like Mathilda Elise Best, which was hard work and sacrifice. To the ethic of hard work she committed herself working as a hawker for many years building up a large and beloved customer base across Barbados and enriching the lives of all those persons whom she touched.

She raised, as I understand it, five children of whom Your Honour is the last. I associate myself fully with the comments of the Honourable Member for St. Philip South who said that the night of January, 15, 2008 when she would have learnt that her last son was elected to this Chamber, would have represented the summit of her joy as a mother. That joy would have been reinforced on the evening she witnessed Your Honour taking Your Honour's seat in this Chamber. I remember well that evening seeing her very smartly attired and quite vivacious and energetic in her discourses, but we were not to know that soon after that she would have been summoned to higher service.

Her life enriched us for as long as it lasted. She has contributed to Barbados as so many of her generation have contributed to Barbados. This country could not be the country it is today without the effort of people like Mathilda Elise Best. Therefore, it is important that we hold people like Mathilda Elsie Best up to the young people of Barbados as models of hard work, of sacrifice, and of taking the long road rather than short cuts to the achievement of their objectives.

In this press button age, it is tempting for younger persons to believe that in the same way there is something called instant coffee and instant yam, that there is something called instant success. People like Mathilda Elise Best, and in the lives of people like Mathilda Elise Best, proved and demonstrate that the only authentic route to success is hard work, discipline and sacrifice.

House A4 Sequence 5

10.50 a.m.

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Hon. F. J. STUART: She was a committed Christian, and of course, the Christian faith would have reinforced her in all of her endeavours. The renaissance poet, Dr. John Donne, in that famous sonnet he wrote on death, would have summed up for her and for all of us the essence of that Christian faith, when he reminded us that death is not the end. In that famous sonnet he wrote on death, he began it with the words:

“Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,

For, those, whom thou think’st, thou dost overthrow,

Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the concluding couplet of that sonnet, he trumpeted what Matilda Eloise Best and people like Matilda Elise Best have always known, that one short sleep past we wait eternity and death should be no more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think Your Honour is lucky to have had a mother who was so rich in example, so rich in spirit and so robust in faith. Sir, I feel honoured to be able to stand here today to speak of her life. Sir, on behalf of my family and me, I extend heartfelt condolences to you. May she rest in peace. I am obliged to you.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to your late mother, Matilda Eloise Best, who I met just briefly on one occasion as I was walking up next to City Centre Mall. She was a hawker selling produce. She was a very humble woman. She recognised who I was and as I passed, she called me aside and said that she was proud to say that she was, indeed, your mother. Sir, I could see that joy in her eyes and could hear it in her voice, as she proclaimed that her son was, indeed, a candidate in the last General Election.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I share your pain in that during the last General Election campaign my mother took ill and we had to wait for many hours while at the Accident and Emergency Department. My mother was hospitalised in the middle of the Election campaign but is now recovering, and I wish her well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I reflect on the life of your mother, as I had attended the funeral, when I heard she was a hawker, I remembered too that my mother, in her simple way was also a hawker. Her best friend was from St.

Andrew and my mother would say: “St. Andrew bottom.” I remember that my mother used to sell confectionary in front of the Garrison School. She too was very happy to have her little tray to assist in that exercise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I associate myself with the comments made by Honourable Members who have spoken before me in highlighting the fact that there is a role in the development of our society for the working class, the poor, what the political scientists call the proletariat.

Sir, oftentimes, some sectors in our community and around the world condescend upon these proletariat, some even go to the extent of suggesting that poor people or their children should not be eligible to be elected to this Honourable Chamber, that is why I am very happy that persons like yourself, like others and me, are able to stand here as products of the working-class, to represent the people of Barbados at the highest level.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not, in any way, suggesting there is a division of the classes, to the extent where there is hatred for the upper class, the middle class or the working class, I believe we have to work as a cohesive society, respecting each other.

Sir, I was very happy, for example, at the funeral of your mother, to have learnt that she would have insisted that you and other members of the family would cut the canes at reaping time. Therefore, regardless as to whether you were the most successful lawyer in Barbados, she has instilled that humility in you, so that you still had to get your hands dirty in the soil of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree that your mother, like many other working-class people in Barbados, are builders of Barbados, and that the fully taxpayers-funded education, provided by successive Governments, have enabled and propelled the sons and daughters of the working-class to become middle-class and professionals in the various sectors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I extend my deepest condolences to you and your family. Sir, may I say that she lives through you and, therefore, I am confident that the family tradition will live on throughout the ages.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues to place my remarks on record as having stood to pay tribute to a great woman, where the ultimate demonstration of that greatness has now displayed itself in your person as the Deputy Speaker of this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe if the story of greatness had to be told through the eyes of those who only see wealth or riches as greatness, or those who have etched their names in the cornerstones of buildings, then persons like your mother would not be recognised as a great citizen of this country. We believe that the ultimate demonstration of greatness is seen in the legacies left behind, particularly in the lives of those who have been touched by great women and men and specifically a woman like your mother.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I only had the opportunity to meet her once and that was on the occasion of the Opening of Parliament. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not forget the delight and the expressions of joy that were marked all over her face, not only at the thought, but at the reality and recognition that your Honour would have made it to this political summit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that being born at a time when she was born, engaging in an occupation in which she engaged, would of itself demonstrate the courage, the tenacity, the will, and the personal power, to ensure that her memory would not be soon forgotten.

Sir, I suppose in a way that when we observe the passing of others, we are reminded of our own journeys that will one day come to an end, and that when it does come to an end, we would want to be remembered as persons who have left a contribution, either through our offsprings or through our kindnesses to mankind, in the footprints of time. We would want to be remembered as having passed this way, since there is a destiny that makes us brothers. Sir, no man goes his way alone, it is only what you send out in the lives of others that come back into your own.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I, therefore, would wish to submit my own tribute to a life that was lived without regret; to a contribution that was made, not to be forgotten; and children, including yourself, who will live on and carry on the legacy of a great mother.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I extend my deepest condolences on behalf of my family and me. May she rest in peace. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

11.00 a.m.

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MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George North.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too would like to join with all Honourable Members in here to pay tribute to your mother, the late Mrs. Matilda Best. I

was fortunate to meet her on the afternoon of the opening of Parliament. I was fortunate because I was standing in the western end of the courtyard when you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, brought her over to me and introduced Mrs. Best. Sir, this is why I say I am fortunate.

Therefore, one has to say that one cannot determine one's life. That afternoon she looked very radiant; she looked happy and I must say that she was expressing here satisfaction in seeing you elected as a Member of Parliament and I think that was very satisfying to her. I was not able to attend the funeral because of other commitments but I read some time that she was a hardworking woman, and I understand from today that she was also a hawker, who would have grown and sold her produce and, indeed, a Christian woman.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the last two weeks, I attended a number of funerals for persons who have lived way above the age of 90. Sir, yesterday afternoon, I went to a funeral at St. George's Parish Church for Mrs. Bourne, who was 101 years old. Sir, the evening before, we went to two funerals in the St. George area, where many of these women had lived past the age of 90.

Sir, as has been expressed here today, all these women were hardworking in their times. They did not look for handouts and they recognised the value of hard work. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were Christians in their thoughts; Christians in their lives and they set examples for us to follow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that such examples need to be emulated. Therefore, we as Parliamentarians must uplift women of that ilk, praise them and hope that in our generation and a generation to come, that we can see women and men really emulate what these people stood for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of myself and my family I would like to wish you and your family all the best at this time and hope that your life would be lived for the memory of your dear departed mother.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be remiss of me not to stand at this time and add my voice to those of my colleagues, who have extended their condolences at the passing of your mother. I extend condolence to you on behalf of my family and, also, on behalf of my extended family and other relatives with whom you are good friends and I know that they would want me to do so at this time.

I have only had occasion to meet your mother once. I am sure that in her passing, she was satisfied with her life's work, certainly having known you and how she has raised you, I am sure she believed that she has done a good job and so, she must have gone with the knowledge that she has done what she was on this earth to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have known many rural women of that era through my medical practice in St. George and, as was said here today, that kind of woman is the kind that we need to revere and uphold more in our country. It is certainly the kind of thing that we would want to see as we endeavour in the Ministry to bring values and morals back into our society.

We need more families to embrace the types of values that your mother did. We need more women to be able to pass them on to their children in the way that your mother did with you. The previous speaker spoke of other elderly folks whose funerals he attended. Indeed, the 101-year-old lady, who was laid to rest yesterday, was my great-aunt.

I do not know that we would be so fortunate to live quite as long. Certainly the way our society is and we argue that the things we eat and all that may not encourage us to live so long. Certainly we would like to think that when we are touched by women and men like your mother that it would encourage us that regardless of how much time we have on this earth that we would do our best to pass on those values to live the life that upon reflection we can be pleased with and the lives that our relatives and children can look back on and be proud of. I know certainly that you and your family as you reflect on your mother's life, that you could be proud of her. You can be proud of what she has passed on to you and you can pass those values on to your children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I extend my condolences to you and my support in any way that I can on behalf of myself and my family.

Hon. S.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too would like to associate myself with the very warm sentiments in relation to paying tribute to your mother. I believe that in doing that, I would also like to associate all those persons from Christ Church West Central, whom I have the honour to represent, who have asked me to convey their sympathies to you on the passing of your mother.

Sir, it is not often, Mr. Deputy Speaker that we get an opportunity such as this to pay tribute to persons who have done so much in their own way to assist with the development of our country. Sir, I believe this occasion must not pass without a very sound reflection on all of us on the very sound contributions made by mothers and fathers, who have been part of the liberation and the

movement to enfranchise all of us, who are now present as Members of Parliament in this very august Chamber.

Sir, I would like to say, because I have felt it for a long time that, perhaps one of the failings of our system is that we do not spend enough time looking within the centre of our community to accord honours and privileges to persons. Very often, in giving persons knighthoods and those kinds of accolades, we do not drill down to persons, such as your mom, and ensure that they are elevated in the annals of our history.

Sir, in paying tribute to your mom, one thing I would like to leave, not only on the record of this Parliament but certainly, as an action point for this Government of which I am proud to be a part, is that we find a way to ensure that we can honour and celebrate those persons, such as your mom, who have toiled and contributed, in my own estimation, in a way that persons who have received signal honour have also contributed, but we have failed to find innovative ways in honouring persons such as your mom.

11.07 a.m.

Sequence 7

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Hon. S.A. LASHLEY: Sir, that is my contribution as I see it. In addition to the words of recognition, that there is some action plan in place to ensure that we can find persons, such as your mum, early enough, to let them know, we feel so strongly about their contribution, that we want to elevate them in the annals of our history.

Sir, on behalf of my family and the constituents of Christ Church West Central, I would like to record my deep sympathy to you and your family on the passing of your mother, who has contributed so significantly, not only to your own personal development, but to the development of her community, and therefore to the development of Barbados.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D.St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I would like to be associated with the comments of the Honourable Members who spoke, and to say that the mere fact that you are a product of rural Barbados means you would have gained some values, well-known to rural Barbados and to Barbados as a whole. I am not surprised at what I heard today, because it is known that once you are from rural Barbados, there are certain values and traits you are

expected to practice, so I am not surprised at your behaviour in the Chair so far.

Sir, I want you to know that your mum is one of the best examples of what we call the Barbadian product. She was hardworking, dedicated and loyal. She did not believe you had to start at the top. She believed that she had a contribution to make and she chose the good field which is well-known in Barbados, where the measurement is the greatest.

Sir, a lot of people do not know that when you start from there, the measurement is the greatest. You do not have to guess whether there is measurement or not, you are sure that the measurement is there to be made.

Sir, once we recognise that, and we as politicians would recognise that those persons have no value. I do not mean that they have no values, but there is nothing called a money value to them. Once they have principles, they lived by those principles and continued those principles for the rest of their lives.

Sir, the age of 90 means that she was born in 1917, which means there is a common factor. The name is also common. So it means that if all of these things are common, certain things must be common in here also. I look forward for you to practice the values you would have earned from this great lady. Sir, Hansard will show I have said that sometimes in rewarding people, it is the real people of Barbados who are not rewarded.

I believe that persons like Mrs. Best should be one of those persons held in the records of Parliament, because there are persons like her that have contributed and developed this country called Barbados, but we sometimes forget that at 4 o'clock in the morning, and that might by late, these persons are outdoors developing Barbados. They are the people who market the produce of Barbados ensuring that the output and growth of Barbados are recorded.

Sir, if you had reached into her basket, you would have seen the rural produce there, which meant that her contribution to Barbados was much greater than a lot of persons, who would have been honoured in this country. Sir, I am saying that is something that has to be corrected in this country, because those persons are the real heroes who have contributed to the development of Barbados without recognition. I am saying it has to change.

Sir, agriculture has always catered to the development of Barbados, but agriculture is useless without people to market the produce. We called them vendors or hawkers, but when you really think about it, a lot of people who had other names and were given credit would not have developed Barbados, in a similar way. I am saying this

Parliament must recognise the contribution of this honourable lady, and there are many more men and women like her.

Sir, I can think about Sylvan Yearwood of Checker Hall, St. Lucy. A man who is the best example of a hardworking person can be. I am saying that there are persons like them that we, the by-products or the products of them have to acknowledge the need to make the change to recognise the real people of Barbados.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, let me extend to you on behalf of all my parliamentary colleagues, those who did not speak in this debate or who might not be here, as well as the Democratic Labour Party, our sympathy on the passing of your mother. Sir, when last I met her, and I only met her on social occasions, she was planning the next social occasion. Sir, as you would know, we were to meet at St. John's Parish Church for the christening of your latest grandchild, whom I have been asked not by his side of the family, but by the paternal side, to be the godfather. Regrettably, I had to leave Barbados and was not present, but it was your mother who reminded me that we had a date on that Sunday, and I could not remember what she was talking about until she specifically said, "I will see you at St. John's Parish Church."

Sir, on the few occasions that I met her, I found her to be not only of a pleasant disposition, but obviously a person of strong character. Therefore, when I heard you speak in the obituary of her great contribution not only to your life, but to your brothers, sisters and other people in the community in which you lived, I was far from surprised.

I would think that all of us who heard your very sincere tribute to your mother could associate it with the kind of things of which the Barbados we know today has been built. Therefore, your tribute alone sufficed it. There is nothing I can add or subtract except to say that she obviously was very proud of you and was happy to be associated with your success.

It is on that basis that we had the privilege today in this great Chamber to be able to speak of Matilda Best, a lady who, perhaps, were it not for the strength of character that she gave you, may never have heard her name called in this great assembly. The point is, you have done her proud, and today we are able to speak highly of her contributions to the development of Barbados. Even though we are not going to single out any qualities she has passed on to you, today, we know that she has been the strength of your

success. Therefore, I extend my sympathy, my family's and the family of the Democratic Labour Party to you, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I want to thank this Honourable House for speaking so glowingly of my mother. I sat here and listened to all the kind words that were really and truly worthy of Elise Matilda Best, or Ma, as I would say. The rest would say Granny Best. She was a great lady and always instilled certain rudiments and values to all her children, grandchildren and great-grand children.

11.20 a.m.

Sequence 8

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

House A4, Sequence 09, 11.20 a.m.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: She always encouraged us to work hard and to ensure that when we work that we save some of what we worked for, for the rainy day.

I can give you the perfect example. On February, 21, 1977, when I was heading off to work in the Ministry of Agriculture, and she said, "you are going to work but you are not a man. I want you to understand that you have to save two-and-half cents out of a penny." I looked up and said, "Ma, how am I going to do that?" She said, "All I want you to do is to save something for the rainy day."

She worked hard and tirelessly for all of her children and she ensured that all of us owned a piece of Barbados. I am the last person to acquire a piece of property. I recall that I was going to England to my brother's funeral and she looked at me and said, "Kenny, you know everybody has something and you do not have anything." I said that "Ma, I know that is true, and she asked if I had any money." I said, "Yes." She said, "There is a piece of land in Jackson, your sister wanted it, but she got something already, so I am going to give it to you."

I am grateful for the life of my mother. She has guided and encouraged me not to give up because there will be stumbling blocks in the way, but you must fight for what you believe in, and I believe it is that fighting power she has given to me, gave me the great Honour to sit in this Chair today to represent the people of St. Michael East particularly, and Barbados.

I thank you all very much for the tributes that you have paid to my mother. May her soul rest in peace.

Thank you.

PAPERS

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

1. Report and Audited Financial Statements of the Barbados Conference Services Limited for the financial year ending 31st March, 2005.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 for the remainder of today's Sitting.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

On the motion of Hon. R. D. JONES, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Hon. S.A. LASHLEY in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

ORDER NO. 1

RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$62 813 000 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2007-2008 AS SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 13, 2007-2008 WHICH FORM THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION AND THAT THE EXPLANATORY NOTES TO HEAD 13 AND HEAD 38 BE AMENDED AS SET OUT IN THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION

HEAD 12 - PARLIAMENT - \$790 514

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, this Supplementary is \$790 514. It relates to expenses associated with the General Elections held on January 15,

2008. As a result of the Election, this is for the payment of gratuities to 12 constituency assistants to those former Members of Parliament, in addition to four former members of staff of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to that, there are 24 Members of Parliament who qualify for a grant of \$10 000 each to purchase office equipment and other supporting paraphernalia for their Constituency offices. There is also a contingency cost for the Opening of Parliament. Sir, all of that is included in this Supplementary.

In moving this, Sir, I want first of all to thank those persons who served as Constituency Assistants to former Members of Parliament, for their service to Barbados. Fortunately, I do not think there are any who would have serviced Members of the Democratic Labour Party but that should not, in any way take away from the gratitude of this Parliament to the Constituency Assistants to former Members of the Barbados Labour Party, who served in this House.

The role of a Constituency Assistant is not easy. Those persons who would have served, some for a very long period of time, need to be commended for their service and thanked by all of us.

I also want to make the point that people often do not recognise the cost of running Constituency Offices. This Government came to Parliament on a mandate that Parliamentarians must spend a specified amount of time in their Constituency, and to achieve that, they need to have adequate accommodation.

There was a time when my small Constituency Office in St. John could accommodate the people who came to see me on Thursdays, even when I was a Minister, not that I am making a case for moving my office, but I am saying that if the numbers of people who come to see me now, whom I cannot physically accommodate, in any way correlate to the numbers of people who may come to see other Members of Parliament, then it is clear that proper facilities have to be made available.

House A4, Sequence 09, 11.30 a.m.

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: In my own case, at one point, we were thinking of getting a tent outside to accommodate the number of people. People expect to be able to see their Parliamentary Representative. I believe that those persons who have been successful in Parliament have been regular attendees at Constituency clinics assisting their constituents with a variety of problems, but the only way they could do that is if they have the facilities made available to them. Sir, \$10 000 may sound like a lot

of money, but once you buy a computer, some chairs for a waiting room and a desk, that money is gone.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am saying that the rent, which is accountable, may be increased to accommodate increases in the cost of property, including rental of property over time, because the rent as it is now was introduced way back in 1980 at \$500 and then \$750 over time. Sir, that is okay in a constituency like St. John where you could find accommodation and in St. Joseph or St. Andrew if you have an office, but when you go to the St. Michael area, it is going to be more expensive, and we agree that something needs to be done in that regard.

Mr. Chairman, included in this also is a contingency cost for the opening of Parliament. I want to compliment the Acting Clerk of Parliament and his assistants for that. We also had some additional assistants during that time as well. They all performed creditably. I want to thank the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central who is not here. He was the designated person responsible to coordinate the Opening of Parliament. I thought that he did a good job.

Sir, I noticed that this amount comes under the Management Commission of Parliament. I have been a Member of this Chamber for over 20 years. I served as a Member of the Management Commission since 1994 except for a two-year break, and I must confess that the Management Commission does not perform the role that it should be performing effectively.

It is there to look after the management of Parliament, but it also has a responsibility to ensure that its meets regularly to direct those affairs and also to meet the needs of the Parliamentarians who use the facilities under its remit including Honourable Members who use this Chamber on Tuesdays, the staffing of the Leader of the Opposition's arrangements, as well as the new facility in the West Wing.

During that time, I cannot think that any serious meetings were held in relation to the direction of the use of these facilities, and I hope that the new Management Commission, which is a Committee of this House and is represented bi-partisanly, will meet and make some determinations about the use of the facilities and about the comfort and organisational structure of this Parliament for the members of staff as well as the persons who use it on Tuesdays.

I beg to move that Head 12 stand part.

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to second that.

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I am happy to support the Supplementary request under this Head and to say that we are appreciative that the amounts owed to those persons who would have worked as Constituency Assistants in some cases for a period of 14 years would be settled shortly. Many of them would have been without any form of money for the last two months and it has been a source of hardship for some of them.

There are also the Personal Assistants. We are aware that while this is not under this Head, that the Cabinet Office hopefully would resolve all outstanding issues with them because, in many instances, there is no money coming in to them and therefore basic things such as the purchase of groceries and the payment of mortgages or rent are proving to be a hardship for some of them.

In relation to the broader issue which the Honourable Prime Minister has averted to, I have my own views that I have held for some time and I would repeat them here now. I believe that there is need not just for the Management Commission to function more effectively but that the time has come for us to have serious reforms of Parliament as an institution.

Sir, I trust and hope that one of the things that we can achieve as a Parliament in this session is the agreement to establish a joint committee of both Houses on a bipartisan basis in order to be able to review the structure and functioning of this Parliament and its relevance to the society in which we find ourselves today.

I believe that the Prime Minister on previous occasions has reflected these views, certainly I have. We had occasion, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, the Prime Minister and myself, in Trinidad and Tobago about two to three years ago at a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting to speak to these issues. I hope that this session of Parliament would therefore see, if not a joint committee of both Houses to review the structure and functioning of Parliament, the establishment of a Commission, whatever the methodology of the Government deems appropriate.

Mr. Chairman, I really do not believe that we could continue to function as we do. The last serious reform of Parliament would have been in 1971 when we moved from double member constituencies to single member constituencies. Indeed, part of the debate that I expect would take place next week and the whole issue of the functioning and operation of a Ministry of Constituency Empowerment and how it gels with the system of public finances that we have and with the system of governance that we have, really begs a larger question; the structure of our governance of which Parliament is but only one component. I therefore trust and hope that we can treat to these issues.

I am not going to go into a long discussion today about campaign financing and electoral reform, but much of the review of the structure and composition of Parliament will lead naturally also to those questions. Suffice it to say that at this stage we believe that we ought to give the Government a chance to govern, but we are prepared to speak and to work in a serious way to be able to address many of these issues during the course of this term.

In relation to many of the allowances, as the Prime Minister has said, many of them have been set quite a few years ago, particularly in relation to the rental of Constituency Offices which has proved a hardship to Members of Parliament, particularly those who are newer Members of Parliament. Some on Our Side too would have had the same difficulty, and I think that an urgent review of those issues is necessary if we are not to see a disconnect developed between what Parliamentarians can effectively do given the resources which are available to them.

I feel that there is a cost to democracy, Mr. Speaker. I feel that the sooner we accept that as a nation there is a price to maintaining the stability which we have as a country, the better for us. This has nothing to do with the payment of Parliamentarians now, it relates simply to the support services that are necessary for people to do their job adequately, given the demands that are placed upon them, particularly, in a country such as ours where there is only a single system of Government. House A4 Sequence 10

11.40 a.m.

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Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: There is not the local Government that would treat to many of the other issues that we would have in other Caribbean countries. Sir, the expectations of constituents range from the very basic local matters, in terms of garbage collection and street lights, to those who believe that those who sit in this august Chamber must be able to articulate a vision. Therefore, to execute that vision in relation to development, we must be able to ensure that appropriate Laws are passed, such that the people of Barbados are capable of benefitting from those Laws.

Sir, there is a wide range of expectations all vested on that person who is elected as an Honourable Member of Parliament. Therefore, unless we come to grips with the fact that structure follows function, we would find a growing level of apathy and cynicism beyond that which we have already recognised in this country.

Mr. Chairman, I signal simply that we feel strongly that in this term there must be a review of the structure and

functioning of Parliament and that we, as an Opposition, are prepared to play our role in that regard. Sir, in a very real sense, even when we drafted the new Constitution, which is there for the Attorney General to take action as he sees fit, one of the things I felt strongly about as an individual Member of Parliament, was that in the absence of appropriate reform of Government, that work of a new Constitution would be deficient, since it speaks not just to the function of Government, but to the role of governance in this society.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward, therefore, to participation in that way.

Mr. Chairman, may I say that we, therefore, await the functioning of meetings of the Management Commission and we look forward to what new innovations would take place, as the Prime Minister has adumbrated here today. We trust and hope that we would use the occasion of the newness of this Parliament to be able to bring about many of the things, including the structure of the support services, both for the Opposition and for Backbenchers, both of whom, in my view, do not benefit from appropriate support or research services, to ensure that the quality of debate in this Honourable Chamber would be and could be as high as it ought to be.

Mr. Chairman, I am obliged to you.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt this new Government should be congratulated for the speed they have brought this particular measure, considering the time that it has taken in previous years for this measure to be sorted. Sir, it is interesting that all 12 former Honourable Members are from the Other Side, and I am happy to see there are no political games being played.

Sir, as rightfully said by the Leader of the Opposition, these persons have expenses to be paid, et cetera, and so I am, therefore, happy to see that at the Third Sitting of Parliament, we are here dealing with this particular matter, to ensure that those persons who worked for the Opposition are not out of pocket for any long period of time.

Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that the Management Commission needs to function, and that there are many things that must be corrected. Sir, people must understand that Parliamentarians have duties to perform and that they must have those facilities in order to carry out those duties, in the interest of the public of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member mentioned the Constituency Councils. There is no doubt the Honourable Member would have remembered that on too many occasions I have always lamented in this Parliament that I have had to vote at Estimates times for large sums of

money and I could not have guaranteed my Constituency that any money would have been spent on it. If one only looks at the previous allocations of certain Heads, one would see that some Ministries were allocated millions of dollars and that none of that money was ever spent in some Constituencies.

Sir, the mere fact that that charge has been answered, and now there will be 30 separate units representing each Constituency, is a clear indicator that each Constituency will now be ably and truly represented in this Parliament. Sir, furthermore, each Honourable Member would be able to go to his or her Constituency and tell them about some of the things that would be done, or about the amount of money that would be spent in those Constituencies.

Mr. Chairman, I want the Other Side to understand it is one thing to talk about something but that it is another thing to implement it. Sir, this is a clear indicator that this Party continues to listen to the voices of the people and that this Party is demonstrating that it understands its commitment, especially between the people and the social Heads of Barbados.

Sir, I do not believe that any one Minister should believe that votes belong to him or to her solely, neither should they believe that whole vote should be used in that particular constituency. Sir, I have always made the point that social Heads should be allocated, and I look forward to the day when we come to discuss Estimates that we could pick up the Estimates and see the social Heads divided by constituencies, because it is at that point that we would truly understand what is occurring and that this would empower Parliamentarians.

Mr. Chairman, this is the beginning of empowerment for Parliamentarians, and the Opposition needs not worry because under this new Heading they too would have a say in projects that would go on in their Constituencies, without them necessarily having to beg the minister or having to pass a note across the Floor, hoping that something would occur within their constituencies. Mr. Chairman, I want to say that this is a good start and that we will continue to monitor it.

Mr. Chairman, we need not worry about the Opposition wanting to help us. We have persons who will monitor, who will ensure that internal checks are done, so that the Government continues to function under that name we have always known. Sir, we will continue that democratic process into which we have all been indoctrinated, we will ensure that the interest of the public is taken care of. I thank you.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, as I rise to support this Resolution, I would like to sincerely thank the good people of the City of Bridgetown, who have elected

me to be their representative in this Honourable Chamber. Sir, I gave them the pledge that I will do all within my power to do the best job that I possibly can, in representing their interest.

Mr. Chairman, as the Honourable Prime Minister mentioned, when we look at the cost of rental properties throughout our country - he mentioned the City of Bridgetown - throughout urban Barbados one would see that it is practically impossible to get a piece of property valued under \$ 1 000 that would be suitable for a Constituency Office. Therefore, I support his statement that we will have urgently to review this \$750 being provided per month for Members of Parliament to offset the cost or rental of their Constituency Offices.

Mr. Chairman, some people may argue "but tough luck, if you want to vie for Parliament, you should be well equipped to handle this." Sir, if we perpetuate this thinking, then clearly there would be a bias against working-class people coming forward to offer themselves as Members of Parliament, and then where would democracy be?

Sir, we have had Members of Parliament, for example, I have heard of the late "Hommie" Corbin who used to take the bus from St. Andrew to get here; therefore, as I said earlier, we cannot discriminate against working-class people. We have as much right as anybody else to offer ourselves as Members of Parliament; therefore, Members of Parliament should not be put in a position where, if they do not have the means themselves or through a fairy Godfather of Godmother, they would find it impossible to survive.

11.50 a.m.

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Hon. P.M.T TODD: Sir, many of us as politicians and Members of Parliament, pull our pockets on a daily basis to send birthday cards and calendars to our constituents. We provide sporting equipment and prizes. This is all coming from us. Therefore, the public must appreciate that in fulfilling our mandate as proper representatives, there is a tremendous outlay of money, and if we are not careful we could end up spending more money than we earn, even as Members of Parliament, or even as Ministers.

Therefore, I am saying that we do not want situations to arise, where there is too close a relationship between persons funding their Election campaigns or the worker's, where there is insufficient independence for the Member of Parliament to stand on his own feet, and therefore would not be influenced unduly by sources of funding. Sir, therefore, I support this call for the proper provision of facilities for our Parliamentarians.

Sir, currently, as the Prime Minister said, in our Party's Manifesto, we have pledged that in order to guarantee that Members of Parliament get assistance with rental fees for accommodation, they must really be represented, where we will have be accessible to constituents at least once daily, when running clinics.

Sir, other Members of Parliament and I on This Side, and I would imagine on the Other Side, have had in the last few weeks literally scores of constituents coming to us. The rent for my office is \$1 500 a month and still the space is not enough, people are standing in the road waiting for hours to see us. Sir, I am saying this is justified if we are really going to be truly representing our people's interest.

I thank you.

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

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, just a few points. The first I want to make is that I understand the broad concerns raised by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East regarding this concept of governance. Sir, that is not an issue as people want to make it out to be. The word "governance", just like the word "environment" and prior to that, the words "poverty alleviation" and so on are words concocted by people in international institutions to tack on to loans given to developing countries, which they feel do not conform to certain international standards. Sir, I am as cautious, skeptical and cynical about using such broad concepts.

Sir, the first step in relation to governance in our system of government, is that the Members of Cabinet in the House of Assembly should not be more than half of the total Members of the House. We have endured in Barbados, under the previous Government, what essentially was a dictatorship by the Cabinet, because even if the Back Bench joined up with the Opposition, they could not outnumber the Members in the Cabinet.

Sir, collective responsibility, therefore, meant that Cabinet Ministers were bound by the Westminster system of Government, to agree with whatever came before this Honourable House from the Cabinet. Sir, right now you can team up, the ten of you, or nine, or ten-and-a-half can team up with the six non-executive members, and you can defeat a measure that comes here from the Executive. That is the first step. The Speaker can vote.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: As a matter of principle in constructing the Cabinet, we decided that the numbers of Members of Cabinet should be less than half, so that Parliament would always, in the House, even at the level of

principle, that this Parliament could be restored to its preeminent role, not as lapdogs of the Executive, not accepting a principle of collective responsibility transported from Government Headquarters down here, but by a concept of Government which meant that Parliament could ultimately, both in concept and practice, be supreme in Barbados. That did not require any change in Law. It required a commitment to Parliamentary conventions and principles that restored this Parliament to preeminence.

Sir, I start only there, but I want to go on to say that this matter came before the Ministry of Finance on February 29, 2008, which is when they were able to calculate all of the outstanding gratuities. This is not even a month that this Supplementary had been brought here. I could have provided for it in next year's Estimates, as was done previously.

Sir, in 1994 there were Parliamentarians who were promised pensions, jointly agreed to. They had to wait almost five years after the Government changed to get those pensions.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member knows better than that. He would tell you when they waited, but he would not tell you that the reason they had to wait was because the Democratic Labour Party chose to call an election to disenfranchise them from a pension.

Furthermore, when we got to the point of being a Government, legislation had to be changed in order to ensure that persons, who swore allegiance to the Democratic Labour Party, were able to carry home a decent pension in this country. Now if we want to have a political debate under this Head in the manner in which it is going to be done, I welcome it.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, I am not worried about a political debate, since when does that bother me. I am a politician. I do not know what you are. I do not know what the Honourable Member is. I do not believe that anything has to be sanctified in here. The Honourable Member spoke and gave the impression that for two months people were waiting on money, and I am not going to allow the slightest inkling.

I heard the Honourable Member say Governments are given honeymoons. The Honourable Member said that the honeymoon has come to an end. I heard we have given you a honeymoon. I understand the English Language. I therefore am not going to speak with a forked tongue. I do not want any honeymoon, and you do not have the privilege of giving me one. I do not want a honeymoon. I want to ensure that this Government practises policies, grounded in integrity, and that we restore this Parliament to its position of preeminence and respectability.

Sir, we got the request on February 29. It was expedited three weeks later, and included in this amount. Sir, I am going to go to another level of governance. This Democratic Labour Party Government had the honour and privilege, through me, of advising His Excellency the Governor General, to appoint to our Parliament a young lady who is visually impaired.

We did not put her in there for tokenism, Sir. Therefore, we had to buy equipment to facilitate the translation of all our Order Papers, Standing Orders and documents into Braille, so she does not come in here winging it. She goes into that Parliament, both herself and every other visually impaired person elevated to office in this country can.

HA4 12:00 Noon

Sequence 12

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Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Therefore, that is another aspect of governance, because we are not into tokenism. Sir, I am saying that we need to prepare this Parliament for a new era of participation by all citizens of all levels of ability and attainment and that is included in this Supplementary. I do not take the word "governance" in this abstract sense. I do not need any consultants to write pretty reports about governance and I am uninfluenced by all the international meetings and conventions that people attend to tact on governance as an issue.

We do not need any lessons in governance. Sir, that is why in relation to the constituency councils, I am going to get to that because any warning shots across the bow, this is the second time I have heard them from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. She keeps saying that she is watching this Constituency Council thing very carefully, that it happened in Jamaica and that she is now more interested in accountability than at any other time in her political history. Sir, since 16 January, accountability has become the watch word of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. Sir, let me tell you why this project is not a fly-by-night arrangement. First of all, we took it to the electorate. We are not bringing it through the back door. It was in our Manifesto, including the exact amount that in the first year, we would give to every Member of Parliament...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You would be entitled to it. You think it is for only Government Members of Parliament, Sir? Nobody ever said so. I told you we are going to restore this Parliament and restore respectability to it. Sir, as part of that, whatever Honourable Members on

this side are entitled to, I give the commitment that Members on the Other Side would be entitled to, and since you would be monitoring us, I warn you that I will be monitoring the Opposition very carefully too.

I promise on both Sides that there would be very careful monitoring of the expenditure of those sums of money. It will not be any grant for nobody to cut down trees for the cost of \$11 000, or to build houses that disappeared, or to try to push people off properties that they own. It will be for community development, empowerment and solving the problems that people face in Barbados. It will not be on the basis of any Member of Parliament's decision, so if he want to hold a 'bram' every Thursday night in his constituency, he will not be using that money for that.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I seem very animated today so I am giving you a warning shot across the bow too. I know why you are animated because absence makes the heart grow fonder and you are now fonder of this place today.

Mr. Chairman, there will be no wastage like that. Each of you will have to work with Constituency Councils on which persons who understand the need of the community are placed, people like district emergency officers, community development officers, youth commissioners, people who have that experience to help guide the process and there must be synergy between the Members of Parliament and those individuals.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying all that to say that as a precursor to this policy, we have set up a governance unit already with a Permanent Secretary, which is currently being staffed to look at all aspects of governance, including that. We are also going to ask an independent member of this Parliament to chair a Committee that will take our proposal in relation to these things to the public, including the integrity legislation, freedom of information, contractor general, all of those areas of accountability that are important to go to the public first so, if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East wants to go to a session and talk to them, you are most welcome to put all your ideas on governance to that Committee. It will then come back to the Government for consideration as to how and when such policies will be put in place.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry for Social Care is establishing the structure of the Community Councils and the resources that are to be made available to them. Sir, I know there is bipartisan support for it. I am not worried about the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East because I have a right to talk to individual Members of

Parliament and there are some on That Side who cannot wait.

Sir, they cannot wait, they are licking down my door for the establishment of the Constituency Councils and the availability of the funds to solve problems in their constituency. Sir, I do not believe in divide and rule - that was a former policy - I do not want to divide the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East against the rest of her members but I would suggest that she takes fresh guard and consult a little more closely with members of her Parliamentary Team before she makes statements regarding the establishment of Constituency Councils and making available to Members of Parliament sums of money to solve problems because there is no consensus on that side. I know there is consensus on This Side and I know there is consensus, ad idem with some people on That Side but I know there is no consensus right across.

Mr. Chairman, I do not want to diminish the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East since I said my commitment is to raise the standards of respectability of this House, so I will leave those internal problems to be solved internally but at our level, we know exactly where we are going on this project and despite protestations, we are going to do it.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: We are going to do it our way, and it will be done. Sir, as I have said, it forms part of an overall governance project. There may be part of it that can be discreetly carved out and pursued but it will come together under the rubric of new developments for governance in this country. Therefore, Sir, I look forward very much to, during the Estimates debates, discussing this matter in more detail.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

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

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, it is interesting that the very same person, the Honourable Member for St. John, who used the phrase "governance", with great regularity in the last two or three months of last year, is now dismissing it as a buzz word developed by international organisations for the purpose of trying to bring new areas of accountability to the Governments in the developing world.

I find it curious because it is apparent that when it suits him at one point, he supports it and when he is in another chair, as we have seen with other areas in which he has failed to display transparency and accountability, even since coming to Government he dismisses it.

Mr. Chairman, I am not in any way surprised...

Hon. D. J. H Thompson: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. I do not want the Honourable Member to mislead the House. It is a question of definitions. The Honourable Member believes in cosmetic governance, we believe in effective governance.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman that is why the Honourable Member may want to say so, but the time will come when we will show that his change is cosmetic change and that the country at some point soon will also demand real change. Sir, if he wants to become involved in semantics, that is a matter for him but, suffice it to say, Mr. Chairman, that there is no approach that the Honourable Member for St. John will bring when he flip-flops, that will ever surprise me because that is his nature.

The Honourable Member for St. John told the country that the Cabinet was too big and then proceeds to appoint a Cabinet of the same size. That is what we have come to expect from the Honourable Member for St. John.

H/A4/12:10

Sequence 13

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House A4, Sequence 14, 12.10 p.m.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Therefore, when he gets in here and trumpets that he is going to bring back real respectability to this Parliament, I can only say, Sir, that like his previous behaviour, we expect anything, once it suits his needs and concerns on the particular day.

Sir, let me speak to the issue of constituency empowerment because we are yet to have the Government articulate, not only to the Opposition who is supposed, as he said, to benefit from it, but to the country. In the circumstances where you are introducing a new system, then the very least that this Parliament and the people of Barbados - irrespective of how much you may have referred to it in your Manifesto - as a principle, must be given the Opposition to understand what it is you are doing.

There are Rules and there are Laws in this country. We therefore feel, Mr. Chairman, that if you are going to change the system in relation to how public expenditure is spent in this country then we need to hear from you.

Mr. Chairman, right now, under the Financial Administration and Audit Act, the accounting officer is the Permanent Secretary in our system of Government; therefore, if money is going to be spent, other than through

the Permanent Secretary or statutory corporations, we need to know. If it is that it is only going to be a recommendation for the same Minister to determine, and then for the Permanent Secretary to be responsible for, we need to know. If it is that it is going to be a situation where Constituency Councils are going to be hand-picked, we need to know. Sir, we need to understand the basis of the power that will now be vested in these Constituency Councils. All of us know that when Government is most effective, it is when it is transparent and when people are clearly held accountable.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, Order, please.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, in the circumstances, I simply say to you that I have noted in the Estimates, which have been circulated, \$4.5 million has been put for it, which is not a little bit of money. Sir, we had a Minister of Constituency Empowerment now for two months, and all we are saying is that we are not criticising before we hear the policy outlined by Government, but the policy has not yet been outlined.

Sir, no amount of criticism by the Honourable Member for St. John is going to deter this Opposition from doing its job, and from understanding what it is that will be developed that will now bring a new aspect of governance into the affairs of this country.

Mr. Chairman, it is well that the Honourable Member for St. John understands that I have an interest in accountability, and I will continue to have it, but suffice it to say that you cannot impose a new system on the governance of this country, without articulating:

1. How the system is to be structured. 2. What is expected of it?

Sir, in the Throne Speech comments were made that it is to go from street lights to playing fields to drainage. Sir, anyone who is familiar with public expenditure would know that \$100 000 or \$150 000 invariably cannot deal with most physical infrastructural works.

Therefore, we are anxious to hear the Government articulate, even prior to the placement of funds, what is anticipated, and what will be allowable expenditure, who is to spend it, who is accountable for it and how are the people to be chosen. In the absence of an election of persons, how can it be other than subjective? Those are the things that we are waiting to hear. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, no amount, as I said, of trying to diminish the concerns of the Opposition, will deter us from that objective.

May I say, Sir, that unlike the Other Side, persons on This Side are at liberty to have their views before the settlement of policy. The Barbados Labour Party has not settled its position on constituency empowerment, because we have not heard the position.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, please.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I repeat. The Government is yet to articulate its policy, either through the Prime Minister, or the person who holds the responsibility for Constituency Empowerment. Sir, until such time as that policy is articulated, it would be irresponsible for us to settle on a position, until we hear the policy being articulated. Mr. Chairman, I hold firm to that position.

May I say also, Mr. Chairman, that in relation to what I spoke about in terms of the reform of Parliament, if the Prime Minister feels that is a cosmetic change, then he is at liberty to do so. Sir, to suggest to the country that he now has a balanced Parliament in which Cabinet does not carry the sway is, once again, to try and bring a situation where he is trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the people of Barbados.

The effective situation, Mr. Chairman, is that they are five Back Benchers. The Speaker does not have an original vote. The Speaker has a casting vote in this Parliament. The reality is that unless it is a matter of fundamental importance, to have either a similar situation where the Opposition and the Back Bench constitute the exact number of 50 per cent of Parliament, does not meet the justice of the situation.

We therefore say, Mr. Chairman, that we believe in the principle and I certainly believe in the principle that the Cabinet should not constitute the largest block as it now does. There are more Cabinet Members, than there are members of the Opposition, or than they are members of the Back Bench.

Asides.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: I do not bear responsibility for what may have happened in the past, but I say to you, this is the same way that the Honourable Prime Minister sought to cut loose the former Member for St. Michael South and the former Prime Minister, when he cut down members of the Democratic Labour Party in not allowing them to receive pensions in this country. Therefore, these things are normal. The Honourable Member did not say that, Sir.

I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that I feel fundamentally in this country that the Parliament of Barbados needs to be

reformed. I say so with all sincerity. They are those on That Side too, who have expressed it, not just in this Chamber, but outside.

Mr. Chairman, if that is to be cast away under the word of governance, and as a concern of international institutions, then I am a little more sympathetic for the fate of the Members on the Other Side, during the course of this Parliament.

Mr. Chairman, this country deserves better. I simply say that I trust and hope that there will be a bipartisan approach to, at least, the structure and role of Parliament. I have tried, since being a Member of Parliament in this country, whether in the Other Place or here, to take that approach because I feel that Parliament is too important an institution to be trifled with, Sir.

Sir, if the Other Side does not agree with that, that is a matter for them, but a time will come one day again when, hopefully, we will have the opportunity to position this Parliament to help maintain the country's stability, and to make it more relevant.

The Honourable Member for St. John is the one for the last five years, who more than anybody else, spoke about the irrelevance of this institution. Simply by having the virtuous same numbers of Members of Cabinet, and by virtue of the fact that we just happen to have a larger Opposition than they had, all of a sudden he believes that the problem is solved that is a matter for him.

I do not agree.

House A4, Sequence 14, 12:20:14

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has three more minutes.

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: Thank you, Sir. I do not believe that governance is an abstract concept foisted on us by international institutions. If that is the point at which we have come in Barbados, God help us in relation to the leadership of the Democratic Labour Party, if that is its view of governance.

Mr. Chairman, I have heard the Attorney General speak outside of this Chamber on governance and he did not accept it as an abstract concept.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: Not just at Bank Hall but in Heroes Square. Fortunately, the Internet is available to show us his speeches. I do not know if I enjoy them, but I

could certainly tell you that the view I have heard from the Attorney General on governance does not equate to the speech I just heard from the Prime Minister. So I look forward to the articulation on the perspective of governance from the Democratic Labour Party during the course of this Parliament.

I equally feel, Mr. Chairman that matters pertaining to transparency and accountability cannot only relate to major Government projects. On Thursday last week I picked up the Nation Newspaper and I read in a column that the Prime Minister now has a Principal Political Advisor. It is a new post. If that is what he wants to do, that too is a departure because as I understand it, the political advice is rendered to the political party not to the Government. These are matters that all of a sudden are not to be the subject of statements from the Government, but we are to read it in the newspaper from the person confessing to be the Principal Political Advisor, one, Mr. Hartley Henry.

Secondly, I have already said in here that if we wanted to deal with principles of transparency and accountability, then I would have expected... We have given the Prime Minister time enough to be able to answer questions that were raised legitimately on this Floor of the House two weeks ago, but we would now have to place Parliamentary Questions on the record of Parliament if the Government is not going to answer willingly. That is our right and we shall do so.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: I do not know why the Prime Minister is so rattled, I really do not. It is all right for him to talk about it but when we then raise legitimate questions particularly when there are pieces of information released to the public, not by any Honourable Member of the Front Bench doing a post Cabinet press conference, but by the person who is the beneficiary of the position, last Thursday...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has one more minute.

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: The Honourable Member for St. Philip North should go and read the Nation Newspaper because obviously he is unaware of the position too. Perhaps I am expressing a view that I have read in the Nation Newspaper that not even Members of the Cabinet may be aware of. It was not This Side who called Mr. Henry the Principal Political Advisor, he announced it himself. As I say, in our government system, political advisors are reserved for political parties. If now there is a departure, the Prime Minister is entitled to do it but at least, as he said, he needs to tell the public about it in a spirit of transparency and accountability.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Hon Member for Christ Church East.

Hon. Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Chairman, I rise only to ensure that no one walks off into the darkness in the company of those who would wish to mislead this Chamber and the public. The truth of the matter is that the Constituency Empowerment Programme is housed in the Ministry for which I have responsibility.

Sir, if you listen to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East you would swear that this Government was in office for 14 years. You would not even imagine that this Government has only been in office for less than three months. The kinds of work that we have done already in real time...

Asides.

Hon. Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Chairman, we believe that it is important that the public understand that we are working in order to ensure that the public participates at every single level in the activities of this Government.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Chairman, the Barbados Labour Party needs to remember that they are no longer the Government and they cannot dictate the pace at which this Government rolls out its policies. They had 14 years to do it and they did nothing and now they are at the door, banging off the door, wanting the public to believe that they are imbued with this right to castigate the Government as to whether or not it is acting transparently.

They cannot dictate for us the terms of transparency in this Government or in this country. They have no record that would suggest that they have the right to tell this Government how it should proceed with the rollout of its programmes.

The Constituency Councils will be put in place as a result of shared ideas, of a shared policy within the Government and as a result of a conviction by this Government that we have to put power back into the hands of the people. We are not going to spend the Government's money and then wait on financial accounting times to realise how much money has been spent. We put it up front in the Manifesto and the country endorsed the Manifesto by electing us as the Government. They would have to wait until the information comes.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East has already given a ringing endorsement of the Constituency Councils' programme. As a matter of fact, I know that there would be an official launch of his Council on Saturday. He has invited me to it.

Mr. Chairman, the point is that the Government is not lost on its policy. What has to be recognised is that the Government's programme on the Constituency Councils is part of a large Government policy that is driven to set this country's social development back on track. Therefore, it is not about creating projects to spend money, it is about launching policies through effective programming that would allow the Government to be able to realise its social development mandate in the Manifesto that the people of Barbados endorsed.

Mr. Chairman, we will not be rushed into releasing anything until we know that we have the public's full endorsement on all the pieces of the programme. We will present it to this Parliament and to the country when we know that we have covered every single aspect of its operations. No one on That Side will dictate for us the pace at which we execute the public's mandate.

Mr. Chairman, the difference between this Government and the previous Government is that we work with the public first and then we implement. We do not implement and go to the public and ask the public to accept.

Sir, if the Other Side was so good at implementing programmes, and spending the Government's money with accountability, the Urban Development Commission would not be where it is today. We will deal with that in the fullness of time as well.

House A4 Sequence 15

12.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

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

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, I want to make a brief intervention in this particular matter. Sir, all the Honourable Member has just said only indicates that the Government has no idea, at all, as to how it is going to structure these Constituency Councils. Mr. Chairman, I have no difficulty with any Government seeking to provide assistance to constituencies.

Sir, of my political life, I believe I would have spent about 75 per cent of my time in my constituency and I have enjoyed it. I have always enjoyed Constituency politics more than I have enjoyed any other aspect of political life. Sir, I have no difficulty with any programme which would assist constituents, but what I find offensive is the way in which the Honourable Prime Minister has just indicated, without giving details, that he has a programme which

would be implemented and foisted on us, the Opposition, in effect whether we like it or lump it.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, I never said anything like that, and the Honourable Member is free to reject the programme. Sir that money would be saved and would be used by somebody else who needs it. I would never say that.

Asides.

Hon. R. St.C TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, all I want to say is that the people would have heard what the Honourable Member would have said and would have implied. What I want to say is that I fully respect - I cannot say that I fully understand - the decision of the electorate to make That Side the Government of the day. Sir, in the same way the people of Barbados at the macro level has made that determination at the micro level the people of St. Michael North have indicated that they wanted me to be their elected representative in the first instance.

Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter is that I fully appreciate the honour that has been bestowed upon me by my constituents, and I am not going to allow anybody on earth to derogate from the respect and honour I enjoy as the people's representative, by finding a back door to undermine the will of the people of St. Michael North. I am not going to be a part of it.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Can we have order please?

Mr. R. St.C TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, I want to hear more about this idea because, at present, I do not understand the constitutionality of taking up Government's funds and putting them into the hands of a Youth Commissioner or whoever else. Sir, I do not know the constitutionality of that at this time and perhaps I could be told about it.

Mr. Chairman, what I will say is that in my Constituency, and this is without saying more, there are already certain structures in place which, by the vote of the people, they would have endorsed.

Sir, I want to repeat that without hearing more at this stage, I do not intend to sit silently or idly by and expect any Government to want me to participate in any programme they would implement, for the sole purpose of undermining the will of the constituents of St. Michael North, who have asked me to represent their affairs for the next five years.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

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

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, first of all, greetings in the Name of the Most High, King of Kings, Lords of Lords, the conquering Lion of Judah. Mr. Chairman, first of all, this Honourable Member for St. Michael South East will never ever practice the politics of hypocrisy. Sir, I am a community practitioner.

For years I have stood in this Honourable Chamber and have always espoused the idea of a system of local government and local governance. Sir, the former Prime Minister, the late Sir Harold Bernard St. John also supported the precepts and the concepts of local government and a system of local governance.

Mr. Chairman, as you would know, there is a history of an implemented system of local government in Barbados over some decades ago, which, at some point in time, failed, I suppose through a lack of clear definition of what local governance and Government means to constituencies and communities across Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, in St. Michael South East, we have been practising a system of local governance for more than 25 years. I have said, over and over again, that a system of local governance is a system of community empowerment.

Mr. Chairman, I refer to the terminology of community practitioners simply because people in Barbados who do volunteer work at the community level are looked upon as though they are idiots or persons who have nothing else to do but to volunteer their time, yet the elitist system in which we live in this country has ascribed practitioner hearing to that of lawyers and doctors, but the community practitioners who take on the role, in most cases of some of the politicians, are the ones who are degenerated to a system of being second-class citizens.

Mr. Chairman, I, Hamilton Fitzgerald Lashley III, the Rastaman from the Pine, is saying there is no way that I am going to come into this Honourable Chamber and not defend the rights of community practitioners in Barbados, neither am I going to support a system that does not allow them to function in their own right as true councilmen, councilwomen, and community practitioners. Mr. Chairman, in fact, when this Bill is brought to Parliament, it should also make recommendation that those community practitioners who sit on councils, be afforded the courtesy of being given the title Councilmen and Councilwomen.

Sir, this recommendation is not unique, it might be unique to Barbados, because already we as the citizens' representatives are afforded the title of Member of

Parliament. In a system of local governance throughout the Caribbean, whether in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago or St. Lucia, there are councilmen and councilwomen who meet on a regular basis. These persons are afforded such courtesies. The fact of the matter is that we have to start treating our community practitioners very seriously.

Mr. Chairman, there has been the St. John Development Council, along with a number of communities across Barbados, which have community councils existing for a number of years. Sir, my understanding is that the executive members of these committees have been drawn from the various geographical areas of their respective communities. Sir, this geopolitical institution of changing from Community Council to that of Constituency Council suits me well, because all it does is asks me to expand the current system that exists in St. Michael South East, from that of Community Council to that of Constituency Council.

Sir, as politicians, we have to be careful in our selection of persons to sit on these Councils. We have to be careful that the election process is not done by us alone, and that these persons are drawn primarily from the communities themselves. Sir, a community like that of St. Michael South East does not have that problem because the basic infrastructure is already there. There are persons in St. Michael South East who have already been practising their craft for more than 25 years. When we select community practitioners, it is done from a bipartisan perspective.

Mr. Chairman, sooner or later the Electorate in Barbados is going to hold and is going to treat us with contempt. They would soon call us hypocrites, simply because of the fact that at the community level where a system of governance was implemented, they would have been denied the opportunity of empowering themselves. Sir, in that regard, the brunt of the burden would fall on us to execute a policy of administration at the community level, in a most energetic way. Sir, sometimes we get tired but the fact is, there must be this kind of system.

12.40 p.m.

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Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: I am supporting it from a perspective too that I have intimated to this Honourable Chamber on more than one occasion that I certainly believe that there should be a policy of community divestment. Sir, that community divestment policy should be seriously incorporated into the whole Constituency Councils.

Mr. Chairman, I will draw an example. Why should persons within the community have to go into Bridgetown to the Immigration Department to get a simple immigration

form? Why should simple, basic things not be at the centre of the community and the Community Councils themselves? Why cannot the Community Councils and the community practitioners take management responsibility for those community facilities in their areas?

For example, Let us take the Resource Centres and the Community Centres. You have a system, where the normal Civil Servant, who goes to work from 8.30 a.m. and goes home after 4.30 p.m. Sir, after 4.30 p.m. is when the community comes alive. It is at that point in time that the Community Councils should kick in and activate a system of community governance. If not, you will find the community-minded persons and those persons living in the community getting very tired of how things are being administered.

Mr. Chairman, when I speak, I speak from the bottom of my heart. Sir, sometimes we politicise people issues that need to be dealt with by the people themselves. We are representatives of the people and we are, by extension, servants of the people and there is a certain calling that we, as community practitioners, have.

Mr. Chairman, I was talking about the community divestment programme which we enunciated when we were on The Other Side. Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East has to be careful because there are a number of NGOs in Barbados and a number of so-called community-based organisation that are only paper tigers.

Sir, if you do a careful analysis of them, you would find that a lot of them do not function. The idea of getting the best people that you could find within your respective communities, put them in a council, support them and develop programmes with their respective areas should be one that all of us should support.

Mr. Chairman, it is my understanding that there would be \$100 000 allocated toward each community initially. Sir, I am glad that the Honourable Prime Minister said "initially" because I must tell you that the \$100 000 that initially would be put into it would not even be enough initially because the kind of response that all of us would have and the kind of request that you would get in terms of streetlights because if you are going to put in streetlights and drainage at a community parochial basis, you will need far more than \$100 000. What we should be encouraging is joint working efforts; a joint national effort and a joint community-based effort working with Government.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Thank you, Sir. The \$100 000 that Government has put in should be used to get a council so that we could see how best we could get a part

of this funding. Sir, communities must also be encouraged to be self-sufficient, be encouraged to raise their own funding and Government will assist them when the time is necessary. Sir, Government will also help in building the basic infrastructural structure and provide the community with the technical assistance, et cetera. Sir, for me, at this point, because it might be politically expedient to say that you would 'back back' on it, but, Sir, not Hamilton Lashley because I am a community practitioner and with few adjustments and amendments to the proposed councils, I have no other alternative but to support it and I say so from the bottom of my heart.

How do you expect that after I have practised my craft for the last 35 years, that I could 'back back' on it. I would be a hypocrite eternally damned for hell and I am not going down that street. Sir, all of us have a philosophy that we must adopt, that we must remember where we came from as black people. We have to remember that sometimes we have to take that extra step. The challenge also, in order to execute a viable constituency plan is that we have to start unshackling the inherent bureaucracy that exists because whatever structure you set up, the community practitioners have to go to the civil servants and others that are in place and that burdensome line of questioning that is going to be there, certainly is going to prohibit..

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, hear me good because when I talk people believe that I am not agreeing with a system of transparency and accountability but, Sir, I would be a madman not to agree. Sir, sometimes I believe we should take a shortcut to get things done quicker, but the fact of the matter is that we cannot afford to thwart, frustrate and build up people's expectations and then do not let it happen.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should wind up.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Thank you, Sir. The Opposition clearly is waiting with bated breath for the introduction. Sir, I have no doubt in my mind that the document that would be brought to this Chamber would be supportive of what is being discussed at the community level. I really do not want anyone to feel there is a rift between me, the leader and the others because there certainly is not. What is happening is that everyone knows that this Rastaman speaks his mind on what he believes. If it is wrong, it is wrong and if it is right, it is right.

I cannot now come into this Chamber out of political expediency only and pretend that I am not going to support the things when I know that deep in my heart I am going to support it and, Sir, that is the bottom line. It is not that I am

taking the side of the Government or the side of the Opposition, I am simply taking the side of the people and the community practitioners.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for your indulgence in allowing me to speak. God bless you.

On the motion of Hon. R.D. JONES, seconded by Hon. _____, Mr. Chairman reported progress to Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

Sequence 17

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I beg to give the following notice:

1. Resolution to grant the sum of \$56 418 183 from the Consolidated Fund and to place at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 2007-2008 as shown in Supplementary Estimates No. 14, 2007-2008 which form the schedule to the Resolution.

SUSPENSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that

this Sitting be suspended until 2.00 p.m.

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

The question that this Sitting be now suspended until 2.00 p.m. this afternoon was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

1.00 p.m.

Sequence 18

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

House A4, Sequence 19, 2.01 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: When the suspension was taken, the House was in Committee of Supply, to that it shall now revert.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

The Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Hon. J. D. PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sir, first of all I would like to express my appreciation to the constituents of St. Michael West Central for giving me the opportunity to represent them in the House of Assembly. I would also like to take the opportunity to say that despite the frustration experienced in the past few weeks, it is good to know that we still have a situation in this country where the will of the people is observed, rather than have persons seek to frustrate the democratic will of the people.

I would also wish to add my voice to the question of the Constituency Councils and to say that listening to the debate so far on the question of the Constituency Councils, I think it is important for all of us in this House to recognise that the Democratic Labour Party is attempting to do something which the previous Government had an opportunity to do for 14 years. Clearly, they have failed in terms of trying to implement an approach that I believe is going to do justice to Barbados and the whole question of representation in Barbados.

While I recognise it is my first speech in Parliament, I think it is fitting and appropriate that I speak on this particular subject because, very often in the past, we have heard people speak about the whole question of community empowerment. We have also heard people talk of the whole question of economic enfranchisement and not giving full meaning to those things.

I believe that the position taken by the Democratic Labour Party on the implementation of the Constituency Councils gives full right to the desire to have true democratic participation of people in communities.

Sir, one of the things that we have to be careful in this whole debate is that we do not encourage the whole question of political tribalism. One of the things that has characterised political representation in Barbados over the last 14 years has been the question of political tribalism, where we seek to create tribes within our communities, without, at the same time seeking to ensure that the basic needs of constituents are actually represented, without necessarily being affiliated to any political party or having to crawl up to any political representative, in order to have the benefits which they are entitled to receive as citizens to be delivered to them.

In that respect, Sir, I would want to say that persons from Both Sides of the House should embrace the whole concept of the Constituency Councils, and instead of engaging in filibustering, seek to give support to the Government - as I noticed two Members from the Opposite

Side have in wholehearted terms - on the whole question of Constituency Councils.

I would also want to say that the Constituency Councils afford us the opportunity of creating a new value system within our own constituencies. Sir, this gives us the opportunity to help to reshape communities in a manner that I am sure would benefit Barbados in general and the communities which we have to represent. Sir, one of the problems that we have faced generally is the fact that sometimes central Government cannot adequately understand the needs of particular communities.

For instance, we have had instances even in St. Michael West Central where in some cases, a road is built, but the fact is that the bureaucrats are not aware that there are certain activities, which are played in St. Michael West Central.

Sir, the fact that persons from MTW might not be aware that in a particular stretch of road, you are accustomed to having games such as road tennis being played, the manner in which they construct the road should cater to those activities that constituents are engaged in. They do it in disregard to the fact that it should be done in such a way to, at least, facilitate residents in these activities.

Sir, when you have a Constituency Council which is interacting on a consistent basis in communities, it will help the Government to put these utilities in place, without disrupting ordinary community life.

House A4, Sequence 19, 14:10:14

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Hon. J. D. PAUL: Sir, that is a reason why the Members of the Opposition should support this particular move to have Constituency Councils in a wholehearted way. There should be no attempt to say that we should not have them. As a matter of fact, I was surprised by the Leader of the Opposition from the point of view that instead of coming here to ask how soon? She should be coming here to at least give suggestions and asking how they can help to facilitate the process. Sir, the establishment of the Constituency Councils is a novel idea on the part of the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, I go to the question of values. I listened to the Prime Minister who indicated that there would be broad-based representation of communities and ideas on the Constituency Councils. In that respect, Sir, it would help to strengthen community values which we need to strengthen even more now in our communities. We need to have some kind of way of making the ordinary person feel that he or

she has a stake in terms of how services are actually delivered.

Sir, what I want to tie in here very carefully is the whole question of values and how the Constituency Councils can help to strengthen values in our communities. There is a dire need for that. Sir, many of the communities which had very strong community values have been eroded because of the fact that the community leaders have been alienated within those communities and largely because of the way in which the services, that have been provided by central Government, have not been provided in such a way that the ordinary functions of the community are not disrupted.

Sir, these Constituency Councils offer a means by which those leaders within the communities are able to ensure that the ordinary values, the ordinary practices, in those communities are not actually disrupted. Again, I would say that we should have no hesitation but to support the Government in terms of trying to implement those councils.

Sir, we recognise that as a novel idea it would take time to ensure that we do it in a way that is effective. That is why we should ensure that while we want to move forward in haste, we do so without sacrificing the quality of the product at the end of the day. We should not be rushed into developing the Constituency Councils without ensuring that what we have put in place will answer to those basic needs in the community and that the system that we set up will actually help to strengthen those basic community values that we speak about in the community.

Sir, one of the things about St. Michael West Central which has been unique is that it has always been a sporting community. One of the things I would like to see in respect of the Constituency Councils is the encouragement of those activities which have made those communities permanent. We have a whole number and range of sporting clubs in St. Michael West Central but the thing about it, and I want to make this known, is that in the last 14 years that club structure that we have had in St. Michael West Central had been systematically undermined to the point where they have not been functioning in a very effective manner.

Mr. Chairman, I anticipate that with the implementation and installation of these Constituency Councils that they would see an approach which helps those sporting clubs within those communities to function better than they are functioning at the moment, where we have clubs but no proper structures.

Mr. Chairman, sometimes we do not appreciate the contributions that clubs make in terms of helping to ensure that we have a good community life, and that is one of the things that Constituency Councils can serve. One of the

other things that constituency council can serve is in terms of identifying persons within communities who need things. Again, I go back to St. Michael West Central. One of the things that we are not aware of is that there are physically challenged people in those communities who need assistance, so the role of Constituency Councils can come into play here.

Sir, if Constituency Councils are structured in an effective manner, it gives Government the opportunity to ensure that the services they are delivering reach the persons who are most in need. We have a situation in St. Michael West Central where people who are most in need of services found it most difficult to access those services under the last Administration.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Hon. J. D. PAUL: Those services were actually dispensed depending on whether or not you support... Sir, the Constituency Councils offer us an opportunity to ensure that we rectify that support in terms of ensuring that the persons who are most in need of these services are able to receive them.

Sir, I would like to conclude by saying that the idea of Constituency Councils is a revolutionary idea and to encourage Both Sides of the House to give unequivocal support to this whole question of Constituency Councils and let us move forward in terms of ensuring that we deliver the kind of services to Barbadians that they deserve from the Government.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Hon Member for Bridgetown.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, I would like to add to this debate in terms of the Constituency Councils. I would like to do so by quoting from page 48 of our Manifesto, "Pathways to Progress" where it states that the Democratic Labour Party will:

"Establish state-funded Constituency Councils to execute community enhancement and development projects. These Councils will comprise representatives of the Church, Civil Society and the Political Administration. In this way, perennial problems of street lighting, sporting and recreational facilities, drainage, poverty alleviation and the like can be administered and resolved at the constituency level. An initial budget of \$100 000 would be granted to each Council. After a needs assessment is done, an annual budget would be provided."

It goes on to say further:

"Make these Constituency Councils accountable to the constituents and the country. Each Council will be mandated to hold a half yearly review consultation meeting to report on their activities and spending and respond to concerns from the public."

It further said that:

"Mandate each DLP representative to present a "State of the Constituency Report" at the time of the Constituency Councils' consultation meeting. These meetings will be broadcast live on radio and television."

Mr. Chairman, it is clear the direction the Democratic Labour Party Government is taking our country with regard to empowering constituents at the grassroots level, at the district level, to empower them and to help to expedite the pressing concerns within their communities.

Mr. Chairman, it is not sufficient for the Leader of the Opposition to plea that That Side cannot support this concept in principle. Therefore, I laud the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East for standing up as a man and supporting this concept in principle.

House A4 Sequence 20

2.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, until such time that Government articulates its policy on Constituency Empowerment, the Opposition is not in a position to settle its position on it. Sir, I repeat, we do not know who is in or who is out, we do not know how you would get in or how you would get out. Sir, there are people wanting to know how they could get in and there are people wanting to know if they are going to be left out.

Sir, until such time that Government articulates its policy, until such time as Government tells us how it intends to structure these Constituency Councils. Sir, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East has said, we know about Community Councils, we have never had anything called Constituency Councils and therefore whether it is by selection, election, appointment or handpicking, we need to know.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, I will let the Other Side sort themselves out in that regard but I am saying that the Electorate of Barbados has spoken and has given the Democratic Labour Party its full support to execute its Manifesto pledges.

Mr. Chairman, I could understand, or should I say, I note the concerns of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North in his presentation earlier today. I can understand the nervousness on That Side because let us look at the track record of the Barbados Labour Party in recent years. You and I know, Mr. Chairman, that we had the awful situation in which millions of taxpayers' dollars were put under the control of my opponent in the last Election, when he was not even a Member of Parliament.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Sir, we read about this first in the newspapers, that person was a manager of that project. In the newspaper, he was seen wearing shades and looked as though he was lording over the people of the City. He was there reading and looking down at them as though he was a manager. Sir, when one looks at the major operatives in that project, there were card-holding senior Members of the Barbados Labour Party's Branch in the City, who were already handpicked.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party had no say in that, where millions of taxpayers' money was put in the hands of a declared candidate in an upcoming General Election, to try to save that seat for the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, that was not enough and the people of the City of Bridgetown rejected that 'pork barrel' largesse. That is why Honourable Members on That Side are so nervous because they have set a precedent, but we in the Democratic Labour Party can assure the public of Barbados that we will not follow such folly. We can assure them that we will not abuse taxpayers' money, and that there will be transparency and accountability to the people.

Mr. Chairman, at present, there are persons who worked as contractors in that very project, who have not been paid. When these persons were questioned, they said they did not know where the money went, or if there was any money left. Sir, I am calling upon the Government to fully audit that programme, and Parliament did not have full oversight in that project, as normally would have occurred. Sir, furthermore, that policy was unheard of in the history of politics in our country.

Sir, let the Honourable Members on That Side reflect upon that, especially the Honourable Member for St. Michael North. Of course, the Opposition would plead innocent, as the Leader of the Opposition was claiming innocent earlier.

Sir, the Honourable Member was not Prime Minister at the time but if one believes in collective responsibility as a Government, that person should be man or woman enough to stand up and accept responsibility for the folly of that repressive Government, the Barbados Labour Party.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, I give you my full assurance that the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development is fully on top of this situation, and that in the fullness of time we will be presenting to Parliament the full details as to how this programme will work.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, in speaking on this Head, I want to say that I could understand the concerns of the Opposition, and that we need to ensure we do not find ourselves in the position in which we had found ourselves years ago.

Sir, it must be clear that these Constituency Councils are for Parliamentarians, and I do not know why the Opposition would believe that we would come with a policy which would have something to do with the Parish Independence Committees or Youth Commissioners. These are for politicians, and all persons who have won seats would to the best of my knowledge, be allowed to have a committee.

Therefore, I do not see why the Opposition would believe that because Youth Commissioners and members of the Parish Independence Committees were all Government functionaries that this Government would come and allocate to itself 30 Constituency Committees and would want to control all of them. Sir, to the best of my knowledge, the Leader of the Opposition would be able to name hers, as it will belong to the Constituency to which she has been elected.

Asides.

Hon. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, it seems as though the Honourable Member for St. Michael North has given up his and I do not think that the Honourable Member would do so.

Asides.

Hon. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member has got so caught up with the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto when it said that its Members would have to be accountable, that the Honourable Member felt he would automatically have to be accountable to the Democratic Labour Party. The Honourable Member did not realise that it is the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto and that we can only take charge of our members.

Sir, it is clear when the policy is put that it would be a policy for 30 Constituencies and 30 Honourable Members of Parliament.

Asides.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, we expect that the same rules as laid down, that the 30 Constituency Councils must follow those rules. They will be under the ambit of one control and it would not function in the same way those Youth Commissioners and Parish Independence Committees were allowed to function. Mr. Chairman, I believe the Honourable Member for St. John and I would tell you that sometimes we did not even know of the work going on by the Youth Commissioners, even though they were functioning in our constituencies.

Sir, I am happy to see that we are now at a landmark position, that we are following the good traditions of the Democratic Labour Party where, when we bring policies, we bring policies for all and not policies for the 'too-few'. This is a Government that is moving away from the 'too-few' policy, because we recognised that the Opposition also has a role to play.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

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

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I rise to make a few comments on this particular Head. Of course, I want to say from the outset that most Barbadians do support the concept of Community Councils.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, we do support the concept of Constituency Councils. However, it is very important for the Government to clarify a number of positions. Sir, I must say that the Honourable Member for St. John, over the past five years, has been making the point that there is a need for greater empowerment at the constituency level. Sir, no doubt this is in the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party but, I believe, there needs to be some clarity.

Mr. Chairman, even though the wider Barbadian supports the concept, I think the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has made the point that he wants to find out if Members of Parliament would be in charge.

Asides.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, I have never asked such a question,

I said that every sitting Member of Parliament will be in charge.

2.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I believe that we have a duty and I look forward to the Government bringing the particular legislation to Parliament because we will have to debate the entire thing. I believe that there are some concerns as to the Community Council versus the Constituency Council. I do not think it is a novel idea as some members would want us to believe.

There is a concept which could be followed. In 1964, the Democratic Labour Party abolished local Government and you had Councilors of which the Honourable Member for St. Michael South spoke. Are we going back to the days of Councilors?

Mr. Chairman, one knows and one can say why the local Government structure was abolished because there was no accountability and because there were duplications of effort. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South, I am sure, as the learned Attorney-General could tell us about these things. I think the House supports the whole concept but we need to know the format, the size, if every district would be represented and who will be represented on the Council. I am glad to hear from the Government that it will not be a partisan concept, that it will be structured in such a way that the Constituency itself would be represented. I do believe that the role of the Members of Parliament should feature prominently in any Constituency Council because as a Parliamentary Representative, we know that from time to time we go around the Constituency and there is a need for street lighting, there is a need for the opening of the Council at a later time and the need for doing a number of small things.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I represent my Constituency to the fullest and I have no apologies to make. In fact, a few days ago, I visited with the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and asked him to see what is happening in St. George North. I have visited with the Honourable Member for St. John and I recognised that he tried his best to improve the lot of the people of St. George, which is good. All Members of Parliament have a duty to represent their Constituency to the hilt. Sir, I will continue to do so and I have no apology to make.

Mr. Chairman, as Members of Parliament we need to look at a number of things that sometimes the bureaucracy takes for granted that they try to hold back certain things and I have seen it in Government. Sir, if these Councils are

properly structured in terms of the operations, this could help. I believe that the days are yet early and I look forward to supporting the Government on this once they bring the shape, size and format and put it in proper legislation, it may be the thing of the future and I look forward to this type of thing coming before Parliament.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

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

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I hardly expected this small matter would have attracted such significant debate, but I am very glad for it because I know who my friends are in relation to implementation of this project and I will be calling on them to assist Government in getting it through. I am very grateful to know that there is an element of bipartisanship in the concept of this project.

Sir, I know what it is like to be the Leader of the Opposition just after a Government has changed. The dictum “fools rush in where angels dare to tread” is one that I may even have applied to myself on some occasions, when, after a change of Government, I said that for me to believe that I was alive, or that I was fulfilling my mandate, I had to get up and say things for the sake of saying them. I waited a while before I started that. I must say for the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East that she is quicker to the draw than I am in that regard. I cannot imagine that we could be called upon on This Side to provide all of these details.

Mr. Chairman, I sat in this Parliament and watched a Government give \$3 million to one community in this country in the space of 14 years. There was no panel; there was no council; there was no law and there was no investigation. Sir, this Parliament gave \$3 million to one community and they did not ask me if I wanted anything done in St. John. In fact, when “Families First” established the zone in St. John, the National Housing Corporation charged us \$1 000 for an abandoned car park that was under bush that I fenced around so that young people could engage in community activities.

I finally after much pleading and supplication, fortunately, the Minister was changed and the subsequent Minister quietly decided it was foolishness to charge a voluntary community organisation that never got a cent from the Government of Barbados, and never asked for one cent for cleaning up a car park, buying a container and organising community activities on our own speed. Sir, I am saying today that I have set out in our Manifesto and that we do not have to go far. Sir, all the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has to do is to read this because I do not plan to give her any more information.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, I do not talk to politicians in here. I am representing the people of St. John and my comments, therefore, in here are always directed to the people I represent. There are some people who come in here and forget why they are in here. They get their kicks off debating politicians but I urge the new Members of this House to understand why we are in here. We are not in here to satisfy anybody over there about any argument we have. We are here to satisfy the people that elected us to be in this Parliament. You do not win a debate in here when you have satisfied nonsensical queries. You do not win a debate in here when somebody could ask you about accountability when all of the previous amounts given, I would not say one because it would be invidious of me.

Sir, I was a member and the first legal counsel of that organisation so I did not resent it but it then turned out to be two organisations, specially carved out and given resources. Sir, yesterday I was handed a contract. The gentleman who ran as the Barbados Labour Party's candidate against the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central was paid \$360 a day under a consultancy for that Barbados Labour Party Government. Sir, he has not written a report yet, he has not submitted anything of worth to the Ministry and he was paid to run against the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central and you ask me about accountability?

Mr. Chairman, I will go one step further. The Honourable Member wants to talk about the size of Government but, Sir, everybody that is receiving a Ministerial salary in Barbados is in the Cabinet. H/A4/14:40

Sequence 22

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Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East would have difficulty with me paying an ordinary young black Barbadian from Ellerton St. George, who went to St. George Secondary School, for political skills that he brings to bear on advancing the interest of a Government the people elected. There was a man appointed Special Envoy for Technology, drawing exactly the same salary as a Minister, same allowances and emoluments, but he was not in the Cabinet. Sir, they are people who would feel he deserved it because he was their boss, so he was entitled to draw a Ministerial salary as a consultant and a Special Envoy, but the little fellow from Ellerton, who started out as a Journalist and built up political skills such that he advises six Prime Ministers in the Caribbean.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: You should not be asking about first loyalty. You have two Members over there that now 'break loose' from your policy and you asking me about loyalty.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: You have two Members who said that they support our policy and you are asking me about loyalty. I cannot understand what is going on in here today. I do not understand it. I am saying to you that I do not resent people, as long as they produce and as long as the taxpayers are paying them. Nobody has changed any Laws in Barbados.

Sir, the Honourable Member talked about the Financial Administration and Audit Act. The previous Government repealed that Act. We did not repeal it. There is no such thing as a Financial Administration and Audit Act in Barbados anymore. The Honourable Member is saying that if you all intend to change the Law to let us know. Change what Law? You repealed it. There is no such law to change.

The Estimates in Barbados are constructed in the same way that the previous Government designed them, based on the legislation they passed, based on the movement to the accrual system of Government. Nothing has changed.

Sir, now that we are saying that there should be more than two entities in Barbados that receive the money, that we are going to take \$4 million and divide it among 30, and we are going to ask ordinary Barbadians to help us, members of civil society, Church groups, District Emergency Organisations and Youth Commissioners, identify priorities in constituencies, they have a problem with that.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Prime Minister may feel he can direct all on That Side, but he cannot mislead this Chamber, and for the fourth time I will repeat the Barbados Labour Party's position. We are awaiting the identification of the characteristics of the system that they want to implement. What is it about? Until such time as they can, do not worry about us, if that is your problem. The people of Barbados would like to know what is this new system. Will you be appointing, will you be hand picking, or will you be electing? He cannot therefore accuse us or say in here that we are opposing or supporting. We have called on the Government to identify the system. Tell us what it is about. You have put it in the Estimates at \$4.5 million. You have a Minister, and we are simply saying the time has come now to tell us how you are going to set up these Councils.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, there are two points that the Honourable Member is making. She said earlier that the Barbados Labour Party has no settled policy in this area. Sir, if you leave Government seven weeks ago, and you have no settled policy on Constituency Empowerment, something is wrong. Barbados has had Constituencies...

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this Chamber. The reality is, it is this Government that has put in the Estimates \$4.5 million. We have simply asked the Prime Minister to tell us how you are going to spend it.

Sir, if that is so difficult for him to do, because he has not thought it out, or he cannot tell us, the simple question is, will the members of the Council be elected or appointed? If he can answer that simple question, it will go a long way in helping us to settle our position on whether we will support it or not.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, when the Honourable Member tells me how the people that got the money in Israel Lovell Foundation were selected or appointed, when the Honourable Member can tell me how the people who disbursed the Project OASIS money were selected or appointed, I will answer that question. I will notice a difference in policy. If you can prove to me that they were elected, then I will, perhaps, pull onboard your policy.

Sir, I am saying that no serious Political Party which is boasting idly, it seems, that it is in its 70th year, or moving towards it, can tell me it does not have a settled policy on Community Empowerment. Maybe I knew that when I was on The Other Side, but I did not expect them to say it.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Barbados Labour Party Government not only had a settled policy on Community Empowerment, there is also a Paper that was passed to Cabinet on Community Divestment, which is in the Honourable Attorney General's Chambers for the drafting of legislation. Sir, Community Empowerment, however, is different from Constituency Empowerment, and for those who want to use a form - if I were not in this Chamber, Sir, I would say a form of intellectual sleight of hand, but you would not allow me to say it.

Sir, in those circumstances, I would have to settle myself and say that the Prime Minister continues to avoid answering the simple question. Sir, he believes that it is contentious. It is not. We simply want to know, will you be appointing members to your Constituency Councils or will you be electing them? When you can answer those simple questions for us, the Barbados Labour Party will settle its

policy, as to whether it will support or not support the matter.

Sir, I have Honourable Members of Parliament who have come to me asking, is the Government hand picking person? The Honourable Member for St. Michael North has Honourable Members on The Other Side, saying that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, gave them instructions to call people in his Constituency and ask them if they would serve. The Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Answer the question and we will let you know if we will support, but do not mislead the House.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I have not asked anybody for any support in here. I am not interested. I have the support of two Honourable Members and 20 that gives me 22 supporters in this initiative.

Sir, the Honourable Member is so intent to unlatch herself from the policies of her predecessor, that if she would do a little reading, she may discover that in this House of Assembly, I do not remember if the Honourable Member was a Member then, a debate took place in this House on that matter, and it was the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, who is not in his seat, who directed my attention to the Jamaican model of providing Constituencies with resources to solve problems.

He may not have had the courage to introduce it, because I now realised that some of the Honourable Members over there resent communities getting money. They do not mind certain people getting it. They do not mind Invest Barbados and all of these big agencies and the private sector thrust, but as soon as you have to put money in the hands of small people, what do you want this money to do?

Sir, you had a Premier League Football team and so did I.

14.50 p.m.

Sequence 23

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

House A4, Sequence 24, 2.50 p.m.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Every year they would come to me, cap in hand. Some are unemployed and some are labourers on work sites. They do not have time to walk around town raising sponsorship. Sir, because of the dislocation of the relationship between older males in the society and them...I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central talk about clubs. What clubs do we have in Barbados? You have a team that just goes and

plays football. There is no club structure anymore. That has been systematically dismantled.

Aside.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: There is no connection between the people who played for that club 30 years before and those who are playing for it now. Many of these clubs do not have basic resources. They cannot pay a coach; they cannot buy footballs; they cannot buy gear.

Mr. Chairman, let us go to the cricket clubs. Sight screens need repairing. They need a cooler for water. They need basic things. I know people say that volunteerism should take care of that. The former Member for the City said she resented that. When they went to her for money, she told them to have a cake sale, or go and wash cars in a car park, because I am not supporting that, and if young people want that, let them go out and cut down somebody bush and get some money. I have heard that from the Barbados Labour Party throughout the years.

Sir, I do not support that, and I am not saying that they should not do some of that, but I am saying that it cannot be fair to them, because there are few leaders in those packs who emerge that are trying to get football, basketball, volleyball and road tennis going, and we do not have the flexibility to make any resources available to them. The Constituency allowance is not enough to cover that, and every September you have people coming to you for resources to help get their children to school.

Sir, to send a child to primary school in Barbados nowadays is expensive, despite all the pretty talk you hear about the Government providing this and that free, and adding this and that programme. There are mothers who find it difficult to get a pair of black shoes for their children in early September. We are adding all kinds of programmes and people get in here and dressing up pretty, and talking as if they have advanced education so far.

There are children who go to school in primary schools every day that do not get proper sustenance at home before they leave for school. Then when they get to school, what is provided by the School Meals Department, in very many instances, is not enough to carry them through the day.

To whom do these people go to? They go to the Parliamentary Representative. Do you know why? The same agencies that had been set up in Barbados to solve their problems, tell them to go and get a letter from their Member of Parliament. Sir, we have gone back to square one. Agencies are set up to solve problems, and you assume that they are going to solve them on the basis of merit, but for an old person to get some assistance through the National Assistance Board, they are told to get a letter

from the MP. If they go to the Rural Development Commission, they are also told to get a letter from the Member of Parliament.

Therefore, at the end of the day, if we are being called upon to play that role, unless you are going to unhinge Members of Parliament from that role...and one way, I believe, of seeking to do that is the establishment of the Constituency Councils but in that process, they have to be closely aligned to the role of the Parliamentary Representative in the Constituency. Sir, that is the essential design and that is not difficult to understand.

I went to a country as poor as Swaziland and saw them take abandoned containers that they used on ships - I just saw it in the Pine when I went to visit a sports programme in Wildey - and converted them into Community Centres for specific programmes, such as HIV/AIDS programming. In the one in Wildey, I saw the guy teaching classes on mornings. He got containers that were abandoned by construction companies that had finished work on sites and painted them.

We should be able to send 10 children to that programme every Saturday and pay for them. Sir, 10 children at \$40 is \$400 a month or whatever it is. Also find other sporting programmes to send them and give them scholarships to do those things, and let us get our communities working again in Barbados.

Therefore, I am not nitpicking with anybody on form or structure. I have said the process that would be observed. I am not short-circuiting it and I urge the Minister not to short-circuit it, replying to naysayers and prophets of doom and gloom. Speak directly to the people in relation to this issue. You have the full support of 22 Members of the House of Assembly, so go for it.

Thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. John has come closest in his last intervention to begin to explain what the programme is about. I repeat myself on this matter, because the matter is not the worthiness of the causes to be supported at the community level. Sir, all of us are aware of the worthiness of those causes, whether they are in the area of sports, whether they are in the area of welfare, whether they are in the area of other forms of assistance.

However, the simple matter relates to the point that if you are going to set up a new programme and you are

going to put funding to the extent that you are putting in here, then there needs to be clarity of purpose in relation to the programme, and clarity as to the structure and functioning of the programme.

We will await it because in spite of all the talk we have heard today, in spite of all of the crosstalk that makes people feel good, the reality is that there is a duty to be accountable to this Parliament which is required to approve the expenditure. In the circumstances, we need to know and we still are none the wiser, and it is this genuine question. Will the members of the Constituency Councils be appointed or elected? If they are going to be appointed, what are the criteria to be used for their appointment? These are only a few of the questions.

Sir, if we are seriously to come on board and help to make a difference in terms of ensuring that persons at the community level benefit, then we should not do so in a way that excludes a whole set of other legitimate community practitioners.

In relation to the examples given about parents needing assistance in September for primary schools, there may be a legitimate case, but is this the appropriate mechanism for it or are there other mechanisms which have proved just as effective, namely, welfare.

Asides.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: I have never, in 18 years in public life, had to write a letter for anybody to go to welfare, whether under a previous Democratic Labour Party Government or under a Barbados Labour Party Government, because there is clarity as to the benefits that you get under welfare.

There may be other agencies that have asked people for letters, but welfare has not traditionally been one of them. The reality is that the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party talks about drainage as well. There are examples given by the Prime Minister that relate to sporting and welfare-related matters. If we are going into physical infrastructural issues...

Asides.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: I am not saying there is anything wrong with it, because in the absence of your articulating the statement, we do not know. It is not too high for an Opposition to ask a Government.

Asides.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: This is the arrogance which the Prime Minister has in relation to matters of public policy...that it is not too high a matter for us...

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. Sir, to accuse a member of arrogance in that way, is certainly unparliamentary.

I have not said anything. I have been sitting in my seat. All I am going to say now, however, is that when it is time for you to know, you will know but we are going to talk to the people first. You are not going to know before the people. I am telling you that now.

Hon. M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I withdraw any reference to arrogance because people will make their own judgments for themselves. May I say that I am not asking for any special favours to the Opposition, but I also know that I am going to defend the interest of the people in here, as well as the other members of this Opposition.

House A4, Sequence 24, 15:00:14

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: The simple matter is that the Prime Minister must not feel that we are asking for special answers. The public of Barbados has a right to know. If you are introducing a new form of governance, tell us about it and do not cause me to believe what others have suggested to me that it is a knee-jerk reaction that has not yet been properly thought out. I would like to believe that is not the case. In the absence of a clear explanation and clear statement, people are likely to believe that this policy has not been appropriately thought out.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. We are not introducing any new form of governance. The Honourable Member said earlier in the debate that there is a new Constitution for Barbados that is in the Attorney-General's Chambers. I was a member of this House for 20 years and I never knew there was a new Constitution for Barbados. I heard today that there is a new Constitution for Barbados, not a new council, not a new Parliament, not a new Cabinet, in the Attorney-General's Chambers and if he would sign off on it, she said, we could bring it before the House.

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, that would otherwise be described as a ball outside the off stump and I therefore would leave it because twice in here people have said that we should remember that we are not the Government. The truth is that it is not that we should remember that we are not the Government, the Government needs to remember that it is the Government and that it has a different responsibility to the people of Barbados than if it was sitting on This Side.

The Prime Minister could ignore us as he would wish but the reality is that his obligation is to this

Parliament and to the people and we would do always what we can to remind him when we feel that there is need for further explanation.

Yes, they have been in Government for two months, but there is a Minister of Constituency Empowerment. If you are going to have a Minister of Constituency Empowerment, you must be in a position to tell us what the policy is. There is \$4.5 million in these Estimates that would be voted on for constituency empowerment. Sir, all amount of talk and all amount of red herrings.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member must not abuse the Rules of the House in this way. The Honourable Member must not anticipate the House. The Estimates are not before the House right now and I am urging you to rule the Honourable Member out of order for abusing the processes of this Chamber.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Let us focus on the matter before us rather than on the Estimates.

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I shall, but the reality still is that the Prime Minister is bowling wide after wide after wide. In fact, the wides are now going straight to the boundary because he refuses to answer the very simple question: Would they be elected, would they be appointed? No amount of pleas or asides from the Minister who...

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Let us have order, please. Honourable Members, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is on her feet.

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I look forward to the next five years because if the arrogance, which I am told is unparliamentary, and if it were not unparliamentary. I would refer to it as is being reflected by Honourable Members on the Other Side who continue to echo: "You have to wait, you have to wait!" It is not us who have to wait. They are the Government and the sooner they realise that, the better.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. I think it would be remiss of me as the most longstanding Honourable Member in this Chamber if I did not point out to you as Presiding Officer that there has been a development in our Parliamentary practice that I think new Presiding Officers need to bring to a halt. This idea of somebody saying if I were not in here I could say X, Y or Z, still imputes improper motives to Honourable Members on this side. The Honourable Member must not say it period. The idea of trying to use this technique and device of saying if I were not in here, I could call you a criminal,

if I were not in here I could accuse you of that... I am asking and calling upon you, Sir, to have that struck from the record and do a service to this Chamber by stating for the record that you are not going to accept those kinds of statements.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has raised a concern and has objected to the comments which were made. Is the Honourable Member willing to withdraw those comments?

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: I did not say it, but I would withdraw the statement.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The comments should be struck from the record.

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: I do not know what the comments are, but as usual the Honourable Member for St. John seems to have a curious way of hearing because I did not say what he thought I said, but I am glad to hear these things because there is nobody who has tried to use that practice in this Chamber more than the Honourable Member for St. John, so I look forward to it in the future.

The problem is that the Honourable Member for St. John must remember that he is now in Government and he has a duty, not to just come in here and ask and pretend and throw balls outside the off stump, but to answer. The duty is not to me. He steadfastly avoids answering the questions: Would the Constituency Councils be comprised of persons elected, appointed or handpicked? Would they encompass every community council in a constituency or only some? Would they encompass every representative of a church? All these are legitimate questions that the public of Barbados are entitled to have answered particularly since I would like to believe that beyond visiting the various departments, the Minister for Constituency Empowerment would have given thought and would have carried these matters to Cabinet.

As I said, Mr. Chairman, this Barbados Labour Party as a government carried to Cabinet a paper on Community Divestment because we believed fundamentally that Community Centres should be managed by community groups not by the Community Development Department. We also feel strongly that an extension of that policy would be to legitimately allow vendors to manage the markets within which they function. That is a different step that was being taken by us from the one which is now being represented.

Mr. Chairman, it may well be that there are synergies, but until the Government articulates the policy, we are not in a position to know whether there are synergies, and it is consistent with what we believe. That we should have had to spend a whole day and still at the

end of the day I am unable to give an answer to members of the public when they ask me, Miss Mottley, would the people be elected; would they be appointed; would they be handpicked; how can I be chosen; how can I ensure that I am not excluded... I would not be able to answer them because after three hours of debate, the Government still has not left the people of this country and indeed the Members of this Parliament any wiser as to the policy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Hon Member for St. John

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I do not have anything to add, Sir, to the debate. I do not think the Honourable Members added anything either and therefore I move that Head 12 stand part.

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to second that.

The question that Head 12 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 13 - PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

\$791 577

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Chairman, I first want to thank the good people of St. Michael Central for sending me here to this august Chamber to represent their interest and for reposing their confidence in me.

House A4 Sequence 25

3.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Chairman, the sum of \$491 577 is required to meet the cost associated with the preparatory work in the planning and execution of Crop Over, 2008, by the Joint Public Service Sector Commission, for the period January to March, 2008. Mr. Chairman, at a meeting on August 21, last year, an example of reckless and inept Prime Ministerial decision-making at the Hilton Hotel, imposed an idea conceptualised to further marginalise the Leader of the Opposition and those associated with her...

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central were ordered expunged from the record by Mr. CHAIRMAN.

Hon M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Prime Minister just now gave this Parliament a lecture about what was appropriate and what was not. I am not hearing his voice or yours now.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Chairman, what is the objection, Honourable Member?

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, if you do not know the objection, then I would not bother.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member would have mentioned certain words, which, in the context in which they have been made, are unparliamentary and should be withdrawn and struck from the records.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Chairman, it was conceptualised and widely believed by most of the stakeholders at the time, between his alighting from his car, walking through the foyer of the Hilton and entering the room. Sir, so unwieldy and cumbersome was this Committee; that it duplicated most of the work presently done by the current National Cultural Foundation.

Mr. Chairman, it resulted in the monthly payments to the Chairman of the Joint Select Committee of some

\$12 000 per month, for three-and-one-half months, which was similar to what was being paid to the then CEO.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Chairman, to date not a single report has been produced for this work. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to say that we have reverted to the National Cultural Foundation for the planning and execution of the Festival. This Prime Ministerial mistake has cost the taxpayers to date some \$42 000, three-and-one-half months at \$12 000 per month.

Mr. Chairman, that is only one part. I believe that in future charge should be made directly to any person who incurs this kind of debt on any government.

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 13 stand part.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, I beg to second that, Sir.

The question was put and agreed to in the affirmative.

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

Hon. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government for the concept and gesture in relation to the function honouring outstanding young Barbadian Rhianna, and for her achievements in highlighting Barbados to the international

arena. Sir, I support this Supplementary in principle, but I lament the fact...

The Honourable Member made mention of the National Cultural Foundation being overlooked, but I lament the fact that the expertise of the staff of the National Cultural Foundation was distinctly overlooked in relation to that concert. Sir, we all know of the fiasco aspect of it, where the public of Barbados expressed their feelings about the management of those affairs.

Mr. Chairman, I regret as well that Government used a private consultant in this particular organisation of the show, rather than the expertise of persons at the National Cultural Foundation. Sir, I make reference to some of the activities in which the National Cultural Foundation has been involved, such as the unveiling of statues and other national functions.

Sir, in relation to the unveiling of the statue of His Excellency Sir Frank Walcott; that of His Excellency Sir Garfield Sobers; the unveiling of His Excellency Errol Walton Barrow; the function for Obadele Thompson; the function with reference to Heroes Day, the National Cultural Foundation is the organisation that successfully supervised those functions.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to raise an issue because I trust that the action which has resulted from that show would help this Government, who insists that they are the Government. Sir, we understand them, and we congratulate them but, as I said, we want them to continue managing the affairs of this country. Mr. Chairman, we will support those areas where we know they are above board, where we know that the public of Barbados would benefit, where we know the advancement of this entire country would be respected.

Mr. Chairman, now that they have already acknowledged the usefulness of the National Cultural Foundation, now that they have criticised what this Administration, in our time, had expressed, I would wish them to take note of the wisdom of engaging the National Cultural Foundation in their other activities.

Mr. Chairman, if you would allow me, I would wish to make two queries of the Government: Who are or who were the private consultants of the project? Secondly, what is the exact cost of the management of the Rhianna concert? Sir, I would want to say that we are happy for her because she deserves the recognition. She is the first of that kind but we want to know about the prudence, about accountability and about the transparency of this new Government.

Sir, this Government has expressed a lot of things in its Manifesto but I know that a past Democratic Labour

Party had indicated clearly to the public that their Manifesto was not a social contract. Therefore, I would like Honourable Members on The Other Side to indicate such things to us, the Opposition, because we deserve to know. Sir, we have also been put here by the good people of Barbados and we believe that we could lend our support where necessary, but when we are operating on just hearing things without having the real facts, we do have a challenge with that.

Mr. Chairman, this Government is hurling other ideas all over the place but I trust and wish that the adjustments to the Ministry of Community Development and Culture, which has recently seen the appointment of a Parliamentary Secretary, would make it easier on the Honourable Minister to carry out the affairs of the Ministry of Community Development, while the Parliamentary Secretary would focus on the Ministry of Culture, more particularly on the National Cultural Foundation and its function in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, we all have heralded the role of the National Cultural Foundation over the past two decades and we look forward to working with the Government because at the end of the day, the work of the National Cultural Foundation is the work of a coordinated group, where the people of Barbados across the board would benefit by its functioning. Sir, we are looking forward to working with Government but we would just need for those two queries to be answered, so that we could continue focusing on the development of culture in this small society.

3.20 p.m.

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Hon. C. Y. FORDE Sir, I wish to thank you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I just want to alert Honourable Members before we go on to the next speaker that we have another 20 minutes of debate. I would certainly urge that we can be timely in our contribution so that we can get through these Heads as well as give time to report progress. The Honourable Member for St. John.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I must confess I am not entirely clear what the two questions are. If one of them whether consultants were employed to produce a show, the answer is no. A production team was employed to produce the show and that is nothing unusual. It included the former manager of Krosfyah Ventures, Mr. Phil Phillips and it was a series of people who put the show together.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: The provision that has been made is \$300 000.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: If it cost so much? It was broadcast on BET. It went around the world on the World Wide Web, free of cost; all that the Government did was put on a concert to honour a young, successful, outstanding Barbadian. The National Cultural Foundation was busy working on the mandate it should have been working on ever since, which is to produce Crop Over. That is what its mandate used to be. We asked them to return to it and we asked another team to do that presentation.

Mr. Chairman, I find it difficult to understand how it is that Members on The Other Side can so confidently get up and nitpick. Sir, \$12 000 a month was being paid to a man, who is the former Director of the National Cultural Foundation on top of the salary being paid to the current Director of the National Cultural Foundation. The purpose of that exercise was to find a way of getting around. Instead of dealing centrally with the issues in the National Cultural Foundation, the previous Government was going to add more than \$1 million in expenditure, the bulk of which was going in professional fees, new marketing officers, new event coordinators, and a new marketing plan. Sir, \$1 million more was going to be spent by the Government, according to that proposal. Sir, I have seen all of that.

Mr. Chairman, I have seen a Pan African Conference held here that cost twice the amount that we have to pay for now. It was to cost \$500 000 and it costs more than \$1 million and we now have to look for it. Sir, we have to look for \$33 million to clear up the debts of the National Housing Corporation.

This new Democratic Labour Party has to deal with that. Twenty-four million for the Barbados Defence Force pension left in our lap and we have to clean it up. The Transport Board, the Barbados Water Authority, roads being done in St. Philip by construction companies, no contracts in place, no financing arrangements in place and I have had to ask for all of that to be brought to book and, Mr. Chairman, why?

Mr. Chairman, I was Minister of Finance in Barbados in 1992 - 1993 and I saw what that type of recklessness did to the economy of Barbados. Sir, the ABC Highway, millions of dollars in debt and we had to bring it to account. Sir, CariCargo, millions of dollars, Letters of Comfort every month issued by the Government to accommodate overdrafts. Sir, all this by a previous Government because CariCargo was shut down when the Democratic Labour Party came to office in 1986 and by 1988, it was practically closed down. Sir, the Cement Plant, Heywoods and I come back to Government 14 years later

and find exactly the same situation that had comprised the public finances of this country and it is even worse.

Mr. Chairman, I do not know, because we are still trying to get a grip on the true size of Government's obligations as left for us by the previous Administration. Sir, World Cup, I can go through the list because this is what our time has been spent trying to clean up. Well, the Honourable Member wants me to nitpick over who produced the show for Rhianna. At least you were able to see the work that was done. I have not yet seen the work done by the additional Committee that was put in place to oversee Crop Over. I have not seen the work of the consultant that ran in Christ Church East Central. I have not seen that report yet, I am asking for it. I have not seen anything from the Special Envoy, who was drawing \$15 000 a month, I cannot get any report. Mr. Chairman, there were all kinds of consultants everywhere drawing \$7 000, \$8 000, \$9 000 and \$10 000 a month and, Sir, I cannot see any reports.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I am trying to calculate it because I want to answer as many questions as I can. I am not going to do like the previous Government and leave Questions on the Order Paper for a whole 5 years. I am trying to make sure that I preempt any questions being asked that would cause embarrassment to the former Government.

Sir, I am going to say that a production team under the direction of Mr. Phil Phillips produced the show. Provision is made for \$300 000 in the Estimates. A number of contractors were paid for different things as happened in relation to those matters. Sir, that is only a small part of it. As I said to you, there are other obligations which are being met under this particular Head, which we have assumed would have been of greater concern to Honourable Members.

I am not saying that we should spend any amount of money and throw it away on honouring Rhianna, but I regret very much that under this particular Head, when we should essentially be praising the outstanding achievements of this young woman and projecting a new Barbados and positive vista for our countries and demonstrating that as one.

Mr. Chairman, I read a letter in the newspaper, which was penned by somebody who said that we did not invite members of the Opposition to the Rhianna concert. We did not invite members of the Government either and from the outset, I said no invitations. Sir, I did not get one; I went from home with my children and my wife to the concert like any other Barbadian.

H/A4/15:30

Sequence 27

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Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: You wanted an invitation to the airport? They were a lot of little children up there, and I suppose that as former Minister of Education, for Primary School Education and School Meals we should have included you, and I apologise, but nobody was invited. The impression again was given - that is why I say that people try to give you in one hand and take in the other. We are giving you a honeymoon, but they are digging at you all the time.

Sir, we hold a show for Rihanna and you hear that we did not invite the Opposition, as if people consciously left Members of the Opposition off the list, but nobody from the Government was invited either. There were no invitations. It was a show to promote a young Barbadian who has entered on to the world stage and who should be the standard bearer and the beacon for other young people, particularly in the creative and cultural industries in Barbados. That is all it was.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I certainly rather hear me than listen to you. Therefore, I thought that I would ease you in that way.

Sir, we also have the sum of \$491 577. This half million dollars is to meet the costs associated with preparatory work of planning and executing Crop Over 2008. That is in addition to the resources already given by the public of this country to the National Cultural Foundation. So this is a joint private public sector commission which is getting that sum of money in the year 2008 for only the preparatory work for planning, not the actual planning, the preparatory work for planning and executing Crop Over 2008.

Sir, you could imagine when they actually got down to planning and executing Crop Over, the kind of costs this Government would have to bear? I am saying that I am not prepared in Barbados to see this development taking place where consultants are brought in simply to get around public officials who are being paid to do a job. That is part of the problem that has afflicted this country in the past 14 years. It has demoralised the Public Service in Barbados, because very often those people are being paid salaries much higher than hardworking officers in the Ministries.

Sir, you have Senior Administrative Officers, Deputy Permanent Secretaries in Ministries who have developed cultural policy, who have often gone beyond the

call of duty to help execute it and they are not yet getting this, and somebody who retired about eight years ago, we are talking about a Government that was supposed to have developed all of this talent among young people in TVET management and new visions for culture and they went back eight years.

I have nothing against the gentleman they chose. He played his role in Barbados and I thank him, and I am very grateful for that as a Barbadian, we all should be. Do you mean that there was no new face, no new entity that would have emerged in those 14 years? Do you mean that a tribute to the contribution that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East made to the cultural development in Barbados would that, in the year 2007, they had to go back to year 1999, back down memory lane, to get Crop Over in the year 2008 executed. Sir, I am saying that it must tell me that we have regressed in that time.

Sir, what we need to do in Barbados is to give those persons who have ideas in our cultural industries and in relation to events, the opportunity to execute them. I know that is what the Minister is interested in achieving, and I believe it could be achieved spending less than this.

Sir, in 1993 we contracted out Cohoblopot to the private sector. We were very bitterly criticised by the then Barbados Labour Party. They still brought the Queen of the Bands Show and the King of the Bands Show, and they had the largest ever attendance for Cohoblopot at the Stadium, and they gave the Government of Barbados some money when the event was over. The original plans had estimated that we would have had to subsidize Cohoblopot.

Sir, I know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East had some of those ideas. I do not know if she got swamped out, but we believe that some of those activities need to be outsourced. Why are we allowing young Event Managers and Tent Managers and others to get to a glass ceiling and then hit it abruptly, because Government wants to manage these Crop Over events, when we can contract them out, demand what we want in return and also earn something from them, and give them an opportunity to be involved in large event management.

Sir, how do you think people like Peter Minshall got where they did, because there was space created in Trinidad's Carnival for them. We need to create space in our economy where it does not currently exist, but can exist, for the talents and abilities of Barbadians to come to the fore.

If a man can produce a Crop Over tent every week, three nights on a weekend, 800 people a night, no breakdowns, no patrons complaining, manage the money, pay the Calypsonians, maintain high standards, produce a video, produce a DVD, have a website and do all of those

things, then you turn around and tell him that you can only go so far in Barbados, but no further. You cannot manage a national event. That has been happening. Sir, what has been happening is, they have been competing directly with what Government has been doing, and that is where a lot of the tension and confusion have occurred.

Sir, if Government is having Cohoblopot, you should not hold any private sector events. They get vex when Government host something the same night they host something. While we sit down together, contract out some of those activities, maintain the development aspects that you want for the festival, that's Government's responsibility. Give other people an opportunity to function in that environment. That is what we did with the Rihanna Concert. We asked NCF to go back to its mandate...

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Well, you had taken Crop Over from it. Once we put it back there, they were scrambling, because they never thought they were going to have it again. We told them to return it to the old mandate, so they had to start from scratch, and get a production team to produce a show at a fixed price, and tell the Government what the price was, and that is what occurred. They are Barbadians,

I have seen no evidence that they should be any question in relation to the performance of it. I believe there was a Special Events Manager working in my office at that time. He said that he did not know about the rest, but he knows that he used to with for his money, a former Barbados Labour Party Candidate who was a Special Events Manager in the Prime Minister's Office. I said that he said publicly, "I do not know about the rest, but I worked for my money." Had I known he was there, because I only found out the list of consultants very late, I would have asked him to assist with the Rihanna Show, but I did not know why the Prime Minister's Office...

Aside

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I did not know that is what he was doing. I did not know that the Prime Minister's Office, at that time, needed a Special Events Coordinator or Manager drawing that money when the month come.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I am now answering the question, but the Honourable Member does not like the answers. That is the problem. I believe that the Honourable Member should ask the Parliamentary Questions, put them on the Order Paper so the public can see and judge you on

the questions you are asking. Sir, now that I am answering the Honourable Member is heckling me. The Honourable Member does not want the answers.

I am saying that, and really adding to it by saying that, had I known that there was somebody in the Prime Minister's Office who was being paid monthly allowances, salary and whatever else, to do that kind of work.

15.40 p.m.

Sequence 28

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

House A4, Sequence 29, 3.40 p.m.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I would have asked that, but I had to request the information. When I received it, it was so voluminous, in relation to the contracts that had been signed, and the people who were being employed, and not showed us anything for the amounts they were being paid, that we, therefore, used private contractors on this occasion, Mr. Chairman.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Our time has expired in relation to this particular Head. I did warn that we had 20 minutes, and most of that time has gone. Therefore, we need to move on.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 13 stand part.

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

HEAD 14 -

THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE - \$8 799 720

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 14 stand part.

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

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

Head 20 -

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - \$579 214

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 20 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 28 -

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS - \$567 015

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 28 stand part.

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

HEAD 38 -

MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LANDS - \$34 333 500

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 38 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 49 -

MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT - \$15 452 470

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: I beg to move that Head 49 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 50 -

POST OFFICE - \$609 303

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 50 stand part.

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 2

RESOLUTIONS TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$56 418 183 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2007-2008 AS SHOWN IN TH SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 14, 2007-2008 WHICH FORM THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION AND THAT THE EXPLANATORY NOTES TO HEAD 23 BE AMENDED AS SET OUT IN SCHEDULE II TO THE RESOLUTION.

HEAD 13 -

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE - \$24 500 000

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, this amount is required to pay pensions to former members of the Barbados Defence Force (BDF), under the Defence Pensions Regulations Act. This is only in respect of those persons who have qualified and, I believe, it is instructive. When the actuarial work was done on it, the Estimates, based on the historical information provided by the Barbados Defence Force at April 1, 2004, which was updated to reflect all of the discharges for the period to March 31, 2007 shows that there were 92 pensioners and 683 deferred pensioners, who were entitled to benefits in the scheme. The records also showed that an additional 19 persons retired from the BDF, after that. Of those persons 17 are due immediately and two are deferred pensions.

Therefore, it is now estimated that \$24.5 million is required to pay pension benefits for 685 persons who have served the vesting period, and who are due terminal grants as prescribed in the legislation.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Joseph

Hon.. D. D. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not propose to delay the House overly long, except to say that for This Side, and having served as a member of the Defence Board, the matter of pensions for the members of the Barbados Defence Force is one that has been a burning concern to them for many years.

There have been many challenges as we sought to bring this particular matter to a conclusion. I believe we were only able to get the regulations passed during the year

2007, so as to be able to put the pensions of the Defence Force in place.

In relation to those individuals who had already retired as at that time, actuarial studies had to be done by Eckerd & Associates, in order to be able to sort out that matter.

Sir, the members of the Defence Force have served Barbados very well. I think you would agree that normally there is a distinction between the work done by the Defence Force and the work done by the Royal Barbados Police Force. You would no doubt have noticed that over the years, the Defence Force Officers have been involved in joint patrols. I imagine that would continue with the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force.

In circumstances where they too have had to face the same kinds of perils and dangers, as members of the Royal Barbados Police Force, it clearly was a sad situation that they were leaving and not getting pensions.

I believe Members of this Chamber would be aware that soldiers are, in fact, by the Defence Act compelled to retire at a far earlier age than other people who were in service of the Crown. I believe that any officer under the rank of Major has to retire at the age of 45, and only those ranks over Major are allowed to go to 50. Thereafter you are allowed, through special dispensation to ask and be granted extensions. Therefore, you would no doubt agree that an individual who is forced to retire from his active employment at the age of 45, is at a significant peril or significant disadvantage over other people who are able to retire at a much later stage.

Therefore, on This Side, I wish to reiterate our support. I am pleased to see that this commitment of the Barbados Labour Party, when we had the great pleasure and distinction of being the Government, is being Honoured and settled at this early date.

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

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak on this particular Head and to say that I am very happy to see that so early in the tenure of this Government, this matter is finally settled. This is a matter that has been widely canvassed. It is, no doubt, that those officers who have been bombarding politicians will be happy to know that in week three of this new Government, it has been brought to book, Sir, and that because of these measures, we are not anti the soldiers, as they were told.

House A4, Sequence 29, 15:50:14

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Hon.D. St.E. KELLMAN: There is evidence to prove that we are not anti the soldiers, that we are here to put the money in their pockets.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to move that Head 13 stand part.

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to second that.

The question that Head 13 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 15 - CABINET OFFICE

\$3 402 759

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, this relates to the work of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission in respect of the Elections held on 15 January. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Electoral and Boundaries Commission for the work it did during the election. I must say that throughout the world people are very complimentary of the way in which Elections are conducted in Barbados and the way in which, when a government is changed, there is a smooth transition which starts in itself from the process of certainty arising out of the performance of persons in polling stations, counting stations and so on, on the day of the election and on the night of the Election.

Mr. Chairman, this particular Supplementary relates to remuneration for returning officers, election clerks, presiding officers, counting assistants, poll clerks, clerical assistants, island constables and police officers, honoraria for senior officers of the Electoral Department; overtime payment to the staff of the Electoral Department and the staff of the Data Processing Office; and drivers/messengers of other departments.

There are also some other related costs which one would anticipate would occur as a result of a General Election. Therefore, I am asking for the support of the House for this particular expenditure.

I beg to move that Head 15 stand part.

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

The question that Head 15 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 37

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORT

\$28 504 046

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, I want at the onset to indicate my humble appreciation for the confidence which the people of Christ Church South have reposed in me in returning me as their elected representative on January 15, 2008. It is a journey which we have taken together and which I have stood steadfastly with the good people offering a choice other than that which had been presented hitherto by the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Chairman, I recognise that it is also a pretty significant mandate by which I was returned, therefore I recognise that the task of which I am faced is an onerous one. I intend, with the support of this great organisation, the Democratic Labour Party, and the Government of Barbados to maintain a good and competent office in Christ Church South and to represent the people to the best of my ability.

Mr. Chairman, transport is one of the areas in which the Honourable Prime Minister has given me responsibility and it is one which we are already working assiduously in the Ministry to offer Barbadians a solution to a situation which has grown out of control under the Barbados Labour Party Administration. I believe that there are resources available in Barbados to bring about an effective solution to the question of transport and, indeed, the general question of road use.

The Resolution before us speaks to the failure of the former Administration of coming to grips in any significant way with real transportation solutions. We made it very clear in our Manifesto that we understood the role that effective transport would play.

Sir, though I recognise that one's maiden presentation in Parliament should not be controversial, it is difficult, especially with the passage of so much time to make a presentation this evening without confronting the absolute failures of the previous Administration in this respect. I speak, for instance, to the failure of the previous Administration to integrate our transport service options in a meaningful way while, at the same time, bringing about greater economies and opportunities in the private sector.

Sir, they reduce the cost to the central Government of running the transport system. We have numerous examples of what has happened. Right now we are completing the renovation of the private sector vehicles' area around the River Terminal, and we have a standing example of the kind of promises which were made to the transport service in Barbados under that Administration which has never ever been taken seriously.

Sir, we are committed in this new Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport to ensuring that the building which was supposed, since 1966, to have

been made available for the use of the private sector vehicle operators, PSVs as they are properly known, the Transport Authority and other commuters in that area becomes available. It would have taken some time but, because of neglect on the part of the Barbados Labour Party Administration, the process almost has to start over, but we are dealing with that.

House A4 Sequence 30

4.00 p.m.

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Hon. J D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, in addition, I have already begun quiet consultation with PSV operators in Barbados and with persons who want generally to offer other solutions to transportation, by way of traffic management, by way of providing park-and-ride facilities, for instance, or even to the extent of looking at fast ferry solutions, for example, from Oistins to River Bay.

Asides.

Hon. J D. E. BOYCE: I do not believe any of the fast ferries would go to St. Thomas, for the Honourable Member who keeps trying to interrupt.

Sir, the point is that we are planning in conjunction with the Transport Authority which we will be relaunching. Sir, the Transport Authority was launched in the twilight years. It existed for about one year under the last Administration but the achievements are not numbered.

Sir, the first charge of the new Transport Authority will be to convene a convocation, a gathering of the mind, where we will have contributions from all stakeholders in the area of transport: those who operate private vehicles, the Transport Board, the private sector people, commuters themselves, people like myself who may not commute by either private or public service but who drive their own cars. Sir, I invite all Barbadians when this symposium is announced, to come and make their contributions because it is the beginning of a new era in transport solutions in this country.

Mr. Chairman, I am firm in my conviction that a government that embraces the PSVs and the other operators of transport in this country stands to gain, rather than setting themselves up as a "we" and "them" situation. Therefore, this Minister and this Government will be working with the PSVs providers in Barbados to providing a meaningful solution.

Mr. Chairman, this morning before coming here, I held a discussion with the management of the Transport Board, which was aimed to find out if there was any

reason, for example, why the Transport Board would object to PSVs using the Transport Board terminals, where those terminals are big enough, and I drew an example like that of Speightstown.

Sir, this is a largely unused terminal which, indeed, has problems with maintenance for the simple reason of its non-use. Sir, we know that sometimes when a facility is not used to its fullest that it erodes even quicker than when it is used properly. Sir, that is the situation we have there. Mr. Chairman, we are going to work together with the providers of transport in Barbados, to make sure that we bring about a solution that offers relief.

Mr. Chairman, I have also charged the technical staff of the Ministry of bringing together all of the ideas that might have been tried before or might have been spoken about before. Sir, there is one true thing. We like to talk a lot about things in Barbados. For example, we talked about solutions, we talked about one-way streets, we talked about encouraging vehicles, for example, entering Bridgetown, to enter on one street and on leaving Bridgetown, to leave on another street, but we have done zilch.

Mr. Chairman, I have said that we will try solutions. I would prefer to go down in history as having tried and failed than not having tried at all. Therefore, Barbadians can be assured that this is the approach which we, in the Ministry of Transport and Works will take in reducing the cost of the operations of the traditional Transport Board and exposing the whole opportunity.

Mr. Chairman, I believe firmly in my mind, as we discuss it and as I think about it more and more, that we are about to unleash an economic opportunity in transport once more in Barbados. We do not have to fight against it. We can sit and discuss it.

Sir, this Government will take the responsibility of being in charge in conducting those discussions in a meaningful and effective way. That is the role we will play through the Transport Authority, the Transport Board and the Ministry of Transport and Works, wherever it is required.

Mr. Chairman, in terms of the Transport Board itself, we have to get to a situation where we are operating at a higher efficiency. We have to operate at higher efficiencies because we know that the easy solution of raising bus fares is not one that we will take. We need to look at the efficiencies of the Transport Board, wherever they could be improved. We shall so reorganise the operations of the Transport Board to make sure it can meet the needs and effectively meet their mandate, without necessarily resorting to increasing bus fares.

We need to look at routing and at taking advantage of effective routing. We have talked a lot, for some time now, about using the ABC Highway as a new interconnecting route between the Airport and, for instance, the Roundabout at Cave Hill. Once again, we have done nothing in this regard. We need to start. All these things have got to be looked into. We have to look into fast routes into Bridgetown for specialised transport services.

Mr. Chairman, if you believe this thinking is only in the mind of myself, again we have to remember that all members of the public and visitors alike, suffer from the inconvenience of congestion, and from the ignorance of not knowing whether or not a bus is going to arrive.

Mr. Chairman, I had a call this morning from a lady. The conversation started off quite harshly but ended up in almost an amicable agreement, while we smiled and laughed about the fact that we had about 10 minutes of discussion. I said to myself that it was a timely intervention because I knew then that this matter was before us today.

Sir, here was a visitor to the island who talked about the inability to plan her holiday, to plan her entertainment, to plan the effective use of the facility at Oistins, for instance, for dinner, to shop effectively in Bridgetown, because she had no way of relying on the transport service as we have it today.

Sir, to put it in a nutshell, the day must come when commuters in Barbados could go to a layby bus pole in Barbados, they should be able to see the scheduled times for Transport Board buses, the PSVs, the ferry, or whatever else, and make up in their minds what mode of transport they are going to take, and when they are going to take it.

4.10 p.m.

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Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: We cannot lag behind anymore when it comes to a vital issue like transport. Sir, it is not only the \$27 million we are talking about for the Transport Board but loss in the economy of Barbados, as we have man hours wasted. Sir, look how many people are eating breakfast on the way to work, in their cars, just come down the ABC Highway on mornings and pile up like everybody else, just after the Graeme Hall roundabout and you will see the coffee mugs and the cheese and egg sandwiches.

Mr. Chairman, we can only look forward to another hour and a half to reach Bridgetown.

Mr. Chairman, we have talked about it too long. The Democratic Labour Party in its Manifesto spoke to it. We repeated it in the Throne Speech and it was emphasised and

I am going to take this opportunity in responding to the requirement for this money to maintain the Transport Board...

Asides.

Hon. J.D. E. BOYCE: Sir, remember the point must be made that the monies we are talking about today in this Chamber have not been created in the 56 days, the 60 days or whatever time frame you use of this Democratic Labour Party Administration. We recognise our responsibility, however, and I have stayed away from trying to blame anybody for anything in terms of this creation. I am saying that we must be able to come to this Chamber in one year's time with solutions, which would have brought about a reduction in the kinds of monies required to augment the operation of the transport service. Sir, it may not be able to be completed in one calendar year but every small step will go a long way to achieving the objective of efficiencies and effectiveness in this Barbados.

Sir, I commit the resources of the Ministry of Transport and Works and all the bodies under its control and the energies of this Minister in ensuring that these policies are put in place.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

I beg to move that Head 37 stand part.

Hon. R.D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I am indeed very happy that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South and Minister responsible for Transport in this country has really brought this particular Resolution to fruition. Indeed, just before the last General Election, this particular Supplementary was approved by me, if he checked the files, it would have been sent to the Ministry of Finance in those days so I am well aware of this particular Supplementary having presided over the Ministry of Public Works for a while.

I am glad this has come to fruition and to say that the Transport Board has increased its efficiency over the past 14 years. In fact, when we became the Government in 1994, there were less than 100 buses operating in this country and today, as I speak, the daily requirements of the Transport Board are 160 buses. Mr. Chairman, the Transport Board now has a fleet of over 160 buses travelling every day from five o'clock in the morning up to one o'clock the following morning. One can complement the management and staff of the Transport Board for effective service.

Mr. Speaker, the second point I want to make is that at least the Minister of Transport can now brag that he has a fleet and that he has good management that we did not find in 1994. I would also make the point that at least he has found programmes in the Ministry of Public Works that were not available to this Party, when we came to power. He could also brag that he has bus fares at \$1.50 wherever you travel across Barbados and he can also tell Barbadians that school children still pay \$1.00 per trip, which the Democratic Labour Party in 1993 had promised to increase. We did not increase this fare to the travelling public for 14 years.

Mr. Chairman, we believe, philosophically that transport is a necessity. We believe that transportation is important for economic development. Sir, this is why we have decided to subsidise and supplement transportation in this country so when the Ministry brings this here, it is nothing new. It happens every year that the Government must subsidise transportation and the Opposition will hold Government to the feat that you must maintain bus fares at \$1.50 because it is in the Government Manifesto as well as in our Manifesto.

Mr. Chairman, I did not want to interrupt the Honourable Member for Christ Church South because it was his maiden speech in this Parliament, but he said that transportation has grown out of control in this country. Let me say to the Minister that he is fortunate to have a good staff, a good CTO and he is fortunate to have good officers at the Ministry of Public Works.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say to him that for the first time he has two contracts in place that were not voted for in the Estimates of Expenditure and that he would have to vote for them for the next three years because we the House, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding between C.O. Williams Construction as well as Rayside Concrete Works. These two big contracts are in place and a lot is going to come up in here next week, in the course of this debate and in the other debate. Sir, I have said nothing during the Election. They went Haggatt Hall and made people believe that there were lots of problems in transportation and that there were a lot of cost overruns. Sir, as an engineer, I hope the Honourable Member would do the necessary things because I have given him enough time, two months, to bring these cost overruns and the things you speak about to light. I have given you enough time and you have made the point today that transportation has failed. You have for the first time, a contract that is moving for the next two years. One Hundred and Forty-nine roads are being done by Rayside Construction, supplementary roads across Barbados, in St. Michael; in Christ Church; in St. James; in St. Philip; in St. George and in Christ Church. Sir, 149 small roads are being done and C.O. Williams Construction Limited is doing about 26 large main roads. Sir, in other words, you have

approximately \$70 million in roads that have started about one year ago.

A4/16:20

Sequence 32

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Hon G.A. CLARKE: Sir, we were also at the point of signing a contract with Brathwaite's Construction for a further \$30 million in work when the Election came. In other words, the then Government was contracting out approximately \$100 million in work. We could not put the Brathwaite's Construction contract in place because of elections. Of course, the Ministry of Public Works can give you a list of all the roads that were signed off and just to be put in place.

Sir, I want to make the point that it is not true to say that transportation has failed. Nobody will believe the Honourable Minister, because all across Barbados there is evidence of work being done, even in your constituency. Over the last two years roads were done in Rendezvous, and across Christ Church South. We did not have any political agenda.

Hon. J.D. E BOYCE: On a point of elucidation. I need to clarify for the Honourable Member. Sir, road works is not to do with transport. It is not the same connection. You are talking about a lot of road works which you have in the plans. The other point is these are roll-over arrangements. It is not as if there is \$200 million booked. These are the extent to which they can go. The Honourable Member has to clarify these things. Sir, because you create a road does not mean that you have relieved the congestion, or because you repair a road you do not relieve the congestion.

Sir, I speak to transport in the inclusive way, but the Honourable Member must not mislead the Chamber, that these road works that he speaks about, the two contracts that he says are confirmed and the third contract is booked. There are arrangements which can be modified over time.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Sir, the Honourable Member is new, so I would expect him to say these things. These roads have started already and the contracts are in place. The point which I am making is, they have started a year ago, all across Barbados, including Christ Church and St. Philip. The third one is for the north of Barbados. The points which need to be made are any transport policy must take into consideration proper roads.

Sir, I am saying that we took a decision in the Ministry of Public Works to increase road capacity across Barbados, and that is what we were doing. When we

widened the ABC Highway, we were doing that in order to increase road capacity. If you look across the ABC Highway you will see...

Aside

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: I can go there any time. I have all the facts.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: If you go there you will see bus lay-bys were created in order to provide bus routing from the Christ Church area, across the ABC Highway, to the bottom of the University Hill. We recognised that at all the intersections you will have the overcrowding, and therefore, some action must be taken at the intersections.

Sir, we have also visited the terminals and were integrating the private and public service into one. That is what we were doing. Sir, I did not interrupt him. He said that the Transport Authority came into effect a year ago, and the learned Honourable Attorney General should stop him. The Transport Authority came into effect only in December. The Governor General signed it in December, just two months ago. The Transport Authority came into being in this country in December. It took a long time, but once it got on the Statute Books in December, then it started to do its job.

Sir, I will come back in this debate.

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

Hon. D.St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I am happy to enter this debate again. It is rather interesting that the former Minister said when they came to Government they only had 100 buses to work with, and after leaving they left 160. Sir, the former Minister did not tell the Honourable House, what was the deficit at the time, but I am sure it was not to the tune of \$28 839 000.

The former Minister speaks about efficiency. The only way that this Honourable House can judge, based on efficiency, is if the former Minister would tell the Honourable House, that the deficit was less than \$10 000 when they came to Government, and that his assumption having 160 buses, with a deficit of over \$27 million could not prove efficiency.

Sir, it is clear that we will have to point out to the Minister that many discussions were held in this Honourable House where it was pointed out that because of the transportation system in the country, the productive

sectors were suffering in this country. Schools were suffering and workers were losing their jobs.

Sir, I am happy to hear that finally somebody has accepted that there is a need for the private and public sectors to come together and share facilities. We cannot have a situation in Barbados where the Transport Board can have good facilities, and the sector assisting the Transport Board, those persons have to be in the rain, sun and elements. I am happy to hear that the operators of Public Service Vehicles (PSV), ZRs, mini buses, et cetera, will now be treated as human beings, and they too will have shelter. Sir, I believe, if you are speaking about efficiency, this is a way you will achieve some efficiency and fairness.

Sir, we also have to recognise that the former Minister was very clever. He said how many roads were done under the BOLT arrangement and that the Government.

Asides.

Hon. D.St.E. KELLMAN: I am sorry, the former Minister. He spoke as if he were still current, because he was reading the document as if he was still in the Ministry.

Sir, the former Minister also said that they were able to do a lot of work, without bringing the cost to book. That is true, but I want the former Minister to know that at some time they have to come to book, and the people of Barbados will have to pay. It is always wise to pay upfront than to have to deal with the cost after the fact.

This idea of the BOLT arrangement, which I have spoken against, reminds me of the Petro Caribe arrangement, and it is clear that the former Minister brought this arrangement to transport in this country, where you do not know your final cost, and at some time you will find yourself with a large bill, where you have budgeted for the additional cost, and Government will find itself having to look for revenue where they already have expenditure occurring but no matching revenue.

This is a very dangerous thing to do. It means that what will happen in one year, you could find Government having to budget for larger sums than necessarily required. It is better to do it on a yearly basis, so that you know what you have to account for instead of having all of these BOLT arrangements.

Sir, for example, based on the number of BOLT arrangements, you could see nearly \$1 billion coming to book at one time. I am saying that is not proper financing and we need to do something about it. We have to understand that at the end of the day the taxpayers have to pay, so let us bring them to book. I am a bit surprised, now

that we have adopted the accrual system in accounting, that we are still speaking this same language.

HAS 16.30 p.m.

Sequence 33

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House A4, Sequence 34, 4.30 p.m.

Hon. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We have the expenditure and we should have been accounting for this since last year. I cannot believe that we are still speaking as if we are operating on the cash basis where you only account when you spend the money. Those days are over and I am sending a warning that it has to change.

I am also happy to hear this evening that we are before this House to pay the travelling officers, who have been using their money every week, especially those supervisors who work at the Depots. They have been owed for a long time, and those of us who represent our constituencies well, would know how they have been lamenting that they had to find the money to pay for these expenses and it has been accumulating.

Sir, I am happy to hear this evening that we are addressing the needs of those small persons whom we say we care so much about and that we are finally liquidating the debts that they would have accumulated, through no fault of theirs, while doing the work of the people of Barbados.

I also found it rather regrettable that we can have a system of allocation of contracts. I am happy that C.O. Williams Construction was able to get theirs, and I am happy that Rayside was able to get their contracts, but I find it shocking that Brathwaite's Construction did not get their contract.

Asides.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: No. It could not be anything to do with elections. I am not buying that excuse. All three of them needed the contracts.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The former Government put in place two contracts, where contractors brought in their financing, Rayside Construction and C.O. Williams Construction. We were about to put a third construction company in place and Elections came so we could not. Sir, all of the documents are still in the Ministry and I am calling on the present Minister to ensure that Brathwaite's Construction gets that contract.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Yes, Sir. I agree with him. I am calling on the Minister to correct the mistake of the past Minister to ensure that Brathwaite's Construction gets its work. Sir, it is regrettable that I will now have to put a case for my constituent, who served their Party so well. Sir, that is why you can now understand the difference between the two political parties. Here it is today, that we are having 30 Constituency Councils for all 30 Members of Parliament and we are having three contracts and one is left out. This is why they were so worried about how we would manage and implement that policy.

We are going to implement the policy for all, not for a 'too few'. Sir, that is why this evening, I am saying that based on what has gone down in here today, it is clear that once we continue the way we are going, we will also look after the Opposition. They need not fear, because as we said before, the Constituency Councils will be for all, and the contracts will be for all. We are going to ensure that all of the contractors live and not that the 'too few' will get, and the ones that need, will not get. I have two constituents and I will represent both of them in this House as it relates to the construction of roads.

Therefore, this evening, Mr. Chairman, I am saying already you can see the difference.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I just rise to make a brief intervention at this stage. Surely, I would want to congratulate the new Minister on his first speech as it relates to transport in Barbados.

Clearly, in the minds of almost every Barbadian, we have the problem of traffic congestion on mornings and evenings, which needs to be addressed, in a very serious way.

Mr. Chairman, Barbados has been a signatory to the Equilisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, a very serious Charter. I would like that when the new Minister has formalised his transportation policy that persons with disabilities are included in a sense that it is far more conclusive.

For instance, it is okay to say that we have five vehicles to transport persons with disabilities, but it is equally important that we have an integrated transport system to accommodate persons with disabilities in Barbados.

Sir, there is an urgent need to sit with all the players involved, even the Ministry of Social Care, et cetera, to come up with a far more comprehensive transport policy for persons with disabilities. I think Barbados is one of the few countries in this hemisphere that is on its way towards providing that kind of transportation system for persons with disabilities. I do not think that we will have the money to make sure that every bus has the necessary system to collect persons, particularly in wheel chairs.

Sir, I also want to draw your attention to the ABC Highway along St. Barnabas and Mount Friendship, which is a more parochial matter. I remember that we had meetings with the Ministry of Transport. The residents in the area complained about the dust. There is a plan in the Ministry of Public Works to dig a tunnel under the ground, so that the residents from Mount Friendship to St. Barnabas could pass under and the reverse.

The fact of the matter is that it will prevent some serious social problems because, throughout the world, when the social analysis was taken, it was clearly shown that digging these underground trenches for people to walk under, present clear and present dangers. Sir, I just want the Minister to revisit that policy.

Mr. Chairman, we were also promised another Town Hall meeting in St. Michael South East, as it relates to that whole stretch from St. Barnabas down by Bussa Roundabout to Upton, which has not materialised.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: The fact is that there is an urgent need now to reconvene a meeting of the residents in this particular geographical hemisphere to accommodate the residents of St. Barnabas, Mount Friendship, Parkinson Field, Upton, et cetera.

There is also a need for the bus service that services the Pine and Wildey areas, where the buses come to the Pinelands area then travel down back through Collymore Rock. There is no transportation to take the old people et cetera, even the children that go to Springer Memorial School down Government Hill. Therefore, there is a need now to put buses back on that route to Government Hill, running through to the Pine and Wildey.

I just brought these matters to the attention of this Honourable Chamber, because we are going to have a long week to debate the Estimates. Surely, I know the Estimates well. The Ministry of Transport might not come up in the Estimates. The fact of the matter is that I want to take this occasion now to draw these parochial matters to this Honourable Chamber.

Sir, I thank you for allowing me this intervention.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for the City.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, I rise to support this Resolution and I would like to concentrate on Programme 511 - Drainage services and maintenance of drainage to prevent flooding, and Programme 517, Transportation.

Sir, I could not believe my ears when I heard the Honourable Member for St. George North try to defend his stewardship as Minister of Transport and Works in the last Government, and proclaimed that he had not failed. Sir, he said further that he had visited the bus terminals. I want to know when the Honourable Member visited the bus terminal at Fairchild Street, if he saw what was presented in a Saturday Sun newspaper, in terms of the awful condition of the public conveniences there, where doors were knocked off, not properly cleaned, the stench from the place, no mirrors.

House A4, Sequence 34, 16:40:14

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: In other words, if nature calls, you have to do it in public view. Did he notice that the same terminal building is sinking as we speak? Sir, commuters, like your humble servant - I am very familiar with that bus terminal, I use it often - are telling me that they are falling down because the building is sinking and there are a lot of cracks. There are also a multitude of wild birds within the terminal compound and commuters have to fight their way through these birds because the place is not properly maintained.

Mr. Chairman, when you go down to the bus stand to the west of the Post Office, you see a recently constructed building where oftentimes the male toilet is closed and the males and females have to use the same toilet. Many of the toilets are not flushing and mirrors are off. Sir, that bus terminal was constructed in such a ridiculous manner that the commuters are exposed to the elements in terms of rain. I am saying that was mismanagement by the last Government. They built it in this new millennium, and they did not provide proper seating for the commuters. There is also the Cheapside minivan stand where there is not a single seat for commuters. Sir, the last Government also put a whole set of dirty marl to the east of the restaurants which blows into the people's food. There is no seating and the area has old refrigerators which are filled with garbage. Sir, your humble servant brought this to the public's attention. What did the Honourable Member for St. George North do about that when he was Minister responsible?

Mr. Chairman, when you go up to the River van stand there is no seating at all and rats as big as dogs are

running out of the Constitution River among the booths there where people have to serve food to the public. I know about this because I am a commuter taking public transport. That is why the people of the City elected your humble servant to represent these interests.

Mr. Chairman, the Democratic Labour Party Government has inherited a situation where all day on Sunday the public conveniences at the River van stand are closed. So if nature calls, you have to park along a corner and urinate. That is why the Democratic Labour Party will be moving assiduously to solve these problems. So let the Honourable Member for St. George North humble himself and realise that he has failed as a Minister and that is why he is sitting on the Opposition Benches today.

Mr. Chairman, let me turn to the issue of drainage, this is all within that same Ministry.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Can I have order, please.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: I will not be distracted, Mr. Chairman, so let me continue.

Mr. Chairman, I am talking about drainage. As the Member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown, I am very concerned because most of the City is below sea level and drainage has been a perennial problem in the City. I, as well as the residents, have drawn our concerns publicly to the attention of the then Government, because the health and safety of the residents in the City is at stake. We do not want another hurricane season to come and this situation which we inherited from the last Government continues.

For example, Mr. Chairman, if there is a heavy downpour this evening, a boat would have to take me to my home where I live at Reed Street because the box drain running just east of the Salvation Army across to Mason Hall Street is too small. As I said, the former Member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown would have been made aware of this.

Mr. Chairman, when you look at Murphy's Pasture, the box drain via Font belle down to the sea has been clogged with a lot of debris because the last Government failed to consistently clear those drains of debris.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Help is on the way because your humble servant intervened at the canal there to the west of the Westbury School pasture. In the preparation for the Cricket World Cup, the last Government set up a Kensington Community Advisory Team headed by Permanent Secretary Lionel Weekes. Your humble servant

represented the Democratic Labour Party, The Other Side's representative hardly came, and the Church was represented. We did not get any two or so million dollars to spend. They gave it to my opponent to try to win that seat. We toured that area and in all of the public consultations held at St. Leonard's Church and at St. Mary's Church. We highlighted the fact that there were tremendous problems of drainage around Kensington Oval and the engineers said they were aware of it, but it was outside the mandate of the Cricket World Cup people.

The Barbados Labour Party Government at the time had no interest in solving the drainage problem in Bridgetown. As a result, you had the situation worsening after the Cricket World Cup renovations at Kensington Oval up until a few weeks ago when your humble servant and the Democratic Labour Party intervened and cleared that drain. That is what the residents of the City and Barbados have to expect from this Democratic Labour Party Government.

All the Barbados Labour Party gave were empty promises and the situation was made worse to the extent that there was an overflow of the drains and a lot of stagnant water making the area impassable, threatening people's houses and their health in terms of the high incidence of dengue fever. All of this happened under the watch of the Barbados Labour Party and the Honourable Member for St. George North as the Minister responsible.

Mr. Chairman, we are not about all talk, we are about action. Therefore, I will be calling upon the Government to undertake a comprehensive look at the drainage throughout Bridgetown and indeed throughout Barbados, not any piecemeal knee-jerk reaction. We have an engineer who is the Minister and we have another engineer within the Cabinet and engineers within Government that I am sure would be looking comprehensively at solving the drainage problem in a sustainable way. Mr. Chairman, where drains have to be widened and deepened and have to be covered, then let that be.

Mr. Chairman, in New Orleans and several areas, there have been poor road construction under the last Government with not enough wells being sunk to pull off the surface water from the roads, and so you get drainage problems.

In closing, therefore, I would just appeal to all Barbadians to be responsible citizens and make sure that they do not litter the streets, because all of that garbage would end up into the drainage system in Bridgetown resulting in the clogging of these systems and the threat to life and limb.

Mr. Chairman, with those few remarks I support this Resolution.

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

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, I know it is getting late, but if you would permit me to make a few comments, I would like to compliment the new Minister on his presentation. He sounded very confident and we look forward to great things from him.

I would also like to note that the former Minister, the Honourable Member for St. George North, also sounded very confident at last. Maybe he belongs where he is, in Opposition. He has finally found a place where he is more at home and is comfortable.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward, indeed, to improved efficiency of our transport system. When you live where I live, and represent the constituents who I represent in St. Philip South, and you drive down to work every morning, regardless of what hour, and you see many of your constituents standing at the bus stop, you wonder what you need to do to improve their lot and how can you improve their ability to get to and from work.

Mr. Chairman, when I listened to the Minister, I felt more comfortable and I look forward to seeing results from his intervention. I look forward, indeed, to seeing a comprehensive transport policy.

House A4 Sequence 35

4.50 p.m.

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Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Already I am being told by some of my constituents, for example, several bus drivers, that it is impossible for them to meet their commitments, going from Speightstown to Oistins, because that journey takes sometimes two-and-one-half hours, when they are expected to make that journey between one hour and one hour and fifteen minutes. Therefore, we do need to have a holistic look at our transportation system.

Mr. Chairman, one of the most frustrating things my constituents face on mornings and on afternoons is this whole issue of motorists coming into roundabouts and stopping, so that drivers cannot move in either direction. I dare say that once it is clear, one finds that miles ahead there is no traffic, but that the bottlenecks just occur in the roundabouts themselves. We look forward to having some kind of policy that would alleviate that.

Mr. Chairman, probably without doubt at some point in time, we have to look at the whole issue of the number of motor vehicles we have on the road. We are a small nation and we cannot continue with the large volume of vehicles that we have, and we might have to consider hard policies and limit the number of vehicles we take in, in any one year.

I know this is something that would be unpopular, even on our side. I know that it may not be appreciated but, certainly, I do not envisage that as a nation we could continue importing the large number of vehicles on the continuous basis that we are doing so. Therefore, without doubt, we have to look at a holistic policy and decide what is best for us as a country.

Mr. Chairman, my final intervention is with respect to transparency. One of the things that I look forward to with the new Transport Authority is the issuing of licences. Many of my constituents complain that they were told the only way they could have received a licence was if they had seen the previous Minister. Sir, I look forward with our new governance policy, with the issue of accountability. I look forward to having a system that is transparent, so that regardless of whether or not you are known to the Minister, regardless of whether or not you are a supporter, once there is merit that you must be issued a licence, then a licence will be issued to you.

Mr. Chairman, I bring those two points to your attention, even at this late hour. I thank you.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I just want to make a brief intervention because I believe there are still a number of issues that need to be clarified. Sir, I want to thank the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, who seems to be the Minister of Transport. The Honourable Member seems to know more about transport than the Transport Minister himself, who is also an engineer.

Mr. Chairman, the question of engineers came up. We have had several meetings with engineers across Barbados and, like most professional bodies, they have not settled on any particular issue. Some of those issues were very contentious. For example, we had consultations with the engineers. Most of them have agreed there is the need to improve capacity at the roundabouts, but some of them are unsure whether or not we need to have flyovers or underpasses.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South was correct to say that it is at the intersections, whether at Sargeant's Village Roundabout, Bussa Roundabout or the Norman Niles Roundabout, that there are miles and miles of backup traffic occurring every morning.

Mr. Chairman, one of the policies this Government is talking about is that of introducing ferries across Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: The Minister of Public Works and Transport is saying that he wants to introduce ferries in this country. Sir, could you tell me how ferries are going to help the people from St. George, Six Roads, St. Philip, St. Thomas, or Parish Land, Christ Church? The Minister is saying first that persons would have to go to Oistins, then take a ferry to Speightstown; that persons from Six Roads would have to go to Bussa Roundabout, then to Worthing and then take a ferry to Speightstown. Mr. Chairman, I am saying that in the final analysis, one has to be able to come to grips....

Sir, I want to make the point that it was a suggestion coming out of the Ministry itself. Sir, when I came to the Ministry in 2004, one of the first things with which I was confronted was that of the expansion of the ABC Highway and building flyovers. There was also talk about the synchronisation of traffic signals, which we have achieved.

There is now, for the first time, traffic signals that are operational within the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. Therefore, if there is a traffic lights problem in Bridgetown, the engineers at the Ministry of Public Work and Transport could go and do something to have the lights flashing.

Mr. Chairman, we now have five vehicles to transport the disabled, and sidewalks that have been made easily accessible to the disabled. Sir, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown has made the point that we have failed, but the Honourable Member is accustomed to walking aimlessly around the City, encouraging persons to squat. Sir, I remember that it was drawn to my attention that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown had encouraged persons to squat at Murphy's Pasture. Sir, let the Honourable Member deal with that problem now.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, your humble servant has never, at any time of my existence, encouraged any person in Barbados or elsewhere to break the Law, in particular to squatting. Sir, I ask that the statement by the Honourable Member be withdrawn and struck from the record.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I am saying that when I was at the Ministry of Public Works and

Transport, it was drawn to my attention that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, who is now an Honourable Member of this House, was encouraging people to squat at Murphy's Pasture. The Honourable Member was also encouraging persons, not only to squat but also to...

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member continues to mislead this Honourable Chamber. The Honourable Member is imputing improper motives on the part of the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown. Sir, I reiterate adamantly that at no time did Patrick Martin Tyrone Todd encourage anyone to squat and therefore to break the Laws of this land. Sir, I stand by this and ask that you rule.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I said when the Honourable Member was not a Member of Parliament. Sir, not only that, the Honourable Member has to deal with the majority of persons who are residing at the River Bus Terminal.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman. I want to be further clear on this matter. I am saying that the person in the name of Patrick Martin Tyrone Todd, born December 30, 1963, at no time during his existence on this earth, did he encourage anyone to squat and therefore to break the Law. Mr. Chairman, I asked you to rule because the Honourable Member persists in misleading this Honourable House.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, the point of order is taken. The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is also asking that the words be stricken from the records.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, what words?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Are you saying that the Honourable Member for St. George North is imputing improper motives to you? Is that the point you are making?

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: The Honourable Member for St. George North has imputed improper motives by suggesting that your humble servant encouraged persons to break the Law. Sir, that is unparliamentary.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. George North, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is making the point that the words are imputing improper motive to him, and it is against the Rules of the House

to impute improper motive to a Member. The point is that the Honourable Member is now an Honourable Member of this House and therefore it is not proper to impute improper motives. I, therefore, call on the Honourable Member for St. George North to withdraw those words, and to move on.

5.00 p.m.

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Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not sure which words to withdraw but I would like to say....

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, order, please. The Chair has called on the Honourable Member to withdraw the remarks and I would like to give him the opportunity to withdraw the remarks made.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I want to withdraw the words "that the then Patrick Todd encouraged them to squat."

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Fine, let us move on then.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I am making the point that there is a lot of squatting at Murphy's pasture, which cannot be denied and most of those persons at Murphy's pasture support the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, that is a fact of life.

Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because the residents of Murphy's pasture, many of whom would have supported your humble servant, one cannot definitively say that the majority of them supported the Democratic Labour Party because they fall within polling district BF1, which the Democratic Labour Party has never won in its entire history.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please let us move on.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for the City complained about problems in the City, he complained about drainage and I am saying to him that from empirical evidence of flooding and persons having problems in the bus terminal come from illegal vending, illegal squatting and all of these are attributed to problems that we have encountered and that the current Minister of Housing has to deal with. We tried to deal with it but every time we tied somebody carried away a toilet bowl. Most of these people are vagrants around the City.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying that we had to deal with them and the Minister will find in the course of one year, that you would repair a door today and that tomorrow

someone takes away that door. We have tried to provide security at the bus terminal but this is the reality of the situation and this Minister has to deal with them.

Mr. Chairman, when the Honourable Member for Christ Church South starts talking about park and ride, that park and ride is nothing new. Sir, the Honourable Member is not introducing park and ride because we introduced park and ride here and it was successful.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has one more minute.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, we introduced not only park and ride but we did a lot of things...

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that park and ride is a transport policy and that it was not done only for cricket. Sir, I think the Honourable Member should correct that statement.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I will move on. Sir, in the last minute I have I want to make the point that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South is batting on a good wicket and that all he has to do is to continue with the policies. I look forward to greater debate in here because I understand the concept and the complexity he has. Sir, if he becomes contentious, he would find that your humble servant will...

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I did not say anything about Haggatt Hall but I have a lot to say because I am hearing the asides but I have children to protect and, Sir, I want you to understand that I will be back.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I thank you.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, in winding up, I just want to make it very clear that I as Minister I will be leading a policy, which will be contrary to the policy espoused by the Honourable Member who just sat. His Government, his Minister of Finance and himself introduced punitive taxation on PSV operators under the guise that they were going to introduce better a transport service to this country. They have not done so and I want to divorce myself from that policy. Sir, if the Minister is looking for company, he is looking down the wrong street.

Mr. Chairman, let me say to the former Minister that he must not take the comment about failure personally. I do not think anyone on This Side is trying to indicate that the former Minister was a failure. We are saying that his Administration has demonstratively failed to create any form of solution to transport in Barbados and this

administration and this Minister is charged with that responsibility and we will take it on frontally. We will take it on frontally, we will deal with it. We shall include the PSV operators in our solution policy. We shall bring them to the table like comrades in arms and we shall embrace them.

Mr. Chairman, you can be assured that this policy as it unfolds over the few weeks and months, shall demonstrate that we in Barbados are capable of solving our transport problems. We know where ferries can go and where they cannot go. We do not have to be doctored by the Honourable Member for St. George North about ferries and their capabilities. Sir, I do not think that we need to go to the issue of licenses at this stage. That will be dealt with some time later. Suffice it to say, I have now finally received a report, which I can work with as a Minister and I intend to pass the responsibility of issuing licences for all levels of operations of private sector vehicles to the authority where it belongs. Sir, that is what I am charging my Ministry with and that is the approach that we will have.

Mr. Chairman, all Barbadians must be satisfied that they can go to the specific bodies or organs set up to provide solutions and obtain these solutions. Sir, that will be our approach.

Finally, I beg to move that Head 37 stand part.

Hon. R.D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that Head 37 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

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

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, this relates to incidental traveling expenses as a result of an increase in travel rates as well as the Umpires contributions to the National Insurance due to an increase in the maximum earnings and the creation of additional post in the sum of \$11 000 odd dollars.

I beg to move that Head 51 stand part.

Hon. R.D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that Head 51 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

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On the motion of Hon. R.D. JONES, seconded by Dr. D.C. ESTWICK, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the Deputy SPEAKER the passing of two Money

Resolutions in Committee of Supply and Mr. Deputy SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. R.D. JONES, seconded by Dr. D.C. ESTWICK, the Resolutions were read a first and second time and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Monday, March 17, 2008, at 10.00 a.m. when we shall debate on the Appropriations Bill.

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

The question that the House do now adjourn until Monday, March 17, 2008 was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. Deputy SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

17.13 p.m.

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BYER-SUCKOO, Dr. the Hon. E.R. (St. George South)
CLARKE, Hon. G. A. (St. George North)
ESTWICK, Dr. the Hon. D. C. (St. Philip West)
FORDE, Hon. C.Y. (St. Thomas)
HUTSON, Hon. E. G. (St. James Central)
JONES, Hon. R.D. (Christ Church East Central)
KELLMAN, Hon. D. St.E. (St. Lucy)
LASHLEY, Hon. H. F. (St. Michael South East)
LASHLEY, Hon. M. A. (St. Philip North)
LASHLEY, Hon. S.A. (Christ Church West Central)
LOWE, Hon. Dr. D. S. (Christ Church East)
MARSHALL, Hon.. D. D. (St. Joseph)
MOTTLEY, Hon. M.A. (St. Michael North East)
PAUL, Hon. J. D. (St. Michael West Central)
SINCKLER, Hon. C. P. (St. Michael North West)
STUART, Hon. F. J. (St. Michael South)
THOMPSON, Hon. D.J.H. (St. John)
TODD, Hon. P. M. T. (City of Bridgetown)
TOPPIN, Hon. R. St.C. (St. Michael North)

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Committee of Supply, report of Resolutions. The source records the Chairman's report of the two Money Resolutions twice, either side of a take-slip ('Tuesday, March 11, 2008'), in slightly different wording. The second version, which runs on into the readings of the Resolutions, is printed and the first (about 35 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q3. Minutes. The Deputy Speaker announces 'The Minutes of Tuesday, February 15, 2005', but the motion that follows is for the Minutes of 'Tuesday, March 4, 2008'. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Announcements and Papers. The headings 'MESSAGES FROM HIS HONOUR THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL' and 'PAPER' are typed in the source as words spoken by the Deputy Speaker. Papers are then laid twice, in two different lists; item 3 is 'The Actual Revenue and Expenditure 2008' in the first and 'The Actual Revenue and Expenditure 2006-2007' (item 4) in the second. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Tributes to the Deputy Speaker's mother. The name is given as 'Matilda Elise Best', 'Mathilda Elise Best', 'Matilda Eloise Best' and 'Elise Matilda Best' by different speakers. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 1, report of progress. The seconder of the motion is left blank in the source: 'seconded by Hon. _____'. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Suspension. The motion 'Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.00 p.m.' carries no speaker label in the source; it presumably belongs to Hon. R. D. Jones. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Order No. 1, Head 13. A speech labelled 'Mr. CHAIRMAN' begins 'Mr. Chairman, what is the objection, Honourable Member?'. Printed as in the source.

Q9. Order No. 2, Head 51. The Prime Minister's speech on Head 51 has no Head heading or sum in the source; it follows directly after Head 37. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Tuesday, 11th March, 2008, pursuant to the adjournment, with Mr. Deputy Speaker presiding; prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood. The Leader of the House, Hon. R. D. Jones, laid the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 2008-2009, the Schedule of Personal Emoluments and the Revised Estimates of Expenditure, and later the Report and Audited Financial Statements of the Barbados Conference Services Limited for the year ending 31st March, 2005. He gave notice of the Appropriation Bill, 2008-2009, which was read a first time.

Members then paid tribute to the Deputy Speaker's mother, who had died at the age of 90. Hon. R. D. Jones opened, followed by the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. M. A. Mottley, the Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, and eleven other Members. The Deputy Speaker thanked the House.

Standing Orders were suspended and the House went into Committee of Supply, Hon. S. A. Lashley in the Chair, on the Resolution to grant \$62 813 000 under Supplementary Estimates No. 13, 2007-2008. On Head 12, Parliament, \$790 514, Mr. Thompson explained that it covered gratuities to 12 constituency assistants of former Members and four former staff of the Leader of the Opposition, grants of \$10 000 each to 24 Members for constituency office equipment and the cost of the Opening of Parliament. Miss Mottley supported the sum but pressed the Government to state its policy on Constituency Councils, for which she said \$4.5 million appeared in the Estimates; Mr. Thompson spoke of keeping Cabinet to fewer than half the Members of the House. Dr. Lowe, Hon. R. St. C. Toppin, Hon. H. F. Lashley, Hon. J. D. Paul and others joined in, with repeated points of order. Miss Mottley withdrew a reference to arrogance and, at the Chairman's request, a further statement, and Head 12 stood part.

On Head 13, Prime Minister's Office, Hon. S. D. Blackett said \$491 577 was needed for the preparatory work for Crop Over 2008, and Mr. Thompson said \$300 000 had been provided for the function honouring the singer Rhianna, which Hon. C. Y. Forde welcomed. Certain remarks by Mr. Blackett were ordered expunged by the Chairman. Head 13 and Heads 14, 20, 28, 38, 49 and 50 then stood part without debate.

The House next took the Resolution to grant \$56 418 183 under Supplementary Estimates No. 14, 2007-2008.

Mr. Thompson explained that Head 13 provided \$24.5 million for pensions to 685 former members of the Barbados Defence Force, which Hon. D. D. Marshall and Mr. Kellman supported, and that Head 15, Cabinet Office, \$3 402 759, met the costs of the General Election of 15th January. On Head 37, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, \$28 504 046, the Minister, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, spoke of the Transport Board and of fast ferries; the former Minister, Mr. Clarke, defended his record, including a \$30 million road contract. Mr. Clarke withdrew, at the Chairman's direction, words suggesting that Mr. Todd had encouraged squatting at Murphy's pasture. Heads 37 and 51 stood part.

Both Resolutions were reported, read a first and second time and agreed to. On the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones, seconded by Hon. F. J. Stuart, the House was adjourned until Monday, 17th March, 2008, at 10.00 a.m., for the debate on the Appropriation Bill.