
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Monday, March 17, 2008

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly at the meeting held on Tuesday, March 18, 2008, at 10.00 a.m.

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) Mr. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C. Mr. G. A. CLARKE, J.P., B.Sc., Dip. Ed. Mr. H. F. LASHLEY Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B (Hons.) Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B., (Leader of the Opposition) Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P.

Hon. R. D. JONES, J.P., M.A. Ed., B.A., (Hons.),
(Minister of Education and

Human Resource Development), (Leader of the House)

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, B.B.B.S, B.Sc.,
(Minister of Health, National

Insurance and Social Security)

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL, Q.C., LL.B. (Hons.),
L.E.C. Hon. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.) (Minister of Housing and Lands) Dr. W. F. DUGUID, J.P., B.D.S. (Comm.), F.D.S., FDRCS. Hon. R. L. SEALY, M.B.A., B.Sc., (Minister of Tourism) Hon. F. J. STUART, B.A., LL.M. (Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs) Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, M.Sc. (C. Eng.) (Minister of Transport, Works and International Transport)

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

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT, (Minister of Community Development and Culture) Mr. J. D. PAUL, B.Sc. Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, M.Ed., B.A., Ed.D., Dip. Theology, (Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development) Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE, LL.B. (Hons.) Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, B.Sc., LL.B. (Hons.) L.E.C. (Chairman of Committees), Hon. P. M. T. TODD, B.Sc., (Minister of State, Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development) Hon. D. O'N. INNISS, M.B.A., B.Sc., (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)

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, 2008.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes in the Honourable House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, March 11, 2008, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

PAPERS

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

following document:

12th Actuarial Review of the National Insurance Scheme as at December, 2008

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

4.10 a.m.

Sequence 1

Estimates - Monday, March 17, 2008

House A5, Sequence 02, 10.10 a.m.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 1 – THE APPROPRIATION BILL, 2008

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John and Prime Minister.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again, let me take this opportunity in moving the Appropriation Bill, the first for this new Government, to acknowledge the gratitude that the Government feels towards the electorate of Barbados, in entrusting the management of the affairs of this country to us.

I therefore want, Sir, from the outset to reaffirm this Governments commitment to deliver on the pledges that we made in our Manifesto. Sir, it is a universal fact that whenever a populace Government comes to power, its detractors question its ability to meet the needs of the people, while at the same time balancing the Budget.

Sir, you would know that right now in the United Kingdom, the reputed cradle of the Westminster style Government, which we have inherited, is replete with talks by the Conservative Party against the Labour Party asking this question constantly. How are you going to pay for these populace initiatives?

The Opposition here in Barbados, Sir, has remained, true to form on this issue, even during what one might, in normal circumstances, call a honeymoon period. It therefore gives me tremendous satisfaction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be able to show in our first Estimates that we have no intention of bankrupting the Treasury, as was once suggested.

Sir, Barbadians are prudent people and I promised just two months ago, that we would say what we came and found, and we are going to say to the public what we came and found, because Government in Barbados did not start on January 16, 2008.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we said in our Manifesto, fiscal prudence will be the hallmark of this Government. We will maintain fiscal stability in the management of the affairs of Government in this country. This objective is a central plank of good and responsible governance, and it is absolutely essential to the credibility and maintenance of the fixed exchange rate regime.

In light of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Government is going to give priority to achieving and maintaining a balanced Budget, while allowing for small manageable fiscal deficits, where necessary, to facilitate the developmental objectives of the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this statement seems not to be understood, even though it is perfect English, and that is why I have reiterated it here. Let me once again remind those who are now being initiated in the sphere of finance and economics, despite having the chance of being paid as a Minister to learn on the job, that small fiscal deficits are allowed within specified limits and are still considered prudent. Ultimately, Sir, a surplus is desirable where it is possible.

Therefore, the Government intends to pursue sensible management of the finances of this country, using the parameters set by my predecessor in office, as the line in the sand. We do not have any intention right now of crossing that line, so let me first of all spend some time reviewing the financial management of the previous Government.

The fiscal programme for 2007-2008, approved by Parliament on March 23, 2007, showed current revenue of \$2 380.8 million and total expenditure of \$2 905.9 million, consisting of recurrent expenditure of \$2 278 million, debt repayment of \$354.6 million and capital expenditure of \$273.2 million. The projected Net Fiscal out-turn at that time, was a planned funding deficit of \$525.2 million. Sir, that deficit was expected to be financed by domestic financing of \$363.4 million and foreign financing of \$161.8 million.

Sir, on the basis used by the international financial institutions, the deficit was projected to be \$170.6 million or 2.2 per cent of nominal GDP, which was estimated then at about \$7.6 billion. The Revised Estimate of Revenue for 2007/2008 is now \$2 469.7 million and the Revised Estimates of total expenditure are \$3 205.5 million, of which recurrent expenditure is now revised to \$2 472.8 million, amortisation of debt revised to \$405.4 million and capital expenditure to \$327.2 million.

The funding deficit has been revised at this time to \$735.7 million and it is expected to be funded \$684.5 million from local sources, and \$13.5 million from foreign currency project loans. Therefore, the revised deficit of \$250.7 million, on the basis used by the international financial institutions, represents 3.4 per cent of GDP at market prices.

Sir, the Government is expected to collect revised current revenue of \$2 469.7 million and this is \$87 million or 3.7 per cent more than approved for the year, mainly due to the following factors.

Taxes on incomes and profits are expected to be higher than originally projected and that will increase by \$18.2 million.

Taxes on goods and services are also expected to be higher than originally projected and should come in at about 48.1 million.

Taxes on international trade likewise, are now projected to be \$34.4 million.

Non-tax revenue is expected to be higher than originally projected by \$41.7 million, due mainly to interest income of \$27.4 million, and the sale of seismic data \$6.5 million.

Taxes on property are expected to be lower than projected by \$43 million, and this is mainly due to the decrease in the Property Transfer Tax rate.

Therefore, the amount of \$2 469.7 million, which is to be collected during 2007-2008 is also \$246.3 million or 11.1 per cent more than the actual amount collected for 2006-2007.

House A5, Sequence 02, 10:20:14

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: This is mainly due to taxes on goods and services which are expected to increase by \$132.9 million, which is 14.1 per cent to \$1 072.2 million over the corresponding period last year mainly because there were larger than usual VAT refunds last year.

Taxes on income and profits are expected to increase by \$73.3 million, which is 9.1 per cent over the corresponding period last year, mainly because of increased profits of international business corporations.

Non-tax revenues are expected to increase by \$39.7 million, 60.3 per cent, over the corresponding period last year mainly because of the sale of seismic data, which of course is new to Barbados.

Taxes on property are projected to decrease by \$44.2 million, or 29.2 per cent, to \$107 million as a result of the decrease in the property transfer tax.

A 31-day amnesty which ends on March 31, 2008, was recently announced by the Government through the Land Tax Department. This amnesty allows taxpayers in arrears to pay the principal plus 50 per cent of the outstanding interest. The remaining interest and penalties are waived as long as the full outstanding principal is paid. It is expected that this amnesty should result in an increased collection of revenue. However, this has not been factored into the revised revenue projections and one never knows, because amnesties have been given in Barbados before on several occasions, and they have had varying rates of success and in some cases, no success at all.

Taxes on international trade should realise \$225.2 million which is an increase of \$51.4 million or 29.6 per cent over the corresponding period last year as a result of some increase in economic activity.

Sir, it is estimated that revised current expenditure inclusive of amortisation, will be \$2. 956.9 million. There will be an increase of wages and salaries by about \$93.4 million due primarily to the payment of increased salaries and arrears of salaries and wages.

Expenditure on goods and services is also anticipated to increase by \$82.2 million or 31.4 per cent from 2006-2007. That figure is put at \$343.7 million. Sir, this results mainly from the reclassification of some items that were previously classified as capital as well as Supplementaries provided for the following sub-programmes during the financial year.

Sir, \$1.6 million is for the purchase of supplies and materials and the payment of consultants for the Automated Tax and Systems Project. There was a supplementary for \$1.9 million for the payment of consultancy services for the design stage of civil works under the EduTech Programme.

Sir, there is \$2 million for maintenance of property under the Primary Education Domestic Programme. It should be noted, Sir, that a savings in the same amount would occur under capital expenditure as this Supplementary was necessary since the maintenance was

originally voted under capital. This is an example of the reclassification we are talking about.

Sir, \$8.1 million is to assist the Ministry of Public Works in preparing the roads for the project undertaken by Rayside Construction to continue the Ministrys road maintenance resealing and overlay programme and to pay consultants for the geological study and the hazard assessment of Arch Cot Terrace and the wider Brittons Hill area.

That special road re-paving programme started in 2007 before the Election. It was not brought to book above the line and must now be included in Governments expenditure for 2007-2008 and the liability to the provider shown on the Governments books.

There is \$1.6 million for the Prisons to cover utilities, supplies and materials and new equipment.

There is \$17.4 million for the Ministry of Health to cover the cost arising from High Court suits in respect of the St. Joseph Hospital Inquiry for which no report was issued by the previous . Additional funds for the Substance Abuse Foundation at Verdun House, utilities and supplies, contractual services for the elderly and private nursing homes, reimbursement of the Barbados Water Authority for connections on the South Coast Sewerage Project and to cover the cost of clients in the Medical Aids Scheme as well as the Drug Service Special Benefits Scheme. It may be of interest, Sir, to note that in the year 2006-2007, a supplementary of \$8.4 million was also provided to the Barbados Drug Service. There was also \$2.5 million for the Ministry of Energy and the Environment to pay consultants regarding the offshore petroleum licensing round and the pipeline project, and to pay contractors for the remediation of the Mobile Refinery site which costs about \$1.8 million to that point.

Sir, there is \$1.4 million for the School Meals Department to supplement the cost of produce and other food items as well as the cost of undertaking repairs. There is \$1.3 million for the Ministry of Housing and Lands to cover the increase of insurance for Government properties.

There is \$3.4 million for the Electoral and Boundaries Commission to meet the cost incurred as a result of General Elections for which no provision had been made.

There is a cost of \$400 000 together to cover the purchase of land and the concert for Rihanna. There is an equity of \$8 799 720 to the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation which was inadvertently apparently omitted from a loan of \$20 609 720 provided by the Government to the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation.

The payment of \$317 653 in gratuities to 12 Constituency Assistants and former members of staff of the former Leader of the Opposition. There is \$148 000 in fees to an attorney-at-Law in New York to provide services to the Barbados Mission in New York since the attorney had not been paid since August 2001, over six years.

There is \$3.795 million to cover the cost of allowances for the Police for special operations during the Cricket World Cup, and the Harrisons Point Prison, which should have been foreseen and provided for.

There is \$469 017 to meet additional cost of the Commission of Inquiry on the Glendairy Prison Fire and a Project Management of Construction to the temporary Prison at Harrisons Point.

There is \$802 490 for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Medical Aids Scheme and \$2.97 million for acquisition of land for the West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant.

Current transfers are expected to increase by \$165.1 million, or by 20.1 per cent, over 2006-2007, to \$986.4 million. It should be noted that the following Supplementaries were provided during the year for that.

There is \$10.2 million for pensions to cover the cost of living allowance and Sir, \$2.1 million for the recapitalisation of Fund Access. Sir, \$1.6 million is provided to the Urban Development Commission to meet the cost of salaries of additional staff as well as additional storage space for the Commission.

There is \$1.3 million for Legacy Barbados Inc. to fund its programme for the year. Sir, \$24 million for various statutory corporations to cover salary increases and arrears of salaries. Sir, there is \$8.1 million is to assist with the operations of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

House A5 Sequence 3

10.30 a.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, it should be noted that during the Financial Year, 2006/2007, a Supplementary of \$20 million was provided to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to enable payment of suppliers and to meet operation expenses.

- \$800 000 for Sanitation Services Authority

- \$26.5 million to the Barbados Defence Force, to meet the cost of contributions to the Regional Security Systems (RSS), as well as payment in lieu of vacation

leave for three officers and to cover pensions. The sum for the pension that we had to find was \$24.5 million

- \$2 million is to cover the payment of gratuities to two retired officers of the National Cultural Foundation, the upgrade of electrical wiring, the settlement of outstanding amounts in respect of NIFCA and Crop Over, 2006, as well as operating expenses for the period October 2007 - March 2008

- \$500 000 to meet the cost associated with preparatory work on planning and executing Crop Over, 2008

- \$3.1 million is in respect to welfare grants to persons with severe

disabilities. These grants were increased from \$63 per week to \$96 per week, as was announced in the last Financial Statement

- \$400 000 is for the Barbados Community College, to meet the cost of providing additional security coverage and undertaking unforeseen repairs

- \$11.4 million is for the Urban Rehabilitation Programme to execute projects specifically commissioned by the Ministry of Finance

- \$33 million is to bring to account a loan which was borrowed by the Government to clear the overdraft facility of the National Housing Corporation

- \$5 million is in unanticipated expenditure associated with the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited

- \$3.7 million is to meet the operating expenses of the Barbados Water Authority

- \$2.9 million is to reimburse the Treasury for payments made as a loan on behalf of the Barbados Agricultural Management Corporation

- \$800 000 is for the Management Commission of Parliament to meet cost

associated with General Elections

- \$600 000 is to cover the subsidy in respect of the price of flour

- \$27.8 million is for the Transport Board to meet operational cost for the remainder of the Financial Year and to liquidate the overdraft facility and honour outstanding debts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it should be noted that a Supplementary of \$33.2 million was provided to the Transport Board during the Financial Year, 2006/2007, to meet operating expenses to the end of the Financial Year as well.

- \$41.5 million is for the University of the West Indies to cover economic cost of \$33.1 million and tuition cost of \$8.4 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it should also be noted, because I am going to give a picture that is accurate, I am not going to pretend that we have had to meet obligations that other Governments have not had to meet, but where we think those obligations have been imprudently and wrongly not brought to account at an earlier time, which have been left in the laps of this Government to cover, then I will point out that is the case.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is necessary because as I have already said, it would be political, economic and governmental folly for this Administration to come to office and find matters which should have been brought to the attention of the public, which might hamper the execution of our programme, and not do so

- \$1.6 million is for the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic to cover increases in property and motor insurance premiums, and the unforeseen cost of equipment repairs.

Sir, total debt payments for 2007/2008 are expected to be \$104.8 million more, or 14 per cent more than the previous year. Interest costs are projected to be \$365.7 million or \$37.8 million more in 2006/2007. Sir, that is mainly due to new debts rose during the year and the repayment of approximately \$27 million for the new Prison.

Capital Expenditure is expected to increase by \$8.5 million or 3.3 per cent, to \$248.5 million in 2007/2008. This amount, however, is \$24.9 million less than the amount approved for the year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to deal a bit with that Capital Expenditure. Sir, capital assets are expected to decrease by \$45.2 million or 25.9 per cent, to \$129.3 million in 2007/2008. This amount is anticipated to be \$51.1 million below the amount approved for the year, notwithstanding the fact that Supplementaries of \$16.8 million for EduTech, \$2.7 million for the purchase of vehicles for the Royal Barbados Police Force, and \$8.8 million to convert a loan to the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation to equity, were all approved.

Capital transfers are expected to increase by \$31.6 million, or 40.9 per cent to \$108 million, mainly as a result

of a Supplementary in the amount of - and I want to go through this. Sir, I do not want to anticipate this Honourable House, but I am going to point out what we are obviously going to have to meet in relation to additional expenditure in this particular fiscal year.

- \$17.9 million is to bring to account the funds which were advanced to the Caves of Barbados from the Public Enterprise Investment Fund, and to liquidate the overdrafts

- \$2.8 million is to meet the capital cost of the Barbados Water Authority

- \$5 million for the Catastrophe Fund

- \$5.6 million for the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the total expenditure is, therefore, projected to be \$3 205.4 million. From the point of view of cash flow of Government, the deficit to be financed was \$737.2 million.

It is expected that revised financing of \$699.5 million or 94.9 per cent of the \$737.2 million fiscal deficit will have to be financed by domestic sources. The balance of \$37.7 million is expected to be financed from foreign inflows in respect of externally-funded projects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think all of us in here know that from Financial Year 2007/2008, the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure were prepared on an accrual basis, comprising both cash and non-cash transactions. Previously, the Government prepared Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure on the cash basis, which measured monies paid out and revenue received. Therefore, under the accrual basis of accounting, revenues are recorded when earned or when they become due, while expenditure is recorded when incurred. Therefore, under this accrual system of accounting, the Government reports its fiscal operations in terms of an operating statement.

The operating statement is similar to a Profit and Loss Statement and is calculated showing revenue, minus expenses. It should be noted that expenses are the cost of carrying on business, and do not include capital outlays.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had, therefore, to bear a pretty heavy burden in terms of cleaning up, as much as we can, Governments finances.

10.40 a.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: There are things that we uncover every day. Sir, in the fullness of time, and there will be another occasion like this, I believe it will be

necessary to bring the public's attention to that matter. I believe that 100 days is always a good time to measure progress and to indicate quite clearly what the status of the Government's agenda is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I have just said in this debate is not the whole picture. There is much more in relation to the Urban Development Commission for which we are undertaking a forensic audit of its operations. Sir, there is a distinction between an audit by the Auditor General and an audit by the Public Accounts Committee or an examination by the Public Accounts Committee and an audit by an audit firm done in the normal course of business and a forensic audit.

As we know, Sir, a forensic audit is done to uncover criminality. That is what it is done for, so if a previous audit tells you that houses that were supposed to be built cannot be found, that, Sir, in our books, would have to equate to a crime if Government paid for them. If contractors to whom money was paid cannot be found, that, Sir, would have to amount to a crime.

I am emboldened very much by the Honourable Member for St. Peter in passing the amendments. The Financial Rules said that the Law was changed so that Ministers would be personally liable. Sir, I hope there will accept the liability because, as I have said, Sir, I am amazed ...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, we asked for a forensic audit. The former Chairman of the Urban Development Commission called in on the Call-in programme very upset, people told me he was crying at what I had said, but if I said anything that would have produced tears, I apologise because that was not my intention. My intention was to ensure accountability and transparency.

Sir, I thought this great gentleman, who happens to be my constituent, had really taken a hand in the affairs of the Urban Development Commission to clean it up but, Sir, you know what I discovered, maybe the Minister does not know this. Sir, of 20 meetings of the Board, he only went to six meetings.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Check the facts; he went to six meetings out of 20 meetings of the Urban Development Commission Board.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The public judges me. I did not come in here on the basis of any fiat by you or anybody else. I came in here based on the 4 300 votes I got in St. John, a record in Barbadian political history. I did not ask you for anything, so do not ask me. I am talking about people being put in charge of the Commission. Their names were supposed to be synonymous with integrity. It was supposed to sanitise the Commission by putting him there so once you associated the knight of Society Plantation, St. John, I as the parliamentary representative, even stood back and said there would be a clean-up only to discover that things went downhill and that he attended six meetings out of 20 Board Meetings of the Urban Development Commission.

Sir, he is on the radio quarrelling and pontificating and saying that his name has been besmirched. Sir, I did not know he was a contractor. I did not know there were any benefits that flowed to him. We were dealing with what we found in the Urban Development Commission and the Minister went and carried out his analysis and advised Cabinet that a forensic audit should be undertaken, and we are contracting a reputable accounting firm in Barbados to have that forensic audit undertaken.

Sir, those other audits do not uncover everything. The Auditor General does not have the power or the resources for a forensic audit.

Sir, that requires certain skills and expertise. In other words, Sir, there are things that you can examine in a forensic audit that you cannot examine in a normal audit. We have to have an audit now because the Enterprise Growth Fund is \$200 million poorer because of ill-advised decisions made by the Honourable Member for St. Peter as a previous member of this House, Sir, \$200 million thrown down the drain by the Enterprise Growth Fund, despite our warnings, despite our recommendations and despite a simple request for an investigation.

Sir, you know we now have to have it and the shareholder, the Enterprise Growth Fund, has to call for an investigation into an enterprise in which it has put money. It could not have called for it under the Honourable Member for St. Peter because he said he wanted nothing to do with it. The shareholder now has to have a forensic audit because the partner has walked away from the Enterprise. He has walked away with equipment financed by the taxpayers of this country, through the Enterprise Growth Fund. He has left a shell and, Sir, it is amazing that we have come to such a sorry past because this Government then had to look for \$5 million to put into the Enterprise Growth Fund.

I felt strongly about it. I objected to it, but I am not going to do anything that would jeopardise the jobs of Barbadians. I am not going to do anything that would

compromise the integrity of financial institutions in this country. Sir, at the end of the day, the Enterprise Growth Fund is a financial institution and people have to have confidence and faith in it because it is owned by Government in its operations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of people have fled the scene. I may have to go back to Trinidad to speak to my counterpart as Minister of Finance there, to uncover exactly how the Enterprise Growth Fund could have continued to invest in an enterprise like Hardwood Housing Factory Inc. Sir, we are going to get to the bottom because there will be a forensic audit. Sir, it has nothing to do with me. I have my views. I have given them and I cannot prejudge the outcome of an audit.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It is not sub judice. I can comment on it and if I see corruption whether you do an audit or not, I am entitled to speak about it.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You want me to shout because you shut down this House of Assembly, much to your own discredit in December 2007? I am not going to allow this Parliament to degenerate to that level. Sir, the forensic audit will be done and if it uncovers any criminality....

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I can only say if. Do you want me to say that it will uncover criminality? If the documents I have are given to the Forensic Auditor, it will uncover criminality. I am guaranteeing you that it will uncover criminality, so do not tell me "if." I used the word if charitably but I want to say this. If the documents in my possession, which were also in your possession and which you should have had the decency as the Minister of Finance in this country to make available to the Director of Public Prosecutions and to restore integrity and honour to your Government, which has fallen so rapidly and so fast and with such alacrity, you would not be telling me about "if."

H/A5/10:50

Sequence 5

Monday, March 17, 2008

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is stating directly that there were documents in my possession that I should have made available to the Director of Public Prosecutions. He is, in

fact, saying that there were documents in my possession that not only spoke directly, but established criminality.

Sir, if the Honourable Member has those documents, he must produce them now, or withdraw the remarks. It is one thing to carry out a forensic audit, and I believe that the Honourable Member is fully justified in carrying out a forensic audit, to discover criminality if it exists. Sir, he has gone beyond that to say that I had them in my possession. That had already established the criminality that I had the duty to refer them to the Director of Public Prosecutions. If you want to go to the forensic audit - It is a crime.

Sir, if he has them, I am asking for the documents to be presented, I really am. It is now not enough to state that it might lead to evidence of criminality. He is saying that I knew it was criminality, and that I suppressed the Director of Public Prosecutions from being in a position to carry out the Law.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: When you give me the FBI report, I will make those documents available too.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. Sir, on another point of order. Sir, you first have to rule. Sir, I am on a point of order. The Honourable Member must understand that he is not in a position to disrespect the Honourable House as he wishes. I have asked you to rule first of all. Sir, also the Honourable Member does not have to ask me to produce any FBI Report.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I have never said that I have a FBI report.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John is moving from point to point. He said that I had it, and now he said that Roy Morris said I had it. It is a fact that a newspaper report said that a draft FBI report was submitted. I said that if a FBI Report was submitted, I would make it available, if possible.

Sir, I am going on the record as saying that the notion of Barbados having a FBI report and keeping it secret is nonsense. Sir, the notion of a FBI report submitted by the FBI, kept secret by Barbados, but also kept secret by the FBI, is nonsense.

Sir, I want you to rule first on the first point, and on the second point. If Roy Morris said that there was a FBI report, that is Roy Morris business. I said that if one was available, I would make it available. The Honourable Member is now in a position to tell the country if, in fact, there was a FBI Report, and if, in fact, there was one, bring it to the House. He cannot just go on what Roy Morris said.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I said that if there was one available, I would make it available to the public.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I do not wish to write any tragedies. I am not a poet. I have laid every single document in this Honourable House. I have already laid the documents.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. John accused me of being an accessory to a crime. I am asking you to rule.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John indicated, to my understanding, that those documents were laid. Order, please.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I am going to reiterate that I laid 20-something documents in here in a debate on a no-confidence motion, all of which were made available to the Honourable Member for St. Peter, and he should have seen them.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of privilege.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: There is no such thing as a point of privilege.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I claim the privilege attended to me as Honourable Member of this House. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I rise on a point of order, I am entitled to make a point of order. You are entitled to rule it out of order, but I cannot believe that after 20 years in the Honourable House, the Honourable Member for St. John will now so blatantly disregard the Standing Orders of this House. It is improper. Then this is the kind of example that he believes in, walking off a football field when you dislike the ruling of the referee, and we will expect more of this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am rising on a point of order, because the Honourable Member never stated on the Floor of this House, on his feet, that documents were laid in this House. It is therefore improper to refer to an aside, and it is in breach of the Standing Orders to refer to an aside which

an Honourable Member made, to constitute the basis for a ruling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that you are new, but I believe that the Clerk or the Acting Clerk has a duty to advise you that you cannot use an aside, which is not recorded in Hansard, as a basis for a ruling in this Honourable Chamber.

I therefore give you the opportunity, because I believe that your recency to the Chair, and your lack of knowledge of the proceedings of this House, may have resulted in that but, in fairness to the dignity of this Chamber, I believe it ought to be corrected. Sir, the Honourable Member can make it or say it on his feet now, but what cannot happen is to set a precedent that you make a ruling on an aside in this Chamber.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know...

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I have not said anything.

Aside

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, you have to rule. Sir, that is part of your duty.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the Chair rules that the Honourable Member for St. John rose in his capacity and not in an aside to indicate that the documents have already been laid.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of privilege.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, there is no such thing as a point of privilege. If I do not give way, there is no such thing as a point of privilege. On what Standing Order are you on? There is no such thing as point of privilege.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of privilege. As much as you want to be the Speaker, you are not the Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking for a copy of Hansard to be produced to us as soon as possible to facilitate the continuation of this debate.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The debate will continue.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of privilege. I, as a Member of this Honourable House am entitled to call for a copy of the Hansard, in relation to a matter...

11.00 a.m.

Sequence 6

Estimates - Monday, March 17, 2008

House A5, Sequence 07, 11.00 a.m.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The debate will continue.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of privilege. I, as a member of this Honourable House, am entitled to call for a copy of the Hansard, in relation to a matter in which there is a dispute. If you do not know that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am suggesting that you take advice again. I hope that the Deputy Clerk does not give you the same advice that he gave you just now because, clearly, his ears do not equate to ours.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have been attacked. The Clerk has been attacked. She has not attacked the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter yet, but she is going to get there. I know that and I know why, too, so I am not finished. They will get up and down all day.

I will wait on that ruling.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East will be provided with a copy of the Hansard, but the debate will continue.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you. I was on urban.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, allow me again to rise on a point of order. I want to state categorically on the Floor of this Parliament that an investigation was being carried out by the FBI.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you must forgive the Honourable Member for St. Michael South because there is a Law suit against him, in respect of this same matter. I can understand why he is pollinating, but I want to state it for the record of the House. It is not what was said in the newspaper, or what was said by Mr. Roy Morris.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: An investigation only was carried out by the FBI into the affairs of two public officers. There was no report submitted, although there was an investigation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no report to lay because there was never a report.

Sir, if anybody would believe that the FBI would hold a report secret as a favour to the Government of Barbados, I say to you that the person is overtaken by a form of midsummers madness. If there was a FBI report and the Government did not make it public, the FBI certainly would, and this should tell Members that there was no FBI Report. I confirm that there was a FBI investigation into two public officers, but it did not lead to a FBI report.

Therefore, to the extent that it has been said, that I refuse to make a FBI report public, I am asking for that to be struck from the record. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the extent that the Attorney-General is now in a position, not only to speculate, but to produce the report, if one exists, then bring the report.

Asides.

(Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member from St. John were ordered to be expunged from the record by the DEPUTY SPEAKER.)

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can we continue in the decent manner with this debate, please?

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was dealing with the Urban Development Commission and I did not complete the point I was making, so I am going to move from the Enterprise Growth Fund and Hardwood back to the Urban Development Commission.

I accused the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter for allowing his Government to descend into what I would consider to be a morass, and I am going to quote from the Auditor General's Report now, Sir, since he wants me to quote from documents that are available and not documents that are locked away and hidden. This is the Special Audit of the Urban Development Commission.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I do not have to say the year. There was only one. Do you mean there is more than one? We are going to have a forensic audit now for the period of which you were the Minister.

Listen to it, Sir, page 8.

The Commission conceded that it erred in allowing persons to remain on its register of contractors including those persons whose only claim to being a contractor was that they were unemployed, unemployable, homeless, vagrants of Bridgetown, criminal deportees and those who frequented the Parliament yard.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It was public, but nobody read it out. Sir, all that I said this morning is in the Estimates too, but I am not going to allow this Government to get away with feeling that I am not going to put it in the record. It is going to go in the record.

Sir, I want to repeat it.

The Commission conceded that it erred in allowing persons to remain on its register of contractors, including those persons whose only claim to being a contractor was that they were unemployed, unemployable, homeless, vagrants of Bridgetown, criminal deportees and those who frequented the Parliament yard.

Sir, if I were a Minister of Finance, I would have had to forward this Report to the Director of Public Prosecutions, because I would have to know how criminal deportees, vagrants, homeless, unemployable, and persons who merely frequented the Parliament yard, could qualify in that regard.

I am saying to this House, Sir, that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter submitted less than that to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). Go into the records of Parliament between 1994 and 2008, in every single Budget debate, Sir, and see the kind of nonsense that he submitted to the DPP. Sir, I will give you some examples.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when in this Chamber, somebody brought information here, including copies of criminal charges brought against the Chief Executive Officer of a government-owned Corporation, which the Government then put more money in, after the charges were brought. I am of the view that in those circumstances, together with the other evidence that was brought to this Chamber, that it should have been submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I really hate to interrupt the Honourable Member, but as the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister of Barbados, I could not refer matters to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

House A5, Sequence 07, 11:10:14

Monday, March 17, 2008

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: I never have. I refer matters to the Attorney-General of Barbados who would make a judgement as to whether the matter is worthy of being referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions. I have scrupulously in all my time as the Minister of Finance refer matters to the Attorney-General of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can refer matters and I have referred matters to the Attorney-General of Barbados. I make the point because the Director of Public Prosecutions is a position protected in the Constitution of Barbados. The Director of Public Prosecutions is isolated from political interference by the fact that he is appointed by the Governor-General of Barbados.

Sir, I am not a Lawyer. The Honourable Member for St. John is a Lawyer, so to be saying in the House now that I would have directed matters to the Director of Public Prosecutions is first not true.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not finished yet. I am asking for it to be withdrawn, because I have never referred a matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: You said in here that I have referred some. You have said that.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I sat in this Chamber in the year 2004 in a reply to a reply delivered by the then Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, and the Honourable Member for St. Peter produced a document which he said established that his former Minister of Finance bribed electors in St. Michael North West, and he said "and I am referring it to the Director of Public Prosecutions." Now we are hearing foolishness about he never referred anything to the Director of Public Prosecutions, but that is not the only letter.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. I said that the matter ought to be referred.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the matter to which the Honourable Member refers is a matter in which the former leader of the Democratic Labour Party was alleged in a letter to have purchased votes as the Leader of the Opposition. He was a person acting at the time, not as a Minister of Finance under me.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Peter, what is the relevance to the point of order?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the Honourable Member is misleading the House. I never referred a matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions. I said that it is the kind of matter that ought to be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions. I have never referred a matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions and that now cannot be allowed to enter the record of this Parliament.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I am going to give you the second example. In 1995, there was a No-confidence debate in this Chamber against the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. The Honourable Member for St. Peter said that there was a letter that I referred to in that debate which could not be found on the file and that he was referring the matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions for investigation, not the Attorney-General. Do you want a third example?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, that is why I tell you that something seems to be wrong with the Honourable Member for St. Peter. He does not remember what he said.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am not done. I have unlimited time, not you. You had it and you squandered it in the past. I am going to use my unlimited time wisely in the interest of the people of this country.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: We have not got too far, Sir, with all the interruptions, but that is part of it. We are dealing with the Urban Development Commission. I dealt with the Enterprise Growth Fund and Hardwood Housing Factory Inc. I have said, and I am going to say it again, that there is information available that was brought to the attention of the Honourable Member for St. Peter who refused to act on it. As a result of that, this Government has had to look for \$2 million of taxpayers' money to put into the Enterprise Growth Fund because of a deficiency

occasioned by that \$2 million being given to Hardwood Housing Factory Inc., and not a house to show for it.

Sir, at the end of the day, it is all up to this Government to identify those areas of land. The Minister of Housing has had to identify areas of land which would now be used for our 500-lot programme, including areas which the Honourable Member for St. Peter and the then Honourable Member for St. Michael North West had earmarked for projects with the so-called Hardwood Housing Factory Inc.

Sir, on that hangs an even more important tale. The Minister had some cleaning up to do in National Housing Corporation. The Honourable Member for St. Peter has a very convenient and selective memory. Sir, there was a deal in relation to land opposite Kent. I am not going to deal with it today because since the Honourable Member for St. Peter is forgetful, I will produce the documents when I deal with it.

The National Housing Corporation also entered into some very strange arrangements that perplexed me. The Honourable Member for St. Peter said that as Prime Minister I should not refer things to the Director of Public Prosecutions because he is an independent officer, so the things in my possession I am to refer to you now, Mr. Attorney-General.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be in dereliction of my duties if the public of Barbados felt that because the Election campaign is over, that things that I said during the Election campaign I do not take seriously. The Honourable Member for St. Peter would have a lot of accounting to do. I do not have anything to account for. Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am going to take the Honourable Members advice. I used to send certain information to the Director of Public Prosecutions directly, but I am now going to route it through the Attorney-General. All the documents at Haggatt Hall, et cetera, I will now route through the Honourable Attorney-General so that he could have the Director of Public Prosecutions investigate them.

Sir, I think it is a sad day in the development of Barbados as a country that we could have seen the standards in Government declined to such a low point in our political development. You would have to remember, Sir, the week before this Government ended its term, it defended on the Floor of this House acts which no other Parliament would have defended, things which any other Prime Minister in my view would have taken seriously and acted on.

All the Honourable Member for St. Peter did was to say: "Send that to the Public Accounts Committee." I cannot send it there now because he is the latest Member, so it would have to be done by Forensic Audit where

independent individuals can investigate the infelicities of the previous Government.

Sir, the latest Auditor Generals Report is an example of that. That project at Newton, I did not even know about that.

House A5 Sequence 8

11.20 a.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I picked up the Auditor Generals Report, like any other citizen in this country, only to discover what had gone on up at the Newton Business Park. I wondered why it had not been opened. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was the business Minister in Barbados, and that was under her portfolio, but the Honourable Member could not get it opened.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member is now into accountability, but the Auditor General had to tell Barbadians about that \$18 million loan. The Minister never told us.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member wants to mislead this Honourable House, but the Honourable Member must not do so, especially on matters which he has already confessed he knows nothing about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only was there accountability on the Newton Business Project but, as Minister, I requested the engagement of a firm of legal and construction consultants towards the end of 2006. Sir, one result was also to get an independent engineering assessment of the building.

Further to that, I directed the Barbados Investment Development Corporation to issue a press release, and to issue statements in relation to what was happening with the Newton Business Project. Sir, that was done and made available to the public. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in fact, Honourable Members on That Side knew about it because others have spoken to me about it. When it came out at the time, they were asking me what was the situation on it.

Sir, the report from the engineers revealed that there were deficiencies in the construction, and I took the matter to the Cabinet and the Planning and Priorities Committee, and we agreed that we terminate the contract with the

contractor and put it back out to tender in the soonest of time, such that there was no further loss to the Government of Barbados.

Sir, that is the basis of accountability and, unlike the Honourable Member for St. John, who has not yet answered my questions posed to him, I have answered his question straightaway. The Honourable Member for St. John is still to answer my question about the private jet or about the terms of reference for his principal political advisor.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if all of that were true, or if any of it were true, the Auditor General would not have to write a whole report on it. Sir, according to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, that is a perfectly legitimate explanation, but the Auditor General does not accept that explanation.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be patient because next year I will be reading the Auditor General's Report to the Honourable Member, and he would be giving me the same answers then, if I try to be mischievous in how I put it forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the truth is that the Auditor General does not interface with Ministers nor, indeed, with the Barbados Investment Development Corporation, but the Auditor General Department could have found out. Sir, much of this took place in the last year, and the reality is that what the Auditor General has commented on...

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the day I am going to die. Sir, I got this requested before I left the Ministry and therefore it is down to the month of December. Sir, the Newton Business Park was originally a contract for \$18.563 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the contract price was \$19.295 million, so the Auditor General's Report needs to reflect, first and foremost, the contract price, and the revised price was, in fact, \$21.3 million.

Sir, we took a decision that the deficiency of the work of the contractor was such to engage both legal services and independent engineering services that allowed us to terminate that contract. Sir, if the Honourable Member for St. John would go to the site now, the Honourable Member for St. James Central could tell him that he has been briefed that there is a new contractor on site doing the corrective work unless, of course, the Honourable Member for St. James Central has not brought it to the attention of his Leader.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would want Honourable Members when rising on a point of order to state that point of order and to be specific.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if Honourable Members on That Side believe that by interrupting me they would, in anyway, reduce my tenacity and then they are wrong. Sir, I stood up in here for five hours with a broken foot and replied to a Budget and if I have to speak in here for 10 hours today, I will do so. Sir, the Honourable Members on That Side could feel free to interrupt me as much as they want. I am going to say what I came and found.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1994, the Honourable Member for St. Peter came to Parliament in this country...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am going to say what I came and found. The problem is that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North exited the Cabinet five years before and, therefore, would not be tainted by this, but it does not mean that we cannot go back further.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I have already said, we were accused of doing all kinds of things in the dying days of a Democratic Labour Government.

Sir, I represent the people of St. John. An Election was held in Barbados on January 15, 2008. Would you believe that on January 10, 2008 - five days before that Election - instead of the then Minister of Housing looking for ways to help poor people in this country to get land, instead of looking for ways to defend the infelicities - if they could be defended - that led to the situation in relation to Hardwood, the Honourable Member went all the way down to this office... What did he go down there to do, under your watch as Prime Minister of this country? Let me tell you what he went to do in relation to St. John.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are lots at Bath, St. John that are owned by Government. Some of those lots are on the beach, including a lot previously assigned to the late Dame Nita Barrow. On January 10, 2008, the Minister allocated that lot to a Mr. Hallam Nicholls of Warrens Park, St. Michael.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I see the cellular number here too but I would not give it out. Did you know that?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You want to know everything now? Did you know that?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Why would you not get up and say you did not know anything about it. I will sit down.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not afraid of the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister will understand that on all matters I will speak the truth and play the ball straight.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that a point of order?

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Well, you invited me to speak. You gave way to me.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I do not have to show you anything. You do not need to see it. You could go to a gentleman whom you know very well, because he received a lot too.

Do you know a Mr. Ronald Robinson, Ajax Construction? He was awarded the lot previously occupied by Warrick Franklyn. His cellular number is here too. Sir, this letter is dated January 10, 2008. There were a further three lots given out, two of those lots to persons from St. George.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I do not need to call their names. I am calling somebody with whom you could verify that.

Asides.

11.30 a.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Do you want the cell number? You do not know his cell number? You mean you want to see this? It says:

January 10, please create rental accounts. There are several vacant lots owned by the Crown at Bath Beach, St. John.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I have no problem making it a document of the House. That is not a big issue.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I do not have to show you when I am reading from it. You are telling me to show you. Sir, I do not understand. I am the second serving Member in this Chamber and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is asking me to give her a document I am reading from. Sir, let me repeat:

To P.S. from Minister, lot at Bath Beach, St. John. There are several lots owned by the Crown at Bath Beach, St. John. These lots should be rented on the same terms and conditions as the others presently tenanted. Allocation is to be as follows:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know why this hurts? The Honourable Member for St. George North and I discussed the development of Bath Beach and he had a particular plan to which I agreed regarding those developments. The Government was to build a portico house on the same property given to Mr. Hallam Nicholls.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Oh, Mr. Nicholls was going to build it for Government?

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, if I can speak on this matter. I am saying categorically that I did not know about that, but more to the point, that like the Honourable Member for St. John just said, what I am aware of was a plan that the Government was to build a portico house on Bath Beach because the Government of Barbados does not have a portico house, and even if this Government was to proceed with that portico house, that is something that we would support.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I did not ask for any support for anything on This Side.

Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I am asking the Honourable Member to yield. I am not rising on a point of order. I am rising to put something in the record.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am not replying to the Opposition on nothing. I am going to put everything in the record.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I thank the Honourable Member for yielding. I am stating that, as a matter of fact, and entering it in the record as a matter of fact.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, time was, in the history of Barbados, that we practise collective responsibility. This is, as the Merry Men would sing in their song Brek fuh wanna self.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member, who is the Prime Minister of this country, ought not to mislead Honourable Members in this Chamber, or the wider public, on a matter as fundamental as the principles of collective responsibility. He was misleading the House because, unless a matter comes to the Cabinet as a matter for the decision of the Cabinet, it cannot bind all of the other members of the Cabinet in collective responsibility. The Honourable Member knows better but he is speaking and relying on the fact that the majority of Barbadians are not lawyers and, to the extent that he says it as a lawyer, people will believe that collective responsibility attaches to that decision. Sir, he knows well that it does not, and his Attorney-General can advise him.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I did Constitutional law at Cave Hill, in a country that has a written Constitution. I do not know where the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East did her Law but Sir, the concept of collective responsibility binds Ministers even in relation to matters that do not go before the Cabinet. Sir, the Cabinet is collectively responsible for the policy and implementation of the policies of the Government.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Do not get into any argument with them because they want an intellectual argument. Sir, I told you that I did my Law in a country that has a written Constitution with Dr. Frances Alexis, Professor Albert Fiadjo, leading constitutional experts in Barbados and they understand the nature of Cabinet collective responsibility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with this set of Honourable Members on the Other Side, the goal-post moves all the time. The allocation of the property is within the purview of the Minister of Housing. The Minister of Housing, on January 10, was a gentleman by the name of Reginald Farley. He had full Ministerial powers accorded to him by the Honourable Member for St. Peter. He had not been fired, he had not been transferred, he had his full Ministerial powers and, Sir, four days before an Election, without Cabinet approval, according to Honourable Members on the Other Side....

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, now we hear that he did not need Cabinet approval. He reversed Governments

policy in relation to a portico house and gave the lot to Mr. Hallam Nicholls.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: He allocated the lot to Mr. Hallam Nicholls, four days before the Election.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South wants to know who Hallam Nicholls is, but I think the whole of Barbados knows who he is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is truly sad. The Honourable Member for St. Peter says that he does not know Hallam Nicholls. They spent long summers and winters together, spring and autumn together, but he never knew he was getting a lot in Bath.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I have not said that I do not know Hallam Nicholls. I can never say so. I will never say so. The Honourable Member for St. John also knows Mr. Hallam Nicholls because he also attends the Honourable Member for St. Johns parties.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, unlike the Honourable Member for St. Peter, my house in St. Philip does not have a fence around it. Sir, my house is not fenced in. To this day, I am the Prime Minister of this country and I do not have a fence around my house. Sir, anybody can walk up to my front door. It has always been the day. I did not do like the Honourable Member for St. Peter and ask for additional land, fenced off land, contrary to the covenants in my conveyance. I do not require a fence.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I do not have any covenants that say I cannot fence off land. I have a covenant that says I cannot build upon it nor can I sell it. Sir, again he is misleading the house. Sir Hallam Nicholls attended his house, not because there is no fence, but because he was invited to attend his house. He was also invited to fraternise with him in St. Lucia and elsewhere on more than one occasion.

H/A5/11:40

Sequence 10

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Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, to pretend, now that he does not know Hallam Nicholls, that he only came to his

house because the house is not fenced, is to do an injustice to Hallam Nicholls and to this Parliament. Sir, Hallam Nicholls is a friend of his too, and he has gone to his house on more than one occasion, because he has been invited there for matters, that, perhaps, we can begin to talk about in the same way that Rodney Wilkinson would have been approached by the Member for matters we are going to talk about too.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Nobody is interested in that. Your days for those kinds of performances are over. Your days for those pretty performances are over.

Sir, let me say from this Chamber, I have one party a year at my house, and it is an open house. I do not issue an invitation. It is called Open House. Anybody in Barbados is entitled to come. I have never invited anybody to that party, Sir, if he has friends who want to make sure that they are covering all bases, and he has friends who are covering all bases. They get lots under him, all the contracts for importing equipment, and I can go through the list of things. Then the Government changes, because they went to my Christmas Party, they are supposed to come to me and say they are my friends too, according to him.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. Sir, again, I must enter this as a matter for the records. Sir, Mr. Hallam Nicholls has never, and this is a fact, received contracts from the Central Government of Barbados for the importation of things. An Ad appeared ...

Aside

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: That is true, but \$30 million of contracts for importation, not true.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, contracts under the Honourable Member for St. Peter. I never said Central Government. Sir, the words "Central Government" have not come out of my mouth in here. I know exactly how the benefits went, and I said so in Haggatt Hall. No legal action was taken against me. Nobody corrected the records, Sir.

I want to make it clear that the Honourable Member seems to be focussing on the individual. It is not really relevant that it is Mr. Hallam Nicholls. What is relevant is that a Minister of Housing, four days before a government was facing the electorate of this country, would leave his Constituency and go down to his office, not to allocate lots for people who live in St. John, the people who live on Bath Plantation who are squatters, and could not get their situation regularised under the previous Government; they are being treated as squatters. The Town and Country Planning Department went there and served enforcement notices on them to get them off the plantation land. Can

you imagine the Minister is down in his office giving away land belonging to Bath Plantation, four days before an Election?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. A citizens name is being called in this House, and the allocation of a lot to him is being treated as an unlawful or improper act. Let me finish please. Although the Minister had the rightful authority to so do.

Sir, before 1994, lots were also allocated, just on the eve of Election to Warwick Franklyn, Evelyn Greaves and others, and Warwick Franklyn never paid for his. The fact that it is allocated means that it is unlawful. That is why I am asking for these matters not to be proceeded with and that they should be withdrawn, because a man is being pilloried, merely because a lot was allocated to him. The same lots were allocated on the eve of the 1994 Election to Warwick Franklyn and others.

Sir, the point I am making is, in 1994, on the day before the Election, when the Honourable Member for St. John should have been out helping the Democratic Labour Party to win a government, he was out giving concessions to Bushy Park, including concessions for a casino licence.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Peter, can you have some respect for the Chair, please?

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was saying, the reason why this is so painful to me, I am not attributing anything to the Minister, except that he went down into his office and allocated lots. That is all I have said.

Sir, I am saying that the Town and Country Planning Department, under the Honourable Member for St. Peter, as Minister responsible for Town and Country Planning Department, issued enforcement notices on squatters living in Bath Plantation Tenantry, St. John, three or four months before the Election. Both the Barbados Labour Party candidate and myself tried to get the matter resolved through the Ministry of Housing, the Town and Country Planning Department, and the Barbados Water Authority, etcetera.

I could not believe that while that matter could not be resolved, because it was the Minister of Housing who should have intervened, however he could not intervene on behalf of those poor people who needed their status regularised, but he could find the time to go to his office to allocate beach front property. Sir, it is not a small property. It was previously occupied by Errol Barrow, previously occupied by J. B. Simpson, and previously occupied by Dame Nita Barrow, and, Sir, look what happened.

Sir, I am saying to you that I will have to have a problem with that. I really do not know. The Honourable Member for St. Peter has no problem with it, apparently. Some say they did not know about it, some say that they are not responsible for it, and some say that he is calling too many names. They have all kinds of complaints, but the fact is, that is the minutes from the file. We will make it a document of the House.

Sir, if the Honourable Member for St. Peter feels that it is sufficient for him to refer to the Director of Public Prosecutions, (DPP), now that he is no longer Prime Minister, he should refer that to the Director of Public Prosecutions to see if there were any infelicities. I said "if" like you. You did not like the word "if."

Sir, you want me to talk about the Estimates, but I warned you. You said that the honeymoon is over, not me. I warned you that we would come in here... I was going to wait for the 100 days, but you could not wait. So you have to prove to the people who did not vote for you on That Side that you have the gumption to fly up to a new and demonstrate that you have political powers.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said that she is going to make this Government accountable, but whenever you raise something, the Honourable Member knows nothing about it.

Sir, the National Cultural Foundation is another example.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I did not ask the Minister to give him the lot. How do you mean, my friend? I know you do not want the public to hear it. Why do you not get up and make that a matter for the record? I did not ask anybody to award a contract to him. I never asked anybody to give him a lot of land. I have never asked him to finance anything for me, neither my honeymoon, visits to St. Lucia or anything else. I met him there like anybody else who I met in St. Lucia, Sir.

Sir, let us go the National Cultural Foundation, another example of nonsense on stilts by the previous Government. Sir, you have a National Cultural Foundation that is the executing arm for Governments cultural activity. A week ago, in this Chamber, Honourable Members on That Side were saying that the National Cultural Foundation should have produced the Rihanna Show, but not Crop Over.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter established another committee which, on that course, would have cost the Government of Barbados an additional \$2 million to produce Crop Over, including salaries at the level of \$12

000. Sir, people were being pulled out of NCF, and new people were being employed by this committee to execute Crop-Over in Barbados.

11.50 a.m.

Sequence 11

Estimates - Monday, March 17, 2008

House A5, Sequence 12, 11.50 a.m.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Therefore, we would have paid \$2 million more, just for Crop Over, not for the development of cultural industries, not for the development of a new cultural policy in Barbados, just for producing Crop Over.

Sir, there would have been no commensurate reduction in the amount given to the NCF, so it was not in substitution for the expenses in the NCF. It was \$2 million in additional expenditure that this Government would have to look for, had we allowed that folly to continue. Sir, we had to stop it. We are not into witch hunts but I certainly could not have condoned that expenditure.

We had a situation with the Pan African Commission, which held a conference here in Barbados that was directed under the Prime Ministers office. The conference was to cost \$500 000. It cost nearly \$1.1 million. We now have to look for the additional \$600 000. I had to ask the Auditor Generals office to do an audit on the expenditure, in relation to that particular conference. Sir, I am going to make that audit available to this Chamber, in due course, because it speaks a lot, Sir, to the way decision-making was undertaken in the Prime Ministers office previously, and why that kind of decision-making led to the situation that this Government now has to clean up.

Sir, I spoke about the \$33 million and the National Housing Corporation. Sir, that institution almost ground to a standstill under the previous Government, so much so that they could not clean up the National Housing Corporation but they were cleaning up the Hardwood Housing Factory.

Sir, could you imagine that a company which had not yet built a house was being given money by a government entity, buying equipment, being facilitated by being given land, and the National Housing Corporation, which up to then, had an overdraft of \$33 million, could not undertake its mandate? Therefore, we are really talking about more than \$35 million.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I leave you to deal with that because I am not getting into that anymore. Ministers must have a say, because they must say what they came and found. Do not let the people of Barbados believe, because it is not so, that we came and found this rosy economy and all of these great practices.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member misled the House. I have now found the Debate to which the Hon. Member for St. John spoke, which indicated that in 1995. I unilaterally determined that a letter should have been referred by me to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I want to stand on what I said then and ask that his remarks be withdrawn from the record. I said that I believe that the matter is so serious that I am going to require of the Attorney-General that he should refer the matter that had been made a document of this House, to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, I referred the matter to the Attorney-General. Sir, I made a point of the fact that I knew that you had to refer the matter to the Attorney-General and on the occasion I said that a letter would have to be referred to the Attorney-General of Barbados and he contradicted it. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking that all of that now be withdrawn from the records.

I would urge all Members that any time the Hon. Member for St. John speaks, to go to the facts because he would take a document and even read what is not in it. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking that everything that was said on that unhappy matter, be withdrawn from the records. Sir, what I said then, is what I am saying now, that the matter would have to be referred through the Attorney-General.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter. The matter has been clarified. I will continue with the debate.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter needs to take a break and reflect, as previous Prime Ministers have done. He has rushed into battle like the Emperor with his new clothes. Therefore, I do not know what is wrong. Is the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter applying for a job of

which there are no vacancies? I want to know. There is no vacancy over there as far as I know. There is a leader and a deputy, so what is the Honourable Members problem today?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I do not know if Honourable Members in here understand what is happening to the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter. Sir, he needs to calm down.

Sir, I am going to get on because I know that is what you want me to do.

The Barbados Water Authority, the Hon. Member for St. Philip West has spoken about that, and the need for an investigation, so he knows why that is the case. Sir, that investigation will have to be undertaken.

The Barbados Investment and Development Corporation - all of their matters will be brought into the public's attention, in the fullness of time.

We found no effective plan to tackle the cost of living. We found no workable housing programme. As I said, in fact, scandal and more scandal at the Hardwood Housing Factory, Inc. There was no working programme for low income earners in Barbados.

We found a Town and Country Planning Office that was conveniently denuded in its status and resources to undertake its job. Sir, I am going to go through every one of those Town and Country Planning applications that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, as the Minister, approved against the advice of the Town Planner, so that the public is aware of the manner in which those decisions were made. It will be shameful when that information comes to light.

We found a Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the major public health institution in this country that was grinding to a halt, while millions of dollars were being spent in legal fees and expenses on the St. Joseph Hospital Commission of Inquiry.

We found a Barbados Investment and Development Corporation tripping-up over Invest Barbados Inc., a duplication of effort and some wasted resources.

We found an agricultural policy in Barbados that because of dangerous decisions by the Minister of Town and Country Planning in my view, is in a mess.

We found public buildings in which civil servants were required to work in deplorable conditions, such that the Government passed legislation and then could not

proclaim it, because Government would be the biggest offender in relation to that legislation.

We found a new Public Service Act that was put on the Statute Books in Barbados that has created more issues than it has resolved.

Sir, that is the legacy. As I said, there is a lot more.

We found a Police Force that was demoralized. We found a teaching service that was battling with issues of deteriorating school plants, rather than being to teach in a learning environment and senior public officers marginalized, creating low morale in the Public Service in this country.

House A5, Sequence 12, 12:00:09

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, we found people in the City clamouring for attention from somebody in Government. We found vendors being hounded down for trying to make a living in Barbados. We found Barbadians being hounded down daily. I do not even want to talk about the issue of public service licences by the Licensing Authority at the Ministry of Public Works because we cannot even discover exactly what the situation is in relation to the issuing of those licenses. It is crazy, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the Honourable Member for St. Peter does not realise that public officers who worked under previous Governments are still in the Public Service. The Minister has already called for a brief. He does not want to see the brief. He is calling for it, but he does not really want to see it. That is the problem with the Honourable Member for St. Peter. He was the Leader of Barbados and the Leader of a Government and everything that went on in Government he knows nothing about. He does not know about the allocation of housing and he does not know anything about anything that went on in his Government. He is asking us to request a brief and he was the person who appointed the Minister of Public Works in this country.

Sir, we found the largest public sector project in this country, the ABC Highway Stage 1 Road Widening. Sir, \$170 million was preceding without a written contract on what you call a rolling basis. Could you imagine that, Sir? Could you imagine road works being undertaken by construction companies off budget?

The Prime Minister just called them in and told them to start doing some work in St. Philip immediately, and then the Government has to bring to account that expenditure two years later. The company borrowed the money to do the work and then it comes on to

Governments Books two years later. We are not talking about a little small contract. We are talking about \$35 million in work being undertaken by private construction companies in Barbados off budget that we have to bring to account.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Government passed new Financial Rules, a new Financial Management and Audit Act, and then went back to MMinistries and found every way to legitimately get around the Act. Sir, while the public felt that there was going to be improved management, accountability and transparency by all of these new initiatives.

As I said with the Public Service Bill, I have never seen in my life a government trying so hard to get around the Constitution of Barbados without amending it. Likewise, I have never seen any Government anywhere in the world pass new legislation putting in place procedures and then finding every structure, legal and otherwise even in some cases legitimately, to get around the Financial Rules in this country.

We do not believe in witch-hunts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nor will I use the Floor of this House to malign persons who have no right of reply. If I did, I would only be following a good example set by the Honourable Member for St. Peter, but I am not going to follow that example.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I need to say something because it is not my fault that an individual who has run in almost every Election since 1987 for every party ever formed in Barbados, and one not even officially formed, cannot get elected to this Chamber. I wish he were here today so that what I have to say he could respond to because it is very important. Sir, no matter how much he try and how much I try to get him in this Chamber, the masses of this country rejected him.

Sir, he sat as part of a government, not on Government Benches, in silence when the previous Government created 17 positions of Personal Assistants to Ministers to give them political advice.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You do not remember the terms of reference? Maybe yours could not give you political advice because you had so many consultants, you did not need it from him.

Sir, the role of a personal assistant is to deal with the political agenda of the Minister. They appointed 17 of them and he said nothing. He sat in silence. He had a newspaper column, a party column and all kinds of public fora while this Government spent nearly \$10 million a year on

consultants. I only dealt with those in the Prime Ministers Office. I have not yet dealt with all the other Ministries. I have them on my desk now.

Sir, in the Prime Ministers Office alone \$500 000 was paid to former candidates of the Barbados Labour Party. Not only that, a Trinidadian campaign advisor to the Barbados Labour Party was given a contract to look at restructuring the Government Information Service. I am going to make that available to the public as well. Why was he silent when all of that happened?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, he was silent because he said publicly that he negotiated certain things from the previous Government at the taxpayers expense for his political support in the 1999 Election. To satisfy him, the Honourable Member for St. Peter set up the Pan African Commission. He employed his cronies. He financed those flights of fancy and paid them a handsome salary. He did not have any problem with that, but in today's newspaper he has a problem with a legitimate Barbadian getting a job in Barbados. They bought his political silence, but I do not intend to waste the taxpayers money buying his political silence. That was the Honourable Member for St. Peter's style, not mine.

Sir, he fell out with them as we all predicted he would, and I never said a word. All those years we were in here we never said a word about it. All of a sudden the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East wants information and I am going to provide that information in due course, as well as some additional information that would help the public of this country come to some sensible conclusions about the former Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in keeping with our Manifesto pledges, the fiscal framework for the 2008-2009 financial year had been formulated to obtain two important objectives. The first is pursuing our social agenda and the second is shoring up the economy. With respect to the social agenda, Government intends transforming and empowering the society and the economy to meet the needs of the people as a precondition for Barbados playing its part in the wider world.

The 2008 Manifesto highlights how the Government would endeavour to free this country of the scourges of unemployment, especially hidden unemployment and underemployment, poverty in the face of high constantly rising cost of living, ignorance in a literate world that is driven by information and communications technology, inadequate housing, when we all know the importance of decent housing to individuals and social development, poor health in an era of pandemics and lifestyle diseases, fear to walk the streets of Barbados and to enjoy the fruits of ones

labour in the safety of ones home, isolation due to some form of deprivation and even ageism, crime as a way of life, violence in our schools and communities and environmental degradation in pursuit of quick profits. We see those as the challenges of our Government.

House A5 Sequence 13

12.10 p.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have now gone further by allocating resources, initially to achieve these specific objectives. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to pull out certain of those objectives and to deal with them in layman language so that their importance is not lost on the people of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to place renewed and increasing emphasis on health care. We deplore the state of our General Hospital, since we categorically reject the notion of user fees for public patients at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and since we have promised to implement a Rescue the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Plan. We have made provisions in these Estimates for the resuscitation of this once great institution.

Secondly, restoring the importance of education to national development. This Government recommitments Barbados to high quality free education, from pre-school to tertiary level. Education is the vehicle on which we have relied to improve our economic and social development. Sir, more than 20 per cent of our national budget is spent on education and we intend maintaining that level of support. In particular, we have made provision for the continuing support of the University of the West Indies as the beacon of education excellence, which we want to foster in this country.

Thirdly, we want to expand the programme for ownership agreements with tenants of the National Housing Corporation for their accommodation units during this fiscal year, while providing the National Housing Corporation with the resources to make all those units ready for sale.

We are committing ourselves to the sale of the National Housing Corporation units on certain estates to the tenants, free of cost, except in relation to legal and transactional costs. Sir, there will be a special unit set up in the Ministry of Housing to deliver urgently on that particular promise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, access to decent affordable housing and land, meaning owning a piece of the rock, remains one of the major concerns for Barbadians from all

strata of our society, especially those now starting out on life's journey. The plight of old aged pensioners in maintaining a roof over their heads is also a major concern, and adequate housing is key to family life, educational success and productivity at work. Mr. Deputy Speaker, every citizen in Barbados has a right to decent, affordable housing and this Government is philosophically committed to ensuring that every Barbadian resident has access to comfortable shelter.

Fourthly, meeting all our contractual commitments, including maintaining public sector employment, improving the accommodation provided for public sector workers. We have promised to create a well-trained and impartial public service, free from political interference, which is essential for good governance in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in these Estimates, we begin to address the deplorable, physical and environment conditions under which many public servants work in this country. Sir, that is a precursor to introducing other incentives and rewards for greater productivity.

It is expected that an efficient Civil Service will make Government more efficient and effective, and in these Estimates these expectations are clearly expressed in our commitment to reduce the level of tax arrears outstanding to major revenue agencies and enhancing collections:

(a) to managing discretionary expenditure by increasing efficiency refocussing departments;

(b) to increasing the efficiencies of the public sector procurement, to obtain better pricing;

(c) to review and negotiate financing arrangements to the greatest extent

possible;

(d) to encourage state enterprises to implement measures to enhance their

revenue generation and using joint public/private arrangements, like BOLT, to finance the public sector investment programme only where Government will make savings on expenditure, or earned additional revenues to cover the lease payments on such arrangements.

Sir, that is the only way that we would use those BOLT arrangements, and not in the way in which they were used by the previous Administration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now turn to the second objective of these Estimates, which is, the strengthening of the economy to withstand the shocks of the impending

economic recession to survive and to rebound. Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again I want to single out and communicate, in clear language, what we intend on doing and show how these measures are consistent with promises made in our Manifesto.

The specific issues addressed in these Estimates are:

(a) the restarting of the onshore oil-drilling programme of the Barbados National Oil Company (BNOC); and

(b) continuing the emphasis on developing the offshore energy programme

and increasing the emphasis on energy conservation.

We said in our Manifesto that the single biggest challenge of our generation is the drain on foreign exchange, which is created by the high cost of oil. Therefore, Government is prepared to be bold and to move aggressively in reducing the oil import Bill, and preserving our delicate environment for the future by further careful exploration and giving incentives to consumers to conserve energy. We also want to see an expansion of the tourism marketing effort to maintain and even to increase our foreign exchange earnings, in a world that is increasingly going into economic decline or a slow-down.

We have identified tourism as one of the flagships of our economy and no effort will be spared in promoting Barbados as a quality destination and introducing incentives to give Barbadians a greater stake in this lucrative industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of these things cost money and we have allocated what we think reasonable to achieve these objectives. We want also to see a sharpening of the focus of the International Business Promotion and Development Programme to increase our foreign exchange earnings.

These Estimates reflect Government's commitment to re-engineer the country's external trade policy, to securing an increasing market share abroad and winning the battle to maintain dominance in our domestic markets. Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we promise to build a competitive productive sector that produces world-class goods and services that are capable of increasing the foreign exchange earning capacity of our country and attract higher levels of investment. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will go on to set out where the provision has to be made to finance this work.

We also want to resolve the bottlenecks in our system of physical planning and other approvals for development projects, so that those development projects may be implemented on a timely basis and the country's

reputation for being investment-friendly and business-friendly is improved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am particularly worried about the resources of the Town Planning Department. We have said we are going to bring certain amendments to the process in relation to planning decisions in Barbados, so that those decisions are transparent and that the principal policy-making and decision-making entity in this country could have a greater say in how our physical resources in Barbados are delineated. In other words, this Honourable House will have a greater say when large tracks of land are being granted approval for change of use.

12.20 p.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me pause because that Town Planning issue seems to be very sensitive. I have given the undertaking, since concerns have been expressed about it, and I think in the interest of transparency that we will review decisions made.

Sir, I want to say first of all that where approvals have been granted previously and sent to me for ratification, I have ratified them even though I may have had some concerns about them. The Honourable Member for St. Peter was Minister of Town Planning and he granted approvals. I have ratified them because, again, Government is a continuum and it would be grossly unfair to...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You wanted to fire him too. You should be the last person to talk. You did not know how. Sir, in case you do not realise it, in the Westminster system of Government, when a new Government comes to office, approvals and decisions that have not already been communicated are usually sent back to the Minister for ratification. For example, if you were appointed a Deputy Director of the Urban Development Commission, you would not appoint them on the 16th, knowing that the Government had changed. You would send it to the Minister so that he would genuinely review the decision and see if it forms part of his policy.

I am saying to you that I may have a different view in relation to Barbados development. There have been sharp lines of demarcation between the previous Government and us in relation to Town Planning policy. We have already said and reiterate that from Archers Bay in the north to Consett Bay in the south-east, will be a special heritage area in this country where we will seek to ensure that land remains part of the patrimony of Barbados, and we will take steps to ensure that it is not sold to

foreigners. Sir, that is our policy and we are going to pursue that policy.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, you see what I tell you about Honourable Members on the Other Side? Even before you pass the Law, they find a way to get around it. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew is now telling me how to get around our policy. He wants to ensure that foreigners can buy up Bath, Consett Bay, East Coast and he wants to transfer shares overseas. Why would you want to do that?

I do not know why the Honourable Member for St. Andrew would put that in the minds of the people. We are trying to protect the patrimony of Barbados for future generations and you have people in this country advising people on how to get around an attempt by a sovereign Government to protect its own land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I say that there is a line of demarcation between us and the Barbados Labour Party in relation to the fiscal development of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us come now, Sir, to what must come to the House of Assembly. This is the highest decision-making body in Barbados. As I have said already, Parliament can overrule the Executive. It can over-rule the courts by making a new Law. Sir, Parliament is supreme in the system of Government that we practise and there is a reason for that, that we are in here not to represent business interest or business of certain sectors of the society. We are in this Parliament on the basis of the people who elected us to be in here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have decided that we are going to make sure that Parliament has a greater role in the decision-making where large tracks of land are to be taken out of agriculture and placed in residential or commercial, that such decisions would be brought here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say something because it seems as though the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is not au courant with the latest practices in Administrative Law worldwide. In the British system, where a Minister gives policy directions, which are executive actions, to certain statutory boards, do you know that those policy directions are required to be laid in the House of Assembly.

So, if I give a policy direction to the Board of Tourism, as Minister of Tourism, or if I was Minister of Agriculture and I give a policy direction to a statutory corporation or company under my authority, those matters are laid. It does not mean that Parliament debates everyone but where a Back Bencher or Member of the Opposition

has concerns about that direction, they can move a resolution that requires a debate on that policy change and I think that is a positive development. You cannot now do that because the policy directions of Ministers to boards are not publicly published.

Sir, even in the UK there are in advance of us in bringing the decisions of the executive more under control but, Sir, you can have a problem. Where you have a Cabinet that is more than half the Members of the House, then the Back Benchers and Opposition can get together, even in the national interest, because of the concept of collective responsibility to stop the Executive from taking an action that is undesirable. Therefore, one of the first things we decided is that we will ensure that the Cabinet is not more than 14 members of the House of Assembly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that is an important development that would be progressive and that we should pursue. Sir, it is not the first time I have spoken to him in here about it because I have seen situations where Ministers have given directions to Statutory Corporations, which direction, in my view, have not been in the national interest and it should have been debated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the previous Government also created a hybrid. Sir, Caves of Barbados, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, in which the Directors have obligations under the Companies Act and then they pass an act on top of that called the Caves of Barbados Incorporated Act, which gave the Minister power to give directions to Board of Directors of a private company incorporated under the Companies Act directions. Sir, that certainly cannot conduce to good governance and is not something that we on This Side support.

We believe in greater accountability and one of the things that arises out of this years Estimates is the establishment of a Governance Unit in Barbados and we have taken a decision to establish a committee under the chairmanship of Senator Orlando Marville, former Ambassador and High Commissioner, who will take the proposed Integrity Legislation, the Conflict of Interest Legislation, the Amendment to the Defamation Act, the Freedom of Information Legislation and related pieces of legislation to the to the public for consultations and then that legislation would be laid in the House of Assembly to enhance governance and accountability in this country.

H/A5A/12:30 Sequence 15

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we acknowledge in our Manifesto that people enjoy their lives, better when the hassles of going about their normal business are removed. Despite living in a small country,

Barbadians spend several hours of frustration getting from place to place and dealing with the various agencies, both in the public and private sectors. This includes time spent on our congestive road systems, and it is a cause of stress and other related illnesses.

Sir, Government is convinced that it is necessary that services, including employment, be located where there can be conveniently accessed by the public. To this end, Government will make access to Government services more convenient to the public, by increasing access locations and using modern technology more effectively. In other words, using computing technology more to allow people to undertake registrations and so on in relation to Government Departments.

Sir, Government will also facilitate commercial and industrial development in country areas, increase the availability of Government services in places outside of Bridgetown, facilitate and support the development of town centres in major areas of settlement, review the countrys traffic management system with a view to improving the flow on major highways, improve public transportation to encourage its wider use, and promote the use of flexi time by businesses and also in the Public Service.

Sir, one of the most important innovations we want to support is the establishment of 30 Constituency Councils. The objectives of this venture are clear, and they relate to those aspects of good governance that require accountability, inclusiveness, participation, consensus, efficiency and effectiveness. However, the structure and operation of these institutions is to be determined. Government has made provision for a detailed study, including national consultations, to design and recommend a workable model of Constituency Councils, and this work will begin from April 1.

Sir, this is a new policy. It is a new project, and therefore we felt that we would start on April 1, the beginning of the new financial year. We would undertake the consultations and the study. The Minister should consult with the Honourable Member for St. Peter, because he never got the courage to do it. He got into this Chamber in the Estimates debate and told us about the Jamaican model of ...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You did not say that you did not agree with it then. You asked me if we could move on the money now. You do not remember? The Honourable Member for St. Peter does not remember? When we were discussing subventions for political Parties, which we moved on the Floor of this House, the Honourable Member for St. Peter went as far as to say that he liked the Jamaican model of having money allocated to

Members of Parliament, to undertake certain things in their constituencies.

Sir, I say that his memory is very convenient, very convenient. I thought about it, and I thought that it was a good idea. It would be a powerful tool for improving access to certain amenities.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, for years in this Honourable House, since the establishment of the Rural and Urban Commissions, asked for the resources to be divided up by the number of constituencies, instead of the way it was being done where certain constituencies were being favoured.

Sir, the previous Government took up millions of dollars and gave to certain communities in Barbados, one located in St. Michael South East, one located in St. Michael East, and others, and they rather give only those areas than to allow for the development in every single Constituency in this country. We are saying: "no." If you have \$4 million, let us divide it up among the constituencies in this country. Let the people determine what the priorities are, and let us get those things done as a matter of urgency.

Sir, I issued a warning shot across the bow. We will not be operating as the previous Government did, so you will not read any Auditor General's Report saying that vagrants, unemployed, unemployable, and criminal deportees will be administering any Fund or getting contracts. We believe that there is a way to design an element of accountability and transparent decision-making in the process for the benefit of all of the constituencies in this country.

Sir, there is also the issue of reducing the underlying deficit from 3.4 per cent of GDP. I already said that the GDP is forecasted at \$7 921.6 million in 2007-2008, to 1.9 per cent of GDP in the next financial year. So, we are looking for that kind of deficit. As a result, the deficit for financing is set to fall from \$737.2 million in this financial year, to \$653 million in 2008-2009, or by \$83.4 million. Sir, the net operating balance on the accrual basis, is estimated at \$77.3 million or 1 per cent of nominal GDP, at market prices.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Government recognises that the rapidly changing global economic environment of the 21st century presents particular challenges for small economies. The impending cessation of preferential market access, the move towards full reciprocity through the accelerated liberalisation of domestic markets, and the removal of all remaining barriers to the movement of finance and investment capital are all conspiring to narrow the scope of our policy responses.

It is against these realities that Government will give maximum priority to the creation of a macro-economic environment that stresses fiscal prudence in the allocation of expenditure and the absorption of revenues, protect the fixed exchange rate through careful management of the fiscal and external current account deficits, a tightly managed debt accumulation strategy targeted at the reduction in both domestic and foreign components of the national debt.

I will go into more detail on that, Sir, when the Government produces its medium-term economic strategy, very shortly. The attainment of full employment, through the private sector response to new domestic entrepreneurial and investments opportunities, in traditional and more important, new industrial cultural and knowledge sectors.

Sir, we want to renew the emphasis on maintaining and improving critical aspects of the environment, such as waste management and a restoration of major beaches. Our policy on environmental protection is so well known, that it does not need to be repeated. We intend to resolve the controversial issue of waste management at Greenland once and for all.

Sir, we have tried to do justice to all of these demands and expectations in our Estimates for the next financial year. Our projections are that the fiscal programme presumes current revenue of \$2.7 billion, current expenditure of \$2 684.7 million and capital expenditure of \$306.2 million.

12.40 p.m.

Sequence 16

Estimates - Monday, March 17, 2008

House A5, Sequence 17, 12.40 p.m.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I believe, Sir, we have also made certain key economic assumptions, real GDP growth of 3 per cent and a nominal GDP growth of 6.1 per cent. Inflation of 3.3 per cent, import cover for goods and services of 17.6 weeks, a tourism GDP growth of 1.7 per cent, traded sector growth of 1.6 per cent and growth in retail imports on a fiscal year basis of 5.2 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also believe that the House should be aware of the projections in relation to taxes on incomes and profits, which are projected to be \$936.9 million, an increase of \$58.9 million or 6.7 per cent over the amount collected in this fiscal year.

Sir, Income Tax is expected to rise by \$13.7 million. Corporation Tax is projected to increase by \$23 million to \$550.8 million, taxes on property are expected to realise

\$120 million, which is \$13 million more than was collected in 2007/2008, taxes on goods and services are expected to rise by \$56.2 million and by that, we are referring principally to receipts to that and Excise Duties, which are expected to contribute \$843.4 million and \$78.2 million respectively to the Treasury in the next fiscal year.

Sir, current expenditure, exclusive of amortisation of \$417.9 million, is projected at \$2 684.7 million; wages and salaries are expected to increase by \$53 million to \$772.4 million. This increase is mainly due to the fact that all posts had been provided for, increments and new posts approved.

Expenditure on goods and services is expected to increase by \$102.6 or 30 per cent over the revised figure for 2007/2008. This will come mainly because of the following:

Increased payments of \$1.6 million for drug rehabilitation services, an increase of \$6.2 million in respect of the Drug Service, and for anti-retroviral drugs. Operating fees of \$7.4 million for the Vacluse Transfer Station, inclusion of \$7 million for the payment of C.O. Williams for road rehabilitation, an increase of \$2.1 million to cover the cost of maintenance of the Prison. Present transfers are expected to decrease by \$42.6 million or 4.3 per cent. Bad debt and depreciation expenses are projected to be \$34 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that has outlined basically what we anticipate from 2008 to 2009 but the major activities, and I want to end on this point, that will be targeted during 2008 to 2009 are as follows:

The sum of \$8.8 million is being provided to the National Housing Corporation to assist with financing its operating deficit, while the sum of \$7 million is being provided for electrical upgrading and the refurbishing of estates.

A current subvention of \$150 million is being provided to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The University of the West Indies had been provided with a subvention of \$75 million. Sir, a subvention of \$80 million has been provided to the Barbados Tourism Authority to facilitate marketing and promotion.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: We know we have to bring Supplementaries later on, and that is why I started in being fair and I hope Members on That Side will not get up and engage in the usual verbal gymnastics. Everybody knows why these subventions are set at this level. Everybody also knows that every Government, since 1994, has had to come back to Parliament for Supplementary provision in respect of the University of the West Indies,

even Governments which said that Supplementaries would be a thing of the past.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Maybe, the Member does not remember that one, so this would be the question. Why do you set it at an unrealistic level? The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter could answer that question for me. I do not have to answer it. I had been the Minister of Finance before and very often, you get unrealistic estimates.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter once told me that my Minister of State is one of the brightest economists this country has ever produced. Get up and deny that, if you did not say it. You see, you forget again.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I discussed a particular appointment with the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter some years ago.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Since the Honourable Member for St. John wants to read things into the records, based upon...nobody has any record of this, Sir. I, perhaps, would put what I want to put in the records. I did not say that the Minister of State is a brilliant economist. I said that he is a quisling.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is not like Comissiong and some of those other guys. When a guy has no political price, Sir, and Governments change, you would get that kind of carping criticism, which is unfounded.

Sir, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter does not remember it and I am going to remind him - not now, because I have a right of reply - where and when that conversation took place. Sir, not everybody knows, especially the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, and he needs to learn some political lessons.

The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter has given me a piece of advice which I have taken to heart, that is, never do anything in Government that you cannot live with in Opposition.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: But you are not taking your own advice.

Sir, one of the things about the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter is that whenever we have conversations relative to matters on which we had to consult, the basis of that consultation until it degenerated, was that you should not do anything in Government that you cannot live with in Opposition.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It degenerated over the judiciary. You know why and I know why. Short memory again but as I said, I am not going into that now. Sir, I took the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter's advice. I am not going to do anything in Government that we cannot live with as citizens of Barbados, and not as Opposition.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It has to be enduring and it has to set standards.

House A5, Sequence 17, 12:50:10

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are those who are now walking around holding their heads down because they took serious public institutions and twisted and turned them to the benefit of individuals and personal devices. We saw some of the biggest institutions in Barbados, including this Parliament, taken and treated like a plaything of an individual. The Honourable Member for St. Peter does not like to hear this. We have seen the standards of Debate decline, the absence of Honourable Members from debate in this Chamber, and a lack of accountability, starting at the top.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I pledge that we are going to restore this Parliament to the high standards for which it is known and has been known down through the years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have provided a subvention of \$80 million to the Barbados Tourism Authority to facilitate marketing and promotion. An amount of \$1.2 million has been allocated to the International Business Unit for private sector services export initiatives. The sum of \$4.5 million has been provided for Constituency empowerment in the next financial year. Invest Barbados has been allocated the sum of \$13 million to carry out its operations.

The Airport relocation project, which provides for the relocation of residents in the flight path, will continue at a cost of \$2.8 million. A capital transfer of \$22 million

has been provided to the Sanitation Service Authority, most of which is for the leachate project. The Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated has been provided with a capital transfer of \$15.3 million to undertake projects.

In relation to publicprivate sector partnerships, there is the Prison facility at a cost of \$144.3 million. The lease term is 25 years. Lease payments started in January 2008 and provision has been made in the Estimates to cover those payments.

The Judicial Centre is estimated to cost \$93 million consisting of a jewel currency bond of US\$35 million and BDS\$23 million. The lease term would be 25 years. No provision has been made in the Estimates - I want to say so up front - as the financing is still to be finalised. The construction period for Tamarind Hall in St. Joseph is expected to be 24 months and the project cost is expected to be \$16.1 million. No provision has been made in the Estimates as this project is still to be completed.

It has been agreed that the contract price for Phase 1 of the ABC Highway Expansion Project is \$117 million. The cost and the whole project in relation to Phase 1 is now being evaluated.

As it relates to road rehabilitation by C. O. Williams, the contract provides for the work to be completed in two years with the repayment period by Government being 10 years. The cost of the contract is \$35 million and the sum of \$7 million has been provided in these Estimates to cover repayments.

As it relates to Rayside Construction, the contract provides for the work to be completed in two years. The cost of the contract is \$35 million and the financial arrangements are yet to be finalised.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, let me stress that my Government takes seriously its responsibility to create the conditions to enable the people of Barbados to proceed along the pathways of progress. These Estimates are the opening salvo of a campaign of good governance that is intended to help Barbados acquire first world status after a mere 50 years of gaining independence in 1966.

I therefore commend these Estimates to the people of Barbados and ask that they be received in the spirit in which they were drawn up. Their intention is simply to create a better Barbados.

I thank you, and beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.00 p.m. today.

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

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

House A5A2 Sequence 2 & 3

12.55 p.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This House is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I stand before you today on the first occasion that I will have to respond to the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill, a debate I might add that is the only debate that is required by the Constitution of Barbados, I am deeply cognisant of the fact that I do so, having just assumed the leadership of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I first and foremost would like to thank my colleagues for the confidence they have reposed in me and to say that it is both an honour and a privilege to accept this responsibility.

Sir, might I add that I am also deeply conscious that this political party, the Barbados Labour Party, has been a Party over the last 70 years that has been responsible for transforming the social landscape of this country while, at the same time, at no stage, compromising its principles in relation to sound economic management. Indeed, those two objectives remain paramount for me, as I undertake this responsibility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe I do so at a critical juncture of this country's economic and social history and it is, therefore, incumbent upon me, before I address the matter of the Estimates 2008/2009, to first reflect on the economy and the social environment which we inherited as a government in 1994, as compared to the one which we are now leaving for this current Government in 2008. Sir, for the sake of accuracy and completeness of the record, I do this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would have come to office in 1994, with a country that was gripped by a lack of

confidence and one in which, indeed, the overarching concern was the strength of the Barbados dollar, and the threat of devaluation that was a known and present threat for the three years prior to our coming to Government.

We would have come to office at a time when our foreign reserves were \$246.2 million, and we would have left foreign reserves to this current Government at \$2.2 billion, almost \$2 billion more than we would have inherited when we came to Government.

We would have found a country with the unemployment rate hovering on or about just under 25 per cent, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, we left a country with the unemployment rate in the last three months of last year, October to December, at some 6.7 per cent, the lowest unemployment figures ever recorded in this country. Sir, I will come back to the question of that unemployment rate later in my speech.

We would have found a country where the levels of savings in commercial banks were just about \$1.12 billion and we left a country with the levels of savings at some \$2.3 billion, some \$2 billion more in savings than we would have found.

We would have found a country where the level of mortgages, both issued by commercial banks and trust companies, totalling \$324 million, and we would have left a country where the level of mortgages is now at \$1.6 billion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I say, for the sake of accuracy, that the level of mortgages issued by commercial banks, in 1986, stood at some \$29.4 million and only increased to \$31.8 million, over eight years of Government by the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would have found a country where the exports of this country would have been flagging. In fact, having inherited exports at over \$500 million, the Democratic Labour Party left them, in 1994, at some \$250 million. Sir, exports in Barbados today are over \$500 million again.

We would have found a country with a flagging small business sector, one in which there was no dedicated tax for small businesses, one in which there was limited access for capital for small businesses to open and expand, one in which there was no dedicated legislative regime, nor was there any provision for the removal of duties on the basic inputs of the small businesses so approved. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we left all of that in place for the Democratic Labour Party in January, 2008.

We would have found a country where, in their tax reform in the early 1990s, so removed all tax incentives,

both to boost the productive sectors and to spur savings among persons in this country, and we would have creatively used a tax regime in order to boost productive capacity in this country, recognising that the only way you could make Job No. 1 jobs, was selectively targeting expansion in key sectors in this economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would have found a country with very few financial institutions, with commercial banks not willing to be aggressive or competitive. Sir, we have left a country where not only have we a plethora of banks that are far more competitive, aggressive and open to be able to help ordinary Barbadians - although in my view still not enough - but also a deepening generally of the capital markets. There was also the establishment of a Securities Commission to provide alternative sources of funding for enterprises beyond debt, those companies wanting to list within the securities market.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would have left a Credit Union Movement with over \$1 billion in assets, which would have been owned by some 80 000 Barbadians across this country.

Sir, we would have found a country that did not have any institutions to assist in the creation of a virtual economy, to compensate for the smallness of our economy and we would have left one with a functioning Fair Trading Commission, with a specific mandate to treat specifically to utilities' regulations, such as the provision of fair competition and the protection of consumers.

2.10 p.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would have found a country with a dedicated telecommunications monopoly reconfirmed by a Democratic Labour Party at a time when all other countries in the world had started the process of liberalisation, but they gave them in 1991 a 20-year monopoly knowing full well that the structure of this economy, the creation of jobs and the improvement of the lives of Barbadians depended on our ability to be able to fuel the services sector, and the telecommunications sector is the oxygen that helps to fuel the services sector of this country.

We would have found a country in which energy prices were used as a weight on the shoulder of productive enterprises and individual people in this country and instead of being able to liberate persons to be able to invest, create jobs and improve their lives, the energy sector was used as one of the main sources of revenue to fund the tax take of the Democratic Labour Party Government.

Sir, as if that were not bad enough with taxes on energy prices, on gasoline at a level of 89 cents a litre, today it stands at 60 cents, on diesel at 74 cents a litre, today it stands at 32 cents.

Sir, as if all that was not bad enough, we would have found an energy sector that was labouring under a commitment given by no less a person than the person who is the Honourable Member for St. John today in relation to the Mobil contract, where he guaranteed a monopoly for importation and distribution and he guaranteed them an after-tax return of 15 per cent and the consumers, the people of Barbados and the enterprises, had to carry that on their backs and then you wonder why unemployment was at 24 per cent in 1994, when we took over the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would have found a country that was limited to a domestic market of 250 000 and we have left a country where the virtual domestic market is 5 million people within the context of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. We would have found a country that was on the verge of making the most commitments that would have had the devastating impact on our productive sectors, particularly agriculture and manufacturing, without so preparing those sectors to meet the terms of engagement of a new international trading environment. Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the consequences of that live on with us as a government. We would have found a country that virtually had no capital works programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say that a capital works programme is not for the sake of building, but about building new productive capacity. I trust and hope that over the course of the life of this Government that Honourable Members on the Front Bench would see their duty as adding to the stock in this country to be able to improve the productive capacity such that we can carry this country to the next level, and such that we can minimise the vulnerability that it faces as a small open economy in a challenging international environment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this Government's capital works programme has just become something that is only to spend money but is not to bring and deliver benefits to the people of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we left an economy that has been strong by every measurement and that, indeed, on most macro economy indices can be regarded as a first world economy. Sir, it is not only the economy, it is the social indices that I want to draw reference to. We found a country where there was no dedicated effort to fight poverty and, in fact, far from a dedicated effort to fight poverty, we found a country that knew what it was only to cut wages in the Public Service, to send home people and to prepare under an enhanced surveillance programme the increases of bus fares and National Housing Corporation

units knowing full well that it is only poor people who catch buses, that it is only poor people who live in National Housing Corporation units, so that they were to carry the brunt of the further adjustment of a Democratic Labour Party programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in contrast to that, we left a Government in which, not just by our judgment, not just by the judgment of the people of Barbados in relation to the material benefits and the material improvement of the quality of life, but, also, by the international community that has been a judge as the country leading the fight against poverty across the entire developing world.

Sir, that is the record and it did not happen by serendipity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We chose to establish institutions dedicated to the purpose of fighting poverty in this country. Sir, in this country, I remember as a youngster, coming into this Chamber and sitting in the Gallery, even before I was in the Senate, and then again while I was in the Senate and hearing a three-man Opposition at that time hold the Government to task for not paving tenantry roads where people live in this country, and the then Minister of Public Works saying that it was not their responsibility that they were dealing with highways. I heard that when I came to the public life of this country.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party believes that there is a responsibility to be able to help people in the evening of their days in relation to giving them opportunity to be able not to live in squalor. We felt strongly that a Government had a responsibility to treat to the housing condition of the aged in this country. Sir, we believed more than that, Sir, that the crusade for the distribution and redistribution of land in this country, started by the Tom Adams Government in the 1980s by the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act had to be continued because it meant that persons living within the urban corridor, and persons living on plantation tenancies that were not listed under the Schedule or non-plantation tenancies, were not being given the same opportunities to buy land at a subsidised rate to ensure that they could make their commitment to this country firm in the one expression that all of us agree is universal to all Barbadians that they must own a piece of land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say this cognisant that there has been much rhetoric about the whole issue of land ownership but without fear of contradiction. I assert to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there has been no political party that has done more to give land and houses to people in this country, especially poor people over the course of this country's modern independence history, without fear of contraction.

Sir, so opposed was the Democratic Labour Party to it, that upon assuming office in 1986, they carried the threshold up from two tenants to five tenants disenfranchising a number of tenants across Barbados, who would have been entitled originally under the passage of the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act to become landowners in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are from St. Andrew and you, therefore, know and you drive through this country and you see village by village people being able to build their houses because they would not have had to find large sums to buy the land. Sir, these are the facts and we felt, as a Government in 1994, that there had to be a similar programme available to persons in the urban corridor and on non-plantation tenancies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we found a Government in which only 40 per cent of our children were receiving certification at the secondary level, leaving school with certificates. We left a government with more than 67 per cent now achieving certificates on leaving secondary school.

H/A5A/2:20

Sequence 2

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, an education system that within 14 years, resulted in more than a 50 per cent increase in the number of persons leaving school with certificates in this country from secondary school. It is a phenomenal achievement.

Sir, we found a government committed to the charging of ... and I hear about free education now, but let the Honourable Member for St. John state what was the commitment of his Government when he was Minister of Finance to the World Bank, in relation to the payment of tuition fees at the Barbados Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and the University of the West Indies.

Sir, in renegotiating with the World Bank we said, you can keep your money, US\$15 million. We do not want the loan if it carries with it conditionalities that would cause us to charge fees on the school children of this country who want to go on to tertiary level.

Sir, we found a government in which there was no technology being used in the classroom. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central can attest to this, because he was President of the Union, and he became part and parcel of the programme to help us not just to revamp the curriculum and the educational system, but also put

technology in the classroom, such that today, as Minister, he presides over a Ministry where more than one in three teachers are now using technology to teach children in a classroom.

Sir, we found a Government that had no programme for the young people of this country. Sir, I find it curious and interesting because people have short memories. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we for the first time, as a Government, undertook the responsibility of establishing a Ministry of Youth Affairs, because we believed that separate from the work in the Ministry of Education, there had to be a dedicated programme to improve the conditions and circumstances of young people in this country, particularly in the area of non-formal education. We left four flagship programmes, which are still reflected in these Estimates today, the Youth Entrepreneur Scheme (YES), the Youth Commissioners' Programme, the Barbados Youth Service, and Project Oasis.

Sir, only yesterday the Parliamentary Secretary in Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment, was on the front page indicating that they would continue to keep Project Oasis, and, indeed, to expand it. We are grateful for that, because we believe that it is appropriate. If that is not the policy of the Government, then they are entitled to get up and say so.

Sir, I know that in spite of his saying it, they have cut the Vote of the very programme that they claimed yesterday that they want to expand, from \$3.5 million to \$1 million. Sir, I will come to the point of the inappropriate use of the \$1 million contingency in the parent Ministry of that Fund that would clearly be used as a slush fund.

Sir, we found a country in which the highest crime rate ever recorded in the history of this country was confronting us, and the figures are there not to be disputed, but to be seen. We left a country with the crime rate at the same levels as 1987. I suggest to you that you cannot find many other countries in the world where countries have so managed their justice system and their peace and security, that their crime rate regressed to what it was 20 years ago.

Sir, we found a country in which any reference to garbage and solid waste was encapsulated in one phrase and one phrase alone, Mount Stinkeroo, and we left a country with an integrated comprehensive solid waste management programme that is capable of functioning, and it is up to the Government whether they choose to let it function, or choose to replace it. The reality is, that is what we found and what we left.

Sir, we left a government where confidence was the key word that was being used by all Barbadians. Sir, the confidence that was expressed both by ordinary Barbadians is, perhaps, most dramatised and best dramatised by the

figure that I cited earlier for the construction of houses, through the acquisition of mortgages, that ordinary Barbadians had so much confidence in this country that the mortgage levels had risen from commercial banks and trust companies from \$300 million to \$1.6 billion.

Sir, irrespective of whichever community you drive in, whether you are in St. Philip, whether you are in St. Michael, Christ Church, or St. John, in every community Barbadians are building. They are expressing a level of confidence in their country, because the investment which they are making, they anticipate will continue to rise in value and not fall. That was the level of confidence which we left.

Sir, when I hear comments, as I heard today and read in the newspaper, that it took a herculean effort to clean the mess that was left, can I say that it is probably a mess that most countries in the world would want to inherit? The reality is, if you examine the macro-economic indices in this economy, you see an economy that is sound. There are challenges, yes, there are, but there are always challenges for a small open economy.

It is to those that I want to speak, because this debate, after all, is about the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue. Indeed, you can only therefore speak to this debate with any great sense, if you understand the economic conditions against which these Estimates are to be read and to be taken.

Sir, I say so with all seriousness, because I really was disappointed. Perhaps, that was the weakest word I could use. I was disappointed, but not surprised in any way at the speech of the Honourable Member for St. John. I did not expect him to come in here and engage on a debate on the Estimates. I expected him to do just as he did, read a speech on the economic issues and then have fun on political issues, where he sought to castigate everyone from top to bottom. Sir, he read a speech.

Sir, he is a good speaker. So, when he reads a speech with no passion, it really comes home to you that he has no familiarity with the content of what he was reading. If this Estimates Debate is to be distinguished by one thing and one thing alone, it is for the fact that the Honourable Minister of Finance did not participate in any of the Estimates meetings with the line Ministries.

Sir, if I were to reflect it in legal terms, I would have to say that all he was doing was reading hearsay, since he had no part in its preparation, indeed, or settlement. That is what we have come to in this country.

Sir, in fact, I think it may be fair to say that this is the first Minister of Finance since Independence that has sought to keep such a distance from the Estimates process.

Indeed, one would have thought - this carries me to the point of the broad philosophy.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, the Honourable Member is putting in my mind the word form, and if ever there was an example of form, and no substance in an Estimates debate, it was today. If I were, on the Other Side on the Front Bench, I would be ashamed and embarrassed because I would have expected that the person who leads my political Parliament and my Government would have a philosophy for the settlement of the Estimates to be able to convert a Manifesto into a series of programmes, that would be able to give full effect to the vision outlined.

2.30 p.m.

Sequence 3

Estimates - Monday, March 17, 2008

House A5A, Sequence 04, 2.30 p.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Estimates are not just about numbers, and not just a set of accounts. They are about numbers that effectively say what it is possible for you to do and not do, as a Government. This is the philosophy that certainly informed us as a Government, for 14 years.

Indeed, Sir, I hope that the Attorney-General would come to advise his colleagues that the series of Laws that are set in place governing the conduct of public officials, require that whatever we do is, in fact, related in some manner, form or fashion to this book here, called the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue. It is the Schedule to the Appropriation Bill. I said earlier that it is the only debate that the Constitution of Barbados requires on an annual basis, for it is indeed the Budget.

I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if there is one thing that is clear to me, is that these Estimates do not reflect a comprehensive vision on the part of the Democratic Labour Party Government. They are not our Estimates. He made it clear today that he required his Ministers to work hard in the last few weeks, and while there may be evidence of one or two that you cannot quarrel with in the Heads, a lot of the other Heads do not reflect the programme of the Democratic Labour Party or more important, Sir, a programme designed to be able to continue to fight poverty.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: It is not our programme. It is yours. You said so.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I never said so. Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me be clear because I am not going to be sidetracked, because the only sidetracking that has been done in this Chamber today, is that these Estimates have sidetracked the fight against poverty in this country.

I will come to it, because I represent a Constituency, along with others in here, where matters pertain to urban poverty, matters. I represent a Constituency where matters pertaining to the well-being of young people who cannot or have not been absorbed into the formal educational system, matter. I represent a Constituency, as do others, where matters pertain to rural poverty, matter. Sir, contrary to popular view, my Constituency goes as far up as Bourne's Village, Exchange Hill and Bibbys Lane.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see in these Estimates, and let me not carry you far, because the Honourable Member for St. John read from a speech, but made it absolutely certain that he did not even touch the document. In fact, I do not even see it in front of him, but this is what is before us and let us go straight to Table V, because persons may want to feel that I am giving a political speech for the sake of giving it, but these matters are too serious.

Sir, under this Government at Table V, Estimates of Total Expenditure by functional classification, under the heading Social Security and Welfare, the estimate dropped from \$263.7 million to \$236.1 million, a cut of \$27.5 million. Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they would want to tell you that they are representing the interest of persons who are at the front line of poverty.

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is just one side of it. They have cut the vote of the Urban Development Commission by \$10 million. They have cut the Vote of the Rural Development Commission by \$10 million. They have cut the Vote of Project OASIS by almost 67 per cent, by \$2.5 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have, throughout, not replaced it with any programmes that can effectively assist persons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no difficulty if that is their priority. When I can tell the people of St. Michael North East who live in tenancies that this Government is no longer interested in facilitating their access to subsidised land at \$250, then so be the charge and let it stand. Sir, that is only one aspect for which these Estimates are remarkable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the second aspect relates to the absence of a comprehensive programme to boost export earnings. Sir, let me spend a few minutes on this, because it really does take cash-to-care. While the cash-to-care may

primarily be domestic revenue, you cannot sustain expenditure at the domestic level, in a society that imports almost all of its goods and services, without the clear earning of foreign exchange and, indeed, buffered by private capital inflows.

There is nothing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that suggests a programme in these Estimates for a dedicated boost to our export earnings, and indeed, an effort to be able to increase our exports to GDP Ratio. I say so, Sir, cognizant that some of these things may not be politically sexy, but you know, and I know, that a balance of payment problem is what put us where we were in 1991.

I say and hope that the Members on the Other Side would appreciate that in order to ensure that this country does not face severe challenges, it is going to be critical to see how you are going to boost your export to GDP ratios, and how you are going to sustain export earnings while, at the same time, seeking to increase the amount of foreign exchange through private capital inflows coming into this country.

The truth is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I say so, cognizant that we are now in an environment where inflationary pressures are more than they were in the early 1990s and the combination of a balance of payment problem, with serious inflationary pressures will be a holocaust that will make the 1991-1994 period look like a stroll on the beach.

I repeat it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I say so, not with any delight, but it concerns me. Why does it concern me? Mr. Deputy Speaker, not one word in the speech of the Honourable Member for St. John, the Prime Minister, about how he intends to be able to boost export earnings in this country.

I remember some two to three years ago, when we felt that we may be on the verge of balance of payment pressure, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter came and levelled with the people of this country, and indicated that we would have to take defensive measures to be able to stop a surge on import bills, and that we had a current account deficit that was worrisome. Sir, not only did we take those defensive measures, but we left a current account deficit at the end of September last year of \$299 million, the lowest ever since the start of the problem in 2004.

Sir, we boosted the exports, and not only did we see a reduction in imports, but there was an export boost of almost 20 per cent in every year. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these things are critical and they are fundamental to the management and the stability of this country. Sir, it disturbs me that a person could hold the office of the

Minister of Finance, and not once in the course of this debate, address any of these issues.

I have the confidence that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and the Hon. Member for St. Philip West will address these issues. The reality is that it must be addressed by the person holding the office of Minister of Finance. If the Members on That Side do not realise it yet, you have an obligation to tell him to do his job.

He quarreled about a half-day job with me. He now recognises that the job is far from a half-day job. In fact, I heard - and he can dispute it if it is not true - that the Honourable Member for St. James Central came under the wrath for having so misled people that it is a half-day job, but suffice it to say that Barbados is a small place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say to you that these issues are important. I looked at the Estimates, Invest Barbados, and we heard the Honourable Member for St. John say that it is a duplication of the BIDC.

House A5A, Sequence 04, 2:40:14

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say to you that these issues are important. We heard the Honourable Member for St. John say that Invest Barbados is a duplication of the Barbados Investment and Development Corporations work. It is clear that he has not read the briefs provided to him or indeed the statute because if he did, he could not make that assertion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation, which is an entity that is structured to treat with domestic production issues in manufacturing and some support in domestic service providers, could not effectively carry out a sustained promotion and marketing effort to be able to boost investment in this country to promote international business and, indeed, to be able to treat to the export of the indigenous service sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a worrisome thing, because we have not reached the point of Invest Barbados as a first option. We tried, as a government, to get the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation to undertake those functions. We realise that both the structure and the culture of the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation could not accommodate that. We then went to the point where we felt that it was important to have dedicated institutions for investment promotion as well as the promotion of the international business and financial services sector, hence the creation of Invest Barbados. They are free to do what they want to do with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also announced to this House on more than one occasion last year that we were working towards the establishment of Export Barbados because we felt that somebody had to come to work every day to be able to create a market to do the promotion marketing and to facilitate the distribution of Barbadian products if we were going to see a sustainable expansion in our foreign exchange earnings as a result of exports.

We left, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Ministry of Economic Affairs, an agreement with the Private Sector Association of Barbados for the establishment of Export Barbados as a joint venture publicprivate sector company. Indeed, the names were filed with the Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Office and all that remained to be done was the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we felt that agriculture has a pivotal role to play, not only in food security and in the maintenance of a strong rural society, but also in relation to our being able to boost foreign exchange earnings again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is amazing once again that the Honourable Member for St. John spoke for three hours and did not address issues pertaining to changes in our international trading arrangements, the settlement of the Economic Partnership Agreement, or the reality that our sugar industry now faces a unilateral cut of some 36 per cent in the price of sugar which would, of necessity, affect the foreign exchange earnings of this country in the sugar industry.

It is for that reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we left in place plans only ready to settle the financing for the establishment of a sugar factory that would move from the production of sugar as a bulk commodity to one of specialty sugars, molasses, ethanol and, indeed, electricity, and would also be purchasing compost from the Ministry of Health's Integrated Solid Waste Management Programme.

Why timing is so important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the project was premised on the co-generation of electricity with the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited who would have to make investments in relation to their capital for the acquisition of additional equipment to generate electricity. Therefore, if the Government continues to put it on the back-burner, not only would they affect the potential for tremendous increases in foreign exchange earnings from the sugar-cane industry, but they would also lose the opportunity for being able to have additional revenue from the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited from the co-generation of electricity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have perused these Estimates both under the line Ministries and indeed under Head 19,

which is now the place where much of the capital projects are found. Mr. Deputy Speaker, nowhere in these Estimates do we see the allocation of funds to be able to move forward the sugar factory at Bulkeley in a way that would add to the foreign exchange earnings of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gets worse. If you accept, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this country has a finite amount of land resources and that if we are going to be able to revitalise agriculture, both for domestic food security and for the boosting of foreign exchange earnings in other areas, then you have to ask yourself, where are you going to find the land to do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you, therefore, ignore the Scotland District Authority, and the Scotland District, which is one-seventh of our land size, particularly in the context of a new physical development plan that now ascribes to land, not only the usage of urban and agriculture, but mix use such that lands in my Constituency like Lears which have traditionally been agriculture may well come to be taken out, then you understand the critical importance of the Scotland District.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you cannot at one and the same time accuse this Party when we were in government of neglect, and in particular the Honourable Members for St. Joseph and St. Andrew, and then have not a cent in here for the Scotland District Authority other than for pure minimal maintenance, knowing full well that there were 12 pages of plans for comprehensive work in the Scotland District so as to be able to stabilise the land, not just by the gabions that we traditionally use, but through watershed management, the planting of trees, the use of a serious expansion of fruit trees and the ability to be able to bring opportunities for enterprise to the people living in those parishes, and stop the migration back into Bridgetown and Christ Church. None of those things are reflected in here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can, perhaps, even empathise with the person who ran against the Honourable Member for St. Andrew because she got a double whammy.

Last week, the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central sought to speak about duplication in culture, but let me tell him, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it does not fall well out of the mouth of the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central to talk about duplication of jobs in the Ministry of Culture, especially since he now has to have somebody come in to do his job for him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so clear was the determination for him not to be part of a two-member team, the Schedule of Personal Emoluments does not have a cent to be paid for the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Culture. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not feel that she should work for free and, therefore, if it is moved in, we would support it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, she was an afterthought so much so that when these Estimates were settled, she was omitted. Sir, she would now discover that it is not only her salary that is omitted from these Estimates, but the interest of the people whom she chose to represent in St. Andrew.

I go further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and make the point that there is no consistent programme to boost exports. We left a decision for the establishment of a financial services authority that would regulate non-banking financial regulations; a matter that the Honourable Member for St. Philip South should be familiar with. Not a word on it from the Minister of Finance. The instructions are in the Attorney-Generals Chambers with the Chief Parliamentary Counsel.

The reality, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that if we are going to be serious about expanding the base of the international business and financial services sector, then that institution that would treat to regulation in a way that uses regulation as one of your key marketing measures... What I mean by that, Sir, is that regulation must be appropriate to risk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are so many jurisdictions in which regulation is not encouragement for you to bring your business to, but indeed a disincentive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not trying to be technical, but the reality is that these are some of the measures that we anticipated would be able to continue to boost the export earnings of this country.

House A5A Sequence 5

2.50 p.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: We feel, for example, that the issue of continued expansion of air route rights, is critical to the expansion of the numbers of tourists who come here.

Sir, I must confess that I am truly at a loss as to what would have informed the separation of the Ministry of International Transport from that of the Ministry of Tourism, particularly since there is a symbiotic relationship between tourism and international transport, because people have not yet been able to come here by the star trek mode of being beamed up, but by boats and planes. Therefore, if you have a relationship by having both within the same Ministry, then one hand helps the other in being able to expand the platform for tourism.

Sir, we say that there is no dispute as to the numbers of the Barbados Tourism Authority and indeed, it

continues. Most of it is within these Estimates. Our own approach was to do part within from the Consolidated Fund and the rest by way of a bond, but we believe the comments we are hearing so far as to the reform efforts to be undertaken for the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., being merged with Needhams Point, is ill-advised.

The Government is free to do it but, we believe, it is ill-advised and I will tell you why. Sir, the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., must come to work every day to deal with product development in terms of urban rehabilitation. We felt that the Needhams Point Inc. should be allowed to get on with the business of the development of hotels.

Sir, they will find out, as being Ministers, that unless you have persons coming to work every day to do a particular function.... Barbados is a small country with limited resources of Government and the truth is that the reality of people having to manage multiple responsibilities is very often responsible for the deficit of implementation or things not being done.

Therefore, unless you use a strategic and rightful approach to be able to achieve those things that are critical to you, and to your programme, they will not get done. Sir, we cannot tell the Other Side what to do, but we say it is a mistake for you to collapse Needhams Point Ltd., and bring all of the work within the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc.

Sir, there is nothing else and I invite not just Honourable Members here, because I accept that some of them may be new to the Estimates process and may not be sure how to read it, but there is nothing in here that reflects a commitment to be able to develop a programme that boosts exports.

Sir, what is even more disturbing is that the Honourable Member for St. John is in this mornings newspapers - and I cannot read from the newspapers - crying down the unemployment statistics of 7.6 per cent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must confess that I have never heard a Prime Minister distancing himself from figures of his own Department before, but he is at liberty to do that. Again if he said that he wants the methodology changed, he is at liberty to do that too, but I will tell him that in 2000, when the Population Census - not a population sample - was conducted, unemployment was stated at 9.2 per cent and unemployment statistics coming from the Population Census was stated at 8.2 per cent. Therefore, to the extent the samples are erring, it is the high side, an over-estimating of employment figures.

Sir, let us assume for a minute that the Honourable Member for St. John is correct in questioning the figures of his own officials from the Statistical Department, then what

is there in these Estimates that is designed to boost employment? If unemployment was as bad as the Honourable Member for St. John is suggesting, if the Honourable Member gave a Press conference yesterday, then comes here and makes no reference to any page, any programme or subprogramme that could tell us where is his programme that is designed to boost jobs, Sir, I trust and hope the Honourable Member would not go back to his 1994 solution of bus fares and lunch money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these Estimates stand remarkable for these points. There is no clear programme to advance the interest of stopping poor people from being poor, that you have sidelined the fight against poverty, that there is no comprehensive programme to be able to boost the export earnings and the foreign reserves of this country, such that we can avert the possibility of a balance of payment problem.

Thirdly, if we were to accept the Honourable Member for St. John's speech, there is no clear programme designed to boost the creation of jobs in these Estimates. Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the end of the day, in the absence of a vision, this document remains just an amalgamation of figures.

Sir, the thing that would hurt the Other Side the most is the part of my speech when I come to analyse it in relation to the promises of the Democratic Labour Party, because the promises could only be executed if they are found in this document. Therefore, other than the \$4.5 million for Constituency Empowerment, there is no clear unequivocal programme to execute the promises.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me continue along the route of the macro-economic conditions in which the country finds itself today. Sir, as we said earlier, the foreign reserves between what Government holds and what the banks hold is about \$2.2 billion, or 18 weeks of import cover. The reality also is that we believe the figures of the Statistical Department that unemployment in the last quarter, October to December, is 6.7 per cent. This is a record level.

We believe the figures when they tell us that the inflation rate at the end of October, as was released by the Central Bank, was 4.4 per cent, down from 7.6 per cent the year before, so that the programme which we had to be able to control inflation was, in fact, beginning to work.

We believe the facts that reflect that revenue was growing at 10.5 per cent at the end of January. Sir, we also accept the figures for a current account deficit that has now reached the lowest since 2004, trending back down from the high point of 12 per cent balance of payment that it was in 2005.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe that the national debt, as it stands at approximately \$5.1 billion, is a little high but that it is manageable. Sir, let me set it in the context, and they would find that they would get the same advice. Sir, the Governor of the Central Bank has indicated to us, through its Deputy Governor, that he had done some work to suggest that the Gross Domestic Product of this country may be under-estimated by as much as 38 per cent. Sir, the reality is that if that holds true, it better explains why what might at first blush appear to be higher than ordinary national debt to Gross Domestic Product and that it is not having deleterious consequences on the economy.

Sir, in relation to the true Gross Domestic Product, it is probably more in the vicinity of the early 1960s, but more important, when you look at the indices that really matter, have we as a Government been able to service the debt? Sir, the truth is that is the foreign component of the debt because that is what really is likely to put us in danger.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the truth is that we have a situation where our foreign component of the debt is about 23 per cent, which is less than most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Sir, I could understand why the Honourable Member for St. John was a little rattled when I started to talk about these macro-economic indices, because they were entirely absent from his presentation.

3.00 p.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John obviously wants to be the beneficiary of lessons in economics and is, therefore, regretting the fact that I choose to, at least, read and learn. Sir, if he had done the same, his speech in here would have been entirely different and would not have insulted the intelligence of ordinary Members in this Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that what matters is our capacity to service the debt. Sir, our foreign debt service is a percentage of the exports of our goods and services. In other words, how much and what percentage of what we receive from exporting goods and services is spent in servicing foreign debt? Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is 7.1 per cent. Sir, think about it. It is seven cents in each dollar and, therefore, the debt situation that we have left is a little high but, certainly, clearly within the capacity of this economy to be managed appropriately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I only remind the Honourable Member, who likes to quote the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow so much that he should, perhaps, call for the 1967 Hansard Debates, one which I have read into the records of this Honourable House already. Sir, I agree with what the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow said that in

order for you to bring about development in a country, you have to be able to run a deficit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me just say at this point that I heard the Prime Minister tried to explain away that most phenomenal of statements that they intend to run a balanced budget while accommodating a fiscal deficit. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are either running a balanced budget or you are running a fiscal deficit. You cannot at one and the same time balance that which is in overdraft. It cannot be balanced and owing at the same time.

The reality is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am speaking in terms that ordinary people can understand how you are trying to fool them, that if you are running a deficit by its very definition that the budget is not balanced. Sir, if it is that they want to run a deficit, they should say so. I understand the political problem he has that the basis upon which the Honourable Member for St. John got his support from the private sector was to promise them that he would continue to use the words “fiscal prudent” all the time, and that he would bring in from the private sector, or a person who had previously served in the private sector to be Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance. It is unfortunate that he, therefore, would have tried to defend the indefensible today that you can run a balanced budget while trying to accommodate a fiscal deficit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me continue. We left an economy last year where the private flows on the capital and financial account led to a surplus of \$624 million, higher than ever before. The simple point that I want to make is that these Estimates, therefore, have to be taken against the background of a sound and strong economy. Sir, I make the point because the Honourable Member for St. John has said that the most important thing to him was the cost of living, cost of living, cost of living.

Sir, I want to address it, because the reality is that he has purported to suggest that the measures which we took as a government were ineffective but has not explained to the public that he really has not taken any new additional measures other than that. We agreed last year that if there are matters that are outside of your control that you have first and foremost to deal with those things that are within your control.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James Central, in his Ministerial Statement in here two weeks ago, acknowledged for the first time, with all the emotions of original discovery, that it was import inflation, a matter that he would never have acknowledged during the campaign or Members on That Side found repugnant. We simply said this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if there are matters outside of your control simply (1) that the demand for most products in the world has increased significantly because of the growth rates and changing patterns of consumption in

India and China; (2) that you have had energy prices increasing at a rate that is unacceptable for us in terms of the kind of safety and comfort zones we would want; (3) that you had a situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where because of the increases in energy prices there is an unwise diversion of certain food crops to the production of biofuels in the world and more as a victim of malfunctioning US political system more than anything, because Congress wants to show that they are providing subsidies to the farmers without realising that the production of corn into ethanol is an inefficient process and, indeed, one that requires far more energy and can only be viable with tremendous subsidies to the growers of corn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have this confluence of events taking place internationally that have an impact on us domestically. As well, as I said just now, you have an extraordinary flow of private capital into this economy at a level of \$624 million last year reflecting the confidence in the economy but which, nevertheless, has to be spent somewhere, and will have an impact on the demand for goods and services in Barbados and hence, will complicate the process in relation to the prices domestically.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have different factors taking place, and our simple position as a government as it is now, is that it is not for us to fight with those factors over which we cannot control. The Honourable Member for St. James Central brought a subsidy that is to last until the end of March for flour and feed. I want him to tell me where the subsidy continues in here, or if it is a subsidy that comes truly to an end on March 31.

Sir, I do not agree with the subsidy and, may I say that we, as a government, met with the people from ADM too and having met with them, we recognise that any such subsidy would be unsustainable and that the way for us, therefore, to help the farmers as well as ordinary consumers, was the way that we were doing before, to put additional money in the hands of people, give people more disposable income to be able to offset the increases that they were facing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a serious point, because what the Government has succeeded in doing at one and the same time as they are saying, that they want to attack monopolies in this country, is to guarantee return to a monopoly, straight to the bottom line without any consideration as to whether all efficiency measures had been undertaken by ADM in the production of flour.

Sir, you say for political rhetoric that you do not want to support monopolies and that monopolies are causing price increases, but you come and your first act that is different from what we did as a government in terms of the removal of duties on the basket of goods, your first and only act is to guarantee the return to a monopoly

through the provision of a subsidy to that monopoly. If it is not in these Estimates, I can sympathise with you and agree with you because it is wrong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me explain the approach that we took. We have a position, and last year we came in the middle of the inflationary pressure with a Budget delivered by the Honourable Member for St. Peter, and we took fundamental decisions to be able to establish increases under the Reverse Tax Credit, so that

H/A5A/3:10

Sequence 7

Estimates - Monday, March 17, 2008

House A5A, Sequence 08, 3.10 p.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: people in this country, who do not pay Income Tax and who are close to the poverty line, but who have still to pay VAT when they buy goods, even though there is a basket of goods exempt from VAT of food items.

We felt that there should be a Reverse Tax Credit. Indeed, it has been recommended to me that it may even be called better so, a VAT Tax Credit, because it was a way of putting money back in their hands, recognising that people were still paying an indirect form of taxation.

We took that Tax Credit which stood at \$500 since its establishment in 1997 or 1998, and we said that it should increase to \$800 last year, then \$1 100 this year and \$1 300 next year, unless the Government repeals the legislation, since they claim that all legislation that was passed when they were not in the House should be repealed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we felt that the way to help people and to cause people not to feel the pressure of the prices, is not to put money in the monopolys hands, in the hands of big companies, but to put it in the hands of the individual people, who are on the poverty line and who, therefore, can benefit from that, in order to offset the increases. Sir, we also feel this is the way that we ought to approach the farmers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognise that our policy options as a government in relation to the productive sectors are somewhat diminished, because of our obligations to the World Trade Organisation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me go further. We felt and we referred to it in our Manifesto that separate from those who receive the Reverse Tax Credit, there was also the need for an ease on the middle- class.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we undertook a comprehensive tax reform programme between 2003 and 2007. Effective last year, Personal Allowances went from \$15 000 to \$25 000 and from 40 per cent to 35 per cent tax free, and a drop in the rates from 22 per cent to 20 per cent. We also felt that there was a justified case in the current environment for there to be a dedicated rate, which really effectively would encompass people earning up to \$80 000, the majority of the middle-class in this country.

The truth is that if you give them a 25 per cent tax rate, instead of having to pay 20 per cent on the first \$24 000 and then 35 per cent on the next \$56 000, they would now pay 20 per cent on the first \$24 000 and 25 per cent on the next \$56 000. Sir, you would be immediately putting money back into the pockets of the middle-class, many of whom are feeling the pressures, in relation to the increases in food prices, some of which we accept are entirely beyond the control of this Government.

Sir, those are the things that we say, but I did not hear discussion or engagement on this matter today from the Honourable Member for St. John.

We also indicated in our Manifesto that we felt that in the same way we removed the Withholding Taxes on savings for pensioners, and in the same way we carried pensioners Personal Allowances from \$30 000 to \$40 000 - although it did not seem to be something that the Democratic Labour Party knew, because they promised in their Manifesto to carry it to \$36 000, when it is already at \$40 000 - it should be removed for anybody who is receiving a Reverse Tax Credit. Therefore, if you are in need of getting a Reversed Tax Credit, the truth is you should not be paying taxes on your savings to the extent that you are saving.

Sir, all of that is in the Manifesto, and people would ask why it was not done. Sir, we had a comprehensive approach to tax reform. Our tax reform framework was from 2003 to 2007 and we have said that is what to do but the Honourable Member for St. John is entirely entitled to continue to put his money in the hands of monopolies, like ADM and Barbados Shipping and Trading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, This Side will continue to support that the money must not be put in the hands of monopolies through subsidies but, indeed, in the pockets of people who are in the front line of having to go in the supermarket and face the increased prices on a daily basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not normally, in the first year in Opposition, seek to gratuitously give the Government any advice, but I believe the interest of Barbados is at stake, in difficult and trying international circumstances. The truth is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have a situation where not only is it predicted that the

prices are projected to continue to increase, but it is also against a background of oil prices at US\$114 a barrel yesterday, and I will come to the subsidy on gasoline and diesel separately.

I believe that one of the things you will see is not only that those increased prices have an impact on the expenditure of Government in these Estimates, but it will also have an impact on the revenue, and that the Government is likely to get a higher increase in the growth of revenue because of the inflationary pressures. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a result, VAT alone is an *ad valorem* tax.

The Honourable Member for St. John should not look surprised, because if he knew it is an *ad valorem* tax, he knows that the yield increases, so long as the base upon which the percentage is being applied to, is greater. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the increases that will, of necessity, come from high prices will yield additional revenue for the Government of Barbados.

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there must be a determined effort to shield those who are at the front line, those who are the working poor, those who are the middle-class, and those who are vulnerable. Sir, as I said, I would not normally do it in a first year, but the issues are too dire and the consequences too great.

I want to suggest Sir, that the Government moves to establish a wages fund that is used to buttress the impact on those who are most vulnerable in our society, from the increased yield in revenue that is likely to come as a result of the VAT. In the same way we accepted that we had to cushion those same people in 1997 when we established the VAT, by the creation of the basket of goods that exempted certain food items from the VAT. Sir, we used the money and offset it against the intake from the VAT and we increased pensions at the same time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the Government's commitment to the increasing of pensions. I do not see plans for it anywhere in these Estimates, but suffice it to say, I see plans for the Constituency Empowerment of \$4.5 million. I do not see the pensions of \$500 a week for non-contributory pensions, and \$611 a week for the lowest form of National Insurance Scheme pensions. Sir, if that were to come, in conjunction with a wages fund to help people who are working, or of working age to be able to offset the increases that they find every week. It would at least ease the burden.

What do I mean? Sir, if you turn to these Estimates at page 1 of the Revenue, you will see that it is anticipated that the VAT is likely to yield another \$108 million in this financial year.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, we believe that part of that \$108 million can be used to establish a Wages Fund to offset the impact of rising prices on persons in this country, who are part of the working poor or the middle-class. Sir, it is up to the Government. They do not have to take the advice, but as I said, I would not normally get into the process of giving gratuitous advice in this first year of Opposition, but I believe that the consequences are too dire if we do not protect our own people against what is a global problem.

Sir, I refer to the issue of energy, because the Honourable Member for St. James Central, once again, was in yesterday's paper saying that they have not come to a position as to whether or not they would subsidise gasoline and diesel in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard him, and look forward to the articulation of the policy, but there are issues that cannot be ignored in the settlement of these Estimates because, at some point, they have to be brought to book.

The reality is, Barbadians are paying for gas at the pump at the equivalent of US\$65 a barrel. Do you hear what I am saying? Barbadians are paying gas prices at the pump at the equivalent of US\$65 a barrel. Indeed, the price of a barrel of oil, yesterday, went to US\$114. Since the beginning of this year, it has continued to gallop.

The truth is, we understood, as a government, that while you are going to pass-through the increases, sometimes you have to stem the full pass-through of increases, because of the impact it would have on transportation, minibus operators, bus fares, buses, and that it would have on the cost of all goods and services delivered in this country. Sir, what we tried to do was to buffer.

Sir, we always, therefore knew in these Estimates that we would have brought here, we would have had to put in an amount in order to pay back the Barbados National Oil Company the level of subsidy that it was incurring in relation to the sale of gasoline products to ordinary Barbadians. Sir, if you agree to a subsidy, you have to provide it.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John has not today addressed this Government's position on whether gasoline or diesel should continue to be subsidised, but equally, he has allowed a set of Estimates to be prepared by his Minister of State and Finance, that does not address the issue of the satisfaction of the debt to the Barbados

National Oil Company, which would be stranded and left technically insolvent if this matter is not resolved.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, if the Honourable Member for St. John is saying that it is stranded, then it is an admission of incompetence on his part for it not to be included in these Estimates.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Sir, this is the most ludicrous statement I have ever heard. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I came and found a situation where the previous Government sat on the scenario, with oil prices increasing and did nothing about it, allowing the debt to reach, I think, nearly \$60 million. We have been in office for two months, and we are going to have to look to satisfy a debt that was run up by that Government for more than two months, and the Honourable Member is telling me, that I must put it in the Estimates. I have just set out in these Estimates all the other debts we have to absorb. That is why I am saying it is a herculean effort, and I said yesterday it is not over, because Barbadians do not know the true extent of financial mismanagement that has taken place in Barbados. I am saying that is not the only debt that has to be absorbed.

Sir, in 1993, I had to clean up debts for the ABC Highway, for which the Honourable Member for St. Peter was Chairman, Carsicot, The Arawak Cement Plant, and Heywoods. This is nothing new to me. I am going to ensure that we put this economy on a solid foundation. We will determine what is sustainable and what is not, but we are going to protect the interest of the people of this country, at the end of the day.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, having given a speech, the Honourable Member still fails to acknowledge that, (1) it is due and owing; (2), we have a system of accrued accounting, and that if it is due and owing, then it has a responsibility either to be here as part of these Estimates, or to have been settled by way of a Supplementary.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading the Honourable House. I thought that the Honourable Member would be ashamed to let the public know that the previous Government, despite the pleas of the former Board to clear up the issue in relation to the considerable debt that they were running up as a result of the increase in oil prices, I thought that she would say why they had not done it. Can you imagine somebody throws it in the lap of this Government and then says that I did not say it was due and owing, as if it will disappear, as if it would just disappear. This is a total political gall. I am ashamed of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

I do not know what kind of trick or stunt the Honourable Member is trying to pull in here politically. I am saying that the people of Barbados are going to have, eventually, to find that \$60 million. We are racking our brains trying to solve those problems without compromising the credit rating of this country.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter saw the file and said to defer it until after January 15, and I will bring it in here, if necessary. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has the gall to come into this Honourable Chamber and say that I have not made provision for it, and a lot of foolishness emanating from her mouth today, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John can shout, the Honourable Member for St. John can turn red, the Honourable Member for St. John can talk about tricks, it does not change the fact that, (1) we face a trebling of oil prices, which by the end of December 2007 became a quadrupling of oil prices in this country; (2) we had a stated Government policy to be able to buffer those increases on the people of Barbados; (3) we would reduce the Excise Tax because the VAT intake would increase because the base was increasing; (4) we have a deliberate policy that we would have honoured had we been the Government today.

Sir, you could not prepare these Estimates without either settling by way of a Supplementary before the end of this financial year, or putting it in these Estimates.

Sir, do you know why he is getting so angry, because it shows, this more than anything else, the false premise and the false sense of security that is being given to the public of Barbados, that these Estimates reflect the total position. He spoke about other debts in here this morning. Why did he not list that? Do you know why he did not list that, because he knows that the alternative, once he settles it, in the context of rising oil prices that can go as high as US\$200 a barrel, his Government, as the Honourable Member for St. James Central said, has to continue that level of subsidy.

The money was not going to anybody else or to nobody improperly. The money is going to offset the cost of the price of oil to protect the consumers of this country. Therefore, his Government will have to determine whether they are going to pass on the increases to the consumers and cause loss of jobs in that instance or

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: whether they are going to continue to provide the subsidy. If they are going to continue to provide the subsidy, both the arrears of the \$60 million plus the continuation of the subsidy, should be found in these Estimates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot expect more from a person who did not even, as I say, preside over the Estimates meetings with the line Ministries. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is that had we been the Government of this country, we knew that we would have to settle this as a first priority before the end of the financial year. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hold him responsible for telling the country that we have a deficit of 1.9 per cent in 2008-2009 that does not, in any way, reflect the settlement of those arrears of \$60 million or, indeed, the continuation of a subsidy unless, of course, it is to come like a flood on the backs of Barbadians and that instead of paying the equivalent of \$65 a barrel for gas, they would now almost pay double of that at the gas pumps. The reality, as I said, is that we would have dealt with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me go further, because it has implications for the kind of policy that we have. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to go at length today to all aspects of our energy policy, but suffice it to say that we understood that we had to bring down the taxes on energy, and we brought it down from 89 cents to 60 cents on gasoline, and from 74 cents to 32 cents on diesel.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is what the Honourable Member for St. John is not saying. We had a policy where we reduced the level of the Excise Tax on energy products to compensate for the increased yield from the VAT. What is this Government now benefitting from, Sir? They are going to benefit from increased VAT receipts from high energy prices and also from a higher level of receipts from the excises.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West understands this well because when he was in Opposition, he used to talk about it. So clearly he did not have an opportunity to speak to the Honourable Member for St. John's before the Honourable Member for St. John's presentation today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the public of Barbados would return to a situation where the taxes on energy products would continue to be burdensome instead of being simply a balancing act between boosting production and easing consumers while, at the same time, protecting the revenue. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is nothing in these Estimates that addresses what is to be done against an international environment where the price of oil has been increasing at the level at which it has.

Sir, I perhaps more than any other Honourable Member of this Chamber is gratified that the Honourable Member for St. John had cause to say that one of the things that would cause his revenue to be boosted this year is the intake of almost \$70 from an offshore energy sector that will now be available to the Government of Barbados as revenue.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John and other Honourable Members on That Side, and other political commentators who host Call-in programmes, pooh-poohed us going to London to fight arbitration proceedings. When the energy debate took place in this Chamber, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central said it had been below the ground for 15 million years. Why are you taking it out? Leave it below the ground. That was the vision displayed by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

The Honourable Member for St. John was on a platform all during the campaign in December telling people that it would not happen in his lifetime. Well, I do not know if it is a "duppy" that I am seeing now opposite me because, as far as I know, it is happening, so if it is not going to happen in his lifetime, he would have to be a political "duppy". Indeed, as if that were not enough, the Democratic Labour Party column made mincemeat of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the primary attack, apart from it not being possible in our lifetime, was that we had no right spending \$12 million on an arbitration matter against Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the \$12 million has not only come back in this financial year before we get to 2008, but it is now being quadrupled, almost six-fold in one year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the record and for the public of Barbados, let me say that these Estimates could now not contemplate \$70 in revenue from an energy sector had the Government of Barbados not had the issue of the maritime boundary settled with Trinidad and Tobago. Sir, we did it in record time. Most countries going into arbitration are in arbitration eight years, 10 years and 12 years. The Attorney-General knows that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we were sensitive to both the issue and the cost, we ran ahead on this matter to ensure that we could get in and out in a shorter time period as possible, and to minimise the outlay to Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only do I have to recite those proceedings in which we got a clear maritime boundary with Trinidad and Tobago to allow us to proceed, but the person who led the energy portfolio for us in the last Parliament, the person who is now the Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate, did all of the work to put us in a position as a country to be able to benefit from

the revenue to come, both from the sale of seismic data from a bonus that would be paid on the signature of any award of a bid block, and from other areas which are critical to the exploitation of the oil sector.

The Honourable Member for St. John had no shame at all when he got up twice in here today and talked about the money he is hoping to receive from the energy sector, because when we said it was going to be Barbados fifth productive sector and the one that would yield the greatest return, he laughed at us.

The Honourable Member for St. John said it could not happen in his lifetime and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central said what you are taking it out of the ground for. He said it was there for 15 million years, and there was as much laughter then as there is today. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is now \$70 million in these Estimates from an energy sector.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South is looking perplexed. He was not in here during these things.

Sir, this matter had been going on between Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago for almost two decades. I want to thank the late Sir Harold St. John, because it was he who ensured, prior to my taking it up, that the Government of Barbados did not yield to the unreasonable request by the State of Trinidad and Tobago to have our boundaries come 40 miles off the coast of Oistins. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy is now in a position to get all the facts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I said at the beginning of this parliamentary term with all sincerity that we are prepared to work with the Government on this issue of the continued work to be done on maritime delimitation...

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you why, and the others may not be fully aware, although I think that you were briefed by the External Council recently.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a date with destiny in 2009 that would forever affect our rights to be able to benefit from a productive energy sector, which relates to the outer Continental Shelf.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not a date set by us. It is a date set by the international bodies, persons on the Law of the Seas Conventions. The difficulty is that there may well be a challenge, in spite of the arbitration proceedings, in relation to the Outer

Continental Shelf, but even without that, Barbados has to collect certain data.

Sir, a country does not get the Outer Continental Shelf rights as of right. That country has to prove it on the basis of certain geomorphologic data, which could only be collected by the appropriate boats and those boats doing the work in our waters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to urge the Government that if they do nothing else, they have to ensure that we do not slip on those deadlines in relation to the Outer Continental Shelf. They cannot. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand ready in a manner that is reflective to the one I took while I was on That Side, that is, to work in a bipartisan way to preserve the future rights of Barbadians, in relation to this matter of our maritime boundaries, our energy and other resources that may be found within our maritime boundaries.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I anticipate that the next round of discussions with France would, in fact, lead to the agreement. In fact, all that was to be done was the initialling now, and I truly look forward to the Government being able to advance the work with the other countries in the OECS, St. Lucia and St. Vincent, in particular, because all that is required now that there is support for the principle of equidistance, is to be able to set the appropriate base points from which the equidistance line is to be drawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government may well find itself benefitting far more than the \$70 million from the direct sale of data and signature bonuses, and that is all the more reason why I call for the Wages Fund to be set up, but this is a serious matter now.

Sir, because of the imminent likelihood of the receipt of revenue from an energy sector, it was always our position. It was reflected by the then Minister of Energy, the now Senator Elizabeth Thompson, by myself, and by other Honourable Members on numerous occasions in this Honourable Chamber, that we feel strongly that as we establish this fifth productive sector on energy, that a Petroleum Stabilisation and Heritage Fund must be established.

Sir, I call on Government and, in particular, the Attorney-General and the Minister of Energy, who is now out of his seat, to advance the work which has to be done for the establishment of the Petroleum Stabilisation and Heritage Fund.

Sir, what is that? We feel that if you were to allow all of the revenue from the energy sector, from the drilling of offshore wells, to just come straight into the economy, that it is going to cause us to suffer from what is known as

Dutch disease, because of its inflationary impact it would have on the economy and its impact in relation to corruption. Effectively, it would destroy the character of the Barbadian economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the premise that what we are dealing with is a non-renewable asset that would not be there forever, we feel that it is critical that at least 50 per cent to 60 per cent of the revenue of the oil industry should be isolated, and should be put into a fund for the future generations of Barbadians, or particularly, when it is no longer available to us. Sir, this is a serious matter. It is one which the Barbados Labour Party feels very strongly about, because we believe it could affect the future character of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been doing reasonably well as a country without the abundance of oil. Therefore, why would you let it now flood into our economy when, in truth and in fact, a little bit of revenue from oil could give you a little more flexibility and space but, at the same time, isolating that fund protects future generations of Barbadians.

Sir, I call today, as I have done with the Wages Fund, for us now not to protect current generations of Barbadians alone, but future generations, for the establishment of the Petroleum Stabilisation and Heritage Fund.

I trust that in this Debate the Attorney-General would address the issue and that in the wrap-up, the Honourable Member for St. John would address the issue, because these are the issues that will affect us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been speaking for some time now but I want to address the matter of expenditure. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South has asked me to show him how to read the Estimates and I propose to do that now. Sir, I am being told that I am not a tutor for illiterates and, therefore, might not be able to succeed in that job of helping the Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say that in all honesty I have tried going through these Estimates, to look for the promises of the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, I said on the debate on the Resolution for the Throne Speech that these promises will break the Treasury, or that the Democratic Labour Party would have to break their promises. Sir, I said so, cognisant that what we were doing was recognising that there were challenging international economic times and that the Government, as the Honourable Member for St. John said today, did not start on January 16, 2008, but that there was an existing programme.

Sir, contrary to his wishes to make people feel that it was an inappropriate programme, what are the things he cited in the newspapers today as having found money for the University of the West Indies? The Honourable Member has not even provided for it fully, because we know the full cost of the University of the West Indies is \$117 million and not \$75 million.

The Honourable Member talked about projects related to capital expenditure, such as the Highway, which is already a four-lane Highway for the most part, from Warrens Roundabout to the Bussa Roundabout, with the other part from the Bussa Roundabout to the Sargeant's Village Roundabout soon to be finished. That is \$117 million, and Barbadians know what they are getting there.

The Honourable Member spoke about other items of expenditure. Sir, it might have been cute for the Honourable Member for St. John, in an Election, to talk about these projects as if they were something dirty or salacious, in the same way that he said that the energy sector would not come to fruition in his lifetime, but that was the talk of a silly season. Sir, the responsibility of a government in a country is to provide for its citizens by boosting their options and by boosting the capacity of the institutions in the society to improve the quality of life of persons.

In relation to the University of the West Indies, we have taken an aggressive approach as a government, because we felt that in this country, Barbados had to rest on a knowledge-base economy. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central is now trying to talk about it, but we did not talk about it now, all of what we did...

Sir, when I spoke earlier about what we found on coming to Government and what we left, I want to say that we have trebled the numbers of persons going to the Barbados Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and the University of the West Indies, in the 14 years we were in Government.

Sir, we determined that we wanted to do more, but that to do so, we needed a new institutional framework to accommodate it, hence the University College of Barbados. Sir, we did those things, but in these Estimates today, one sees that only \$5 million has been allocated for a University College of Barbados, a college that should be establishing itself as an amalgamated entity this year.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: No, the others are under the Barbados Community College and Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, and I ask the Minister of Education, when he speaks, to at least outline the timetable now for the University College of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I laughed because the Honourable Member for St. John read out a recitation of Supplementaries today as if it were something extraordinary. Sir, I sent the Clerk for the number of Supplementaries for each year and I see that in 1994, before we came to office, there were large Supplementaries made by the Democratic Labour Party, including large arrears to the University of the West Indies, in tens of millions of dollars, which I, as Minister of Education, had to come into this Honourable House and clear up.

Sir, the Honourable Member is not the only person who had to clear things up.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I go further. In this year, there were only 14 Supplementaries, but the Minister of Finance had so much of nothing else to say that he read out each one of the amounts for the Supplementaries because he saw padding for time. You have to understand that. Sir, if you did not read them and they are hearsay, then you have to pad for time. Sir, in 1986, he made people feel that it was something unusual.

In 1986-1987, there were 27 Supplementaries. In 1985-1986, under our time, there were 33. Sir, the simple point I want to make is that the tradition in the Government of Barbados has always been that in the latter half of the financial year, you would always see a pattern of Supplementaries. Sir, you try to hold them down and, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter was right because if they are out of control, they will cause your budgeting process to become misaligned and you will end up in trouble.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, part and parcel of the difficulty that we found in 1994, I trust and hope that Ministers on the Front Bench will not repeat the same mistake, is that people were making decisions about the hiring of people without the Ministry of Finance knowing; without the Ministry of the Civil Service knowing that the money was being committed. Sir, if you have that kind of reckless situation, the reality is that you are going to get a situation of fiscal madness. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say to you that is one of the things we have tried to fight against.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, going back to the Estimates. The university is not fully provided for in here. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been given an increase, but it is still \$17 million down from what they ask the Minister of Health for and we know these facts. Sir, while the Minister of Health was asking for \$168 million they got \$151 million.

I am not quarrelling with the Minister for the fact that they did not get what they asked for, but I want to make the simple point that the decision not to build a new hospital will mean that you have to fund the Queen Elizabeth Hospital more money in relation to rehabilitative maintenance, and the figures which were provided to us as a government is that what they need to do the job is closer to \$195 million. Sir, once you decided you are not going to build a new hospital, the Budget you ought to be assessing against is not \$151 million, or even the \$168 million, but \$195 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we await the position of the Government on the construction of the new hospital. The Honourable Member for St. John at Bank Hall, late last year, said that he could build a hospital for \$500 million. We look forward to this \$500 million replacement for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, we truly do because, once again, we accept that this was a statement made in the true spirit as saying that he would not see money from an energy sector in his lifetime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the truth is that there are matters that are not entirely covered for in here. What we are saying is that if it is that, it is to reflect a programme of the Democratic Labour Party, why is it that these things are not appropriately reflected in these Estimates?

I can excuse the Members on the Front Bench who never sat in Government before, but the Honourable Member for St. John has a responsibility to lead from in front and to lead by example. Sir, he above all else, would know that the Estimates really represent the framework by which you make things happen.

The Democratic Labour Party has spoken about the pensions and, the truth is that much of the promises, if brought to book in this year, will alter the fiscal deficit considerably from 1.9 per cent. If the pensions are brought to book, the truth is that it will mean that the amount provided for as \$24 million to be paid for non-contributory pensions for the National Insurance Scheme will have to be increased by a factor of almost one-third.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the matter of the National Insurance Scheme pensions is to be brought on, then it goes even further, because the issue is more complex. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West will have to give the assurance that the appropriate actuarial reviews will be done before increasing those pensions such as there is no deleterious impact on the social services savings of Barbadians that are needed for the future to protect ordinary Barbadians in the evening of their years. If the matter of duty-free cars for public servants... Sir, like the former Prime Minister, I know that anytime the Honourable Member for St. John challenges you on something, go and check it.

Sir, two or three weeks ago in this House, he said that he never referred to the categories of persons that would be entitled to duty-free cars from the Democratic Labour Party as public servants. Sir, I have checked the Reply to the Budget last year and true to form, it was there, persons in the category of police, nurses and teachers, an amount representing some 6 500 persons, so that when we hear now about designated public servants our simple question is, will all policemen, will all nurses, will all teachers constitute designated public servants? If so, will this now have to be taken into account in reducing the revenue that is projected here as coming in next year and, therefore, will impact negatively on the deficit?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also heard the Democratic Labour Party speak, not only about increased pensions and duty-free cars, they told us about increased land banks but would you believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that under Head 19, in these Estimates, the amount for land acquisition is limited to \$5 million, the same \$5 million as last year but yet there is supposed to be an expansion of the land available to persons in this country to carry out an aggressive, ambitious, expanded land programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to say this and hold back the rest for now. It is my understanding that persons are being called into the National Housing Corporation and being given back deposits paid so that lots that were previously assigned to people, can now be reassigned as part of the 490 lots that were referred to in relation to this. I will speak later on this matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me go further. They said that they are also going to provide \$2.50 per square foot subsidy to all first-time land owners. Does that sound familiar? Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, the Minister of Housing is not in his seat but the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, the Attorney-General or even the Prime Minister could you please tell me where in these Estimates is the provision for the subsidy for those first-time land owners from the Minister of Housing, or the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking where it is that we are to find the cost for the removal of VAT on electricity? Sir, I say so because there has been much smoke and mirrors on this issue of VAT on electricity. The Honourable Member for St. John in his final political broadcast did not say we will examine the feasibility of the removal of VAT on electricity. He looked into the living room of every Barbadian and told them that his Government would remove the VAT on electricity. He did not tell them that it would cost the Treasury \$60 million. Therefore, by the time you got

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: to the Throne Speech, it was reduced to examining the feasibility of it. Where is the money for the study to examine the feasibility?

Sir, we come to the issue of consultants, one that has been the subject of the kind of political gamesmanship that I have come to expect from the Honourable Member for St. John.

Sir, sometimes I have a little difficulty, and throughout this term it is going to come out as I speak, because if I am to be honest and sincere, there are aspects of our political culture that I find distasteful. I found it particularly distasteful for persons names - I am not telling you what has happened in the past or has not happened, but I would like to believe that as a child of the Independence generation in this country, that I have come to be raised to expect more from the political culture of this country, that the days of just pointing out people down the line and making them political footballs and symbols of attack ought to be a thing of the past.

I saw the face of the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, and I would feel that he, who is my contemporary, feels the same way. I am not going to let the actions of any other politician assess me or inform me in my views on this matter. I feel strongly about it.

I say to you that if I ever have the opportunity of reflecting on the behaviour of all political Parties, since the course of Independence, the one distasteful thing has been the treatment of people in public, who are not part of the political process.

I expect Governments to change Boards. I fully expect it, because a government must have a Board that will carry out its policy. I expect Governments to even change some consultants, particularly those who are not technical consultants related to the structure of the work of the Ministry, but I do not expect that you go deep inside the cuts of an organisation and fire people simply because they choose to support a political Party that is not yours. It is wrong.

Sir, in my 14 years as a Minister, I have been in Ministries where members of the Democratic Labour Party were hired. I have been in Ministries where members of the Democratic Labour Party were promoted. I have been in Ministries where children of former Prime Ministers and Ministers of a Democratic Labour Party Cabinet got work under a Barbados Labour Party Government. I say that it is distasteful when you can go and fire people down the line, simply because they chose to support another Party.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, the point I am making is, as if that was not bad enough ... and the Honourable Member for St. John must really control himself, because he will come to recognise that people dislike that vituperative nature that he reflects all the time, that inspires a politics of malice that is contrary to the Barbadian character.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John must realise that he has won. He is not in Opposition. He is the Prime Minister of this country and has a duty to set an example to the people, and if he does not know what he has to do, let him speak to the Honourable Attorney-General, because, at least, I have the confidence that he can get him to recognise that he has started to develop a personality that no longer has ...

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: It was not me who said that the Prime Minister has no moral minimum. It was not me who said so. At least I know that the mere fact that the Honourable Attorney-General could have reflected that the Honourable Member for St. John had no moral minimum, means that the Honourable Attorney-General understands morals, and can describe and find them where they are to be found.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I am coming to the point that in these Estimates...

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Let them talk, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Sir, any time I hear the Honourable Member for St. John get up, any time I see him right against me, I know that I am on the right path, and I take comfort from it, because you do not throw stones in an empty breadfruit tree, so I want the licks to come, because my back is broad.

Sir, I am saying that in spite of a story on the front page of the Sunday Sun talking about consultants, as if it was something wrong, as if it was something illegal, innuendo again, would you believe that this Prime Minister, who has the responsibility for the Prime Ministers Office, and has responsibility for the Cabinet Office, has increased the value of professional services for consultants,

when you combine both the Prime Ministers Office and the Cabinet Office? Indeed, the increase has gone from \$980 000 to almost \$1.1 million, over \$100 000 increase. He cut the Prime Ministers Office from \$741 000 to \$500 000, but he increased the Cabinet Office from \$166 000 to \$585 000.

Sir, I have no problem with the Prime Minister hiring consultants, I really do not, but when you make it an issue, you cause people to disrespect the political culture, because it makes them feel that you are prepared to do something at a higher level from the Other Side. Now you are forced on the back foot, in today's newspaper, to speak about your principal political adviser.

While I do not have a problem with you hiring consultants, I really find the concept of a principal political adviser, being paid for by the Government of Barbados, is something I do not appreciate. That is just me. It does not mean that you cannot do it. It is not against the Law. It is not, but you come to the public and suggest to the public that you are cleaning up, that is the word that we have heard in here all day, cleaning up and cutting down, and in cleaning up and cutting down, we find that we have Estimates in here that are providing for consultants in the Prime Ministers Office at a higher level than ever before.

Sir, we find, in the Ministry of Family, Youth, Sports and the Environment, a \$1 million contingency. Sir, I have never known a Ministry that is not the Prime Ministers Office to have \$1 million contingency, because a contingency means that you can spend the money anyhow.

Sir, the Cabinet Office, in our day, never got past a half million dollars. Why are you putting \$1 million as a contingency vote, in a Ministry that treats to sports and youth, unless you plan to use it in an inappropriate way? Sir, the reason why I am saying so is, the public of Barbados may not be aware that the Government Departments are limited by the Explanatory Notes, by the notes in these Estimates, as to how they can spend the money. That is why you do not ever have large amounts for contingencies. A contingency is for when we had tropical storm Lily, when you have national emergencies. That is what you use a contingency for, before you can get the opportunity to come for a Supplementary.

Sir, with the best will in the world, you cannot predict as a government that you will not have to face a situation that may require you to spend funds to save lives or to minimise loss of property, but that should be in the Cabinet Office. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy would be one of the first ones who used to complain about contingencies in the last 14 years. I point him to that section of the Estimates, and I would like to hear his views.

4.10 p.m.

Sequence 13

Estimates - Monday, March 17, 2008

House A5A, Sequence 14, 4.10 p.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The Cabinet Office carries a half million dollars every year to deal with national emergencies that arise, which were not contemplated by the Government of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am simply saying that there really must be a departure from this politics of smoke and mirrors. If the Prime Minister wants to hire consultants, do so, but to try and paint a picture of impropriety on the part of the former Prime Minister is wrong. Sir, I will be Prime Minister of this country one of these days.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I give him the assurance that I will not treat him the way in which he has sought to treat his predecessor and it is a serious point. Mr. Deputy Speaker, he asked the country to vote for change.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel strongly that we have to hold this Government accountable, not to the political side talk, but to the promises made to the people of this country. I asked about the political consultants for the Prime Ministers Office and Cabinet Office.

The Honourable Member for St. John is in the newspaper today saying that Mr. Henry has not yet accepted his appointment, although I made the point that it was announced by him in his column on February 6, 2008. Therefore, I do not know who is speaking the truth.

I also noted that he was a Member of the Barbados delegation to the CARICOM Heads of Government Conference, which took place that same weekend, after February 6. Therefore, I wait anxiously to get the responses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I may move on to the other matters that were the subject of promises, the Democratic Labour Party said that they will establish a rescue plan for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I hope that when the Member for St. Philip West speaks, he will articulate that rescue plan. I have already said that I do not believe it is possible, unless you are going to build the new hospital, and with the level of resources being given.

Sir, this does not mean that I do not appreciate that treating to the issue of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is not complex. In fact, the one problem that we have in this country, and other countries have it, is that because information is so readily available to the population, people have higher expectations of the kind of medical treatment they should be accorded, in a way that they did not have 20 or 30 years ago.

Therefore, any Government of Barbados will always be under pressure to provide a wider range of services to its ordinary citizens, in circumstances where its base of funding may not be able to accommodate it, particularly given the fact of the level of entitlements that are already conferred on Barbadian citizens, by reason of the kind of society that we wanted to develop since Independence. Sir, these are not easy issues to resolve, but I say to you that we truly believe that we have an obligation, since health and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital were the two major things.

The Honourable Member for St. John in one of his first Press Conferences on 100 days, said he would settle a rescue plan for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in 100 days. Sir, we know that he has done nothing to advance that, and we also know that there is little or nothing in these Estimates to advance that, Sir, but see that is the kind of playing with the political culture, and the social fabric of this country that I deprecate.

Sir, we are also told that there would be a 40 per cent procurement to small and medium-sized businesses from Government. Sir, you can only measure and go to a goal of 40 per cent, if you know how much it is now. I dare you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to tell me that it is not almost already at 40 per cent, and that is the truth, but it sounds enticing.

Those are the kinds of things that are put here before us, but you ask at the end of the day where is the vision? How are you going to continue to stop poor people from being poor? Tell me what you have in here when you can cut your social security and welfare budgets by \$23 million, more than 10 per cent? Sir, that is what is here at Table V, of these Estimates.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East said that you cannot tell us when to bring policies of transparency, and he pompasstetted in here. I do not know why he did not pompassette in Cabinet and defend the Votes of the Ministry of Social Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment.

Sir, he had better not point his finger at me, because I get frightened. He might want to treat me in the same way that he treated his former employees who were left holding a bucket, when they went looking for the National Insurance monies.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am telling you that I wanted to hear why it is that this Government will reduce social and welfare spending.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to know how can you settle a budget reflecting Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, knowing full well that it is not only about the collection of domestic revenue but it is equally about the opportunity to be able to earn foreign exchange?

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I know that as sure as night follows day, and the Honourable Member for St. Philip West and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy repeated it in here ad nauseam, and that is why I am surprised that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West would have allowed the Estimates to proceed in a Cabinet, without being assured of the opportunities for exports to be boosted here.

Sir, he spoke too much in the last Parliament about the critical importance of the boosting of foreign exchange earnings, for him now to agree to the set of Estimates that do not affect a cohesive and coherent programme to boost foreign exchange earnings.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have said that, not because we do not want to give the Government a chance. I generally believe that they should be given a chance.

House A5A, Sequence 14, 4:20:14

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really look forward to the Honourable Member for St. John coming in here today and treating to fundamental and serious issues about carrying forward the economy and the society. Instead, we were treated to a speech that was more reflective of the politics of vitriol.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that is the road he wants to go down, I regret it, I am disappointed, but I am not surprised and I trust and hope that he would, hopefully, recognise that his duty is not to me, but to the public of Barbados over the course of the next five years.

Equally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had the opportunity of playing a role in the transformation of this country's society and in this country's economy. It is one that we treasured and it is one that we feel that we

succeeded in leaving the country in a better way than what we found it. It is one in which we felt that we gave back to the country a level of confidence to take on the rest of the world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the end, many of the things that we came to be judged harshly on were as a result of our own successes. Sir, the expanded demand for housing was not of an inability to satisfy housing, but was as a result of the fact that people had money in their pockets in terms of disposable income, and that also the housing patterns have changed. Whereas before people would live at home with their parents and grandparents, everybody upon reaching age 18, 20 and 21 now want their own home. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North would come to find out that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we governed a country in which we felt that the only index as to whether you were being successful for housing was not Governments public sector housing programme, but the entire housing programme of the country. Traditionally, Barbadians build their own houses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you spoke in here last week about your mother ensuring that you got a piece of land in Jackson. That house was not built by the Government. If I go around and do a straw poll in this House and in the Gallery now, the majority of people who are here would have been responsible for building their own houses. The truth is that the majority of housing construction in this country has always been undertaken by the private sector. That is why the true measurement of the Barbados Labour Party's success in housing is not anything other than, perhaps, the mortgage index which shows that mortgages were undertaken at the level of \$1.6 billion coming from \$300 million, 14 years before.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are issues I want to engage in because I think that they are fundamental for us to be able to see whether in the debate, sharp as it may be sometimes, that there would be a yield to the people of Barbados. That is what I have always thought politics is about.

I must confess that I do not understand how a leader of a political party and, indeed, a Prime Minister, could not recognise the advantage that was given to him to become a Minister of Finance two months before an Estimates process was being taken. There is no greater time and no greater opportunity to paint a canvass to reflect the vision that you have of the country than through the Estimates. The Attorney-General would have the opportunity of advising his other colleagues that if they fail to adhere to this, and to the legislation supporting this and other aspects of accountability, they would remove themselves from

office in a way that is unceremonious. That is the importance of these Estimates.

These Estimates admit of what is possible. If it is not here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the reality, the truth is that you are then constrained, and you are deferred for a year from the execution of your programmes. The Honourable Member could take it or not, but that is the truth.

Sir, part and parcel of why you want to lead is not only about wanting power, but about wanting to change the nature and the character of a society, and to be able to make a difference in the quality of peoples lives. Sir, that is why it hurts me when I can now see that people who would otherwise be entitled to buy land at \$2.50 a square foot are to be marginalised this year as a result of these Estimates. That is why it hurts me to see people who would otherwise be the subject of having their houses repaired as older people are now, to be marginalised in this years Estimates.

That is why it hurts me that all the talk about Project OASIS, and even about the gender balance, that we do not realise that we were taking young men, many of whom had stopped believing in themselves, and young girls, and giving them a chance to believe in themselves again, and to participate in a programme that could make them seriously citizens of this country capable of supporting themselves.

The Honourable Member may not like what we did. If he does not want to put it in the Urban Development Commission, the Rural Development Commission or Project Oasis, he should put it somewhere because if you do not have it, it means that the only persons who are suffering are the people of this country.

I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I truly believe that the Democratic Labour Party had a plan to win the Government, but they do not have a plan to run the Government. It reminds me of a dog chasing after a car and when it catches up with the car it does not know what to do with the car. That is what they remind me of. I believe that they owe it to us to be clear and focussed about the programme they want to implement, especially in relation to energy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said in here today, if there is one major deficiency, it is the absence of the subsidy that would make the Barbados National Oil Company Limited solvent again. We would have done it had we been the Government of this country again. Sir, the Paper would have been brought after we rose on December 18, so that there would not have been an opportunity to bring the Supplementary again. Sir, they have a responsibility if not what is here would be a sense of false budgeting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member raised a matter today to do with the former Honourable Member

for Christ Church East, Reginald Farley, and Bath, and he said it in such a way as to make it seem that Mr. Farley broke the Law. I said then, as I say now, that I did not know about the rentals. Out of an abundance of caution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I went and checked in whom the power is vested to determine rentals.

Sir, it is not vested in the Cabinet. It is vested in the Minister, so to begin with even if you accept that it is unwise, and it may have well been unwise for him to do it, I would not have done it. It is not a breach of the Law. The truth is that it relates back to properties which were the subject of a subdivision by the Democratic Labour Party in 1993 as well.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I do not have a problem with it either, but the Honourable Member for St. John said it in a way as to make it look as though the former Minister was guilty of an impropriety.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know how anxious the Honourable Member is to tarnish the reputation of her former opponent, the former Honourable Member for Christ Church East, who was a contender for the leadership of the Barbados Labour Party, but I am not joining in that. Let me make it abundantly clear, and let the record show that I made no accusation, nor did I intend to make any regarding any act of criminality in respect of any former Cabinet Minister of the former Government. I do not have the evidence. That was not my intention. I never said it.

House A5A Sequence 15

4.30 p.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I said, however, that no Minister should be carving up and allotting Governments seafront properties four days before the General Election. As far as I am concerned, the Honourable Member said that it was wrong, while the former Prime Minister said he knew nothing about it. Sir, I am not surprised by his attitude in this regard, and the rest of them on That Side looked dumbfounded, as dumbfounded as we all were when we read the Minutes.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as usual the Honourable Member is judging others by his own intentions to continually want to tarnish others. That is his intention, not mine. Sir, to begin with, I never said it was wrong. I said he may have been unwise to do it, and I would not have done it. Sir, the reality is that lack of judgment is not a breach of the Law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me make the point that it is unfortunate, really and truly, that too much of this speech today was not about how to move Barbados forward, how to create more jobs or how to earn more money to improve the lives of people. Sir, too much of it related to a politics of vitriol that I said whose time was better placed in the 1960s and 1970s. I do not want to be a part of that, but I promise you that I will defend myself if I have to, but I do not believe that in 2007, our political democracy should be reflective of that kind of behaviour.

Sir, I trust and hope that the Honourable Members on That Side would recognise that they have lost a golden opportunity to use these Estimates to paint out their vision for the people of Barbados. Sir, other than the Constituency empowerment issues of which I have spoken extensively about, which I am now glad to hear a week later that the Honourable Member for St. John has agreed there will be a study on the structure and composition of the Constituency Councils. Sir, true to my word. I say that when those positions are made known, then we will tell you whether or not we would support it, but until such time, we will reserve our position as a Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say to you that the Democratic Labour Party has lost a golden opportunity to be able to convert their promises into reality for the people of Barbados. They will have other opportunities, but they have lost this opportunity to convert their promises for the people of Barbados.

Sir, I truly believe one of the reasons they have had to lose it is, as I said, many of the promises remind me of the Calypso refrain: Bring drinks, somebody will pay, and that many of them are so unrealistic that they cannot be accommodated by a sound economy, for example, like the VAT on electricity that is being removed.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sixty million dollars is the minimum of what it would cost the Treasury to remove the VAT on electricity. Sir, you and I know that cannot be accommodated in these Estimates, particularly since we would, not even out of a desire to get back into Government, want to see this Government wash Barbadians away in the true market price for oil at the pump for gasoline.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would want to help support a subsidy because I believe that if you try to pass on the true cost to the consumer, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West would tell you what it would do to this economy, particularly if it goes on as a deluge.

Sir, those are the kinds of serious discussions that we would want to have. There will be sharp divides on some

political matters, but as I said, that is what Parliament is for. Sir, we have come to expect that, but we trust and hope that it would relate to the public welfare of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I close, I say that this Government truly had a plan to win a government, but not one to run it, and I trust and hope that they would find it within themselves to be able to do justice to the people of Barbados, who have put confidence in them. They have been given a chance and it is now 59 days gone, with 41 days more, and the people of Barbados are counting with us. We will stand ready to address them on the completion of the 100 days as a government because they have made that their first test, and we look forward to the assessment on that first test.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House be now suspended for 20 minutes, to be resumed at 4.55 p.m.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 4.55 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

4.36 p.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Dr. the Hon. D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want at the outset to commend the Prime Minister for delivering the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, one that was thoroughly thought out, one that clearly outlines, and fully so, the expenditures to be undertaken by the various sectors under consideration.

I want to empathize with him at the outset, because he had to do so with a macro economic framework that was, indeed, quite challenging and is still somewhat suspect and, until the Minister of Finance and his team are able to get a much better understanding and appreciation of the true state of affairs with respect to this country's macro economic difficulties, I, therefore, stand fully behind the approach used by the Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say at the outset that there is one issue that I want to speak to before I deal with my particular area. Sir, that issue deals with this absolutely foolhardy notion in Barbados that there is an unemployment rate of six point anything percent. I have dealt with that before, Sir, and it bothers me that I have to come back to this Honourable House again and have to deal with it again. Sir, sometimes the best way to deal with a problem that seems not to go away is always to go back, bring statistics and hold them up for Barbadians to see.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I first want to question a very peculiar anomaly, that is, when I look at the most recent Economic and Financial Statistics of the Central Bank of Barbados, January 2007, and one turns to Table 15 on page 100, one sees a peculiar cut-off of evaluation up to the period of 2004. When one looks at November 2007 at the same Table on the same page 100, we have data being printed for 2006 and part of 2007 provisionally.

Sir, irrespective of that fundamental anomaly, I would want to ask Honourable Members on the Other Side to explain two things to me and to the Honourable Members on This Side. I want to find out if it is not true that when you have a declining unemployment rate it means that you are employing more people in Barbados. Sir, is that true, or is it not true? If that is true, then I want the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East to tell me how it is possible then that at year 2007, with respect to Table 15, that is labour force and employment statistics by sex, the total number of persons employed was 129 000 and by 2006, the number of people employed was 130 000.

Where is the increased employment, Sir? Where is the increased number of persons employed to demonstrate a declining unemployment rate? I want that explained and I hope I have put that to an end once and forever, because it is foolishness. It is absolute nonsense. I do not care whose statistics they are, it is foolishness. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the facts are the facts, and these are the facts as so described and expressed in the document.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me speak for two seconds why the Honourable Member for St. John had to be very cautious in these first Estimates. Sir, because of a reckless fiscal programme by the previous Administration, they left this country, according to the last Central Bank of Barbados data of a public sector debt of 91 per cent of GDP.

H/A5A/5:00

Sequence 17

Monday, March 17, 2008

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: They left this country with a fiscal deficit reeling at the point of \$735.7 million. We were spending \$735 million more than we had collected in revenue, therefore, the Honourable Member for St. John had to be very cautious. He could not move with great alacrity with expenditures, so he had to be very cautious in eliminating excise taxes, et cetera, because it could cripple the revenue base that we would have to work with.

Sir, what is even more fundamentally distressing is, we have not yet uncovered many of the expenditures that would so undermine the fiscal capacity that the Honourable Member for St. John would have to utilise.

Sir, I only sound a warning. I may be in hell, but my eyes are still on the economy. When you all on the Other Side proceed to talk foolishness, I will therefore have to put you in some measure of correction. I am going to move on.

Sir, before I get to explaining and expressing fully the expenditure with respect to the health care system in Barbados, it would be necessary for me to explain to Barbadians why we had to craft our expenditure in the way we crafted our expenditure. In order to do this, it becomes necessary for me to evaluate fundamentally the various sectors under my Ministry, the things that were left half-done or not done, the things that were designated, so that Barbadians could understand why we would have to craft a way out of the decline in the health care sector in this country. This not only include the Barbados Water Authority, but it includes the Sanitation Services Authority and the National Insurance services in Barbados.

Sir, the thing that distresses me most of all was to look at 2007, when I recognised that a hospital was given a first past allocation of \$110 million, when salaries and wages alone are almost \$110 million. Sir, it got to a point where, because of that, the previous Administration decided to ask for a capital revitalisation programme, and you would have thought that even after the various Departments would have given information as to what would be required, and given the slow pace by which Government moves, do you know that there was no capital funds allocation to the Hospital at all for the last financial year? Not one red cent, Sir. Do you know what that led to, Sir? That led to no refurbishing of Ward B7. Significant problems with the upgrading of plumbing and the air condition systems, to the point that we had air conditioners in storage for the last three years. Sir, they could not retrofit the Iodine Room on Ward C12, which has been closed due to recommendations from the Physicists.

Sir, what is even more fundamentally dangerous is, because of that lack of foresight by the Honourable Members on That Side, while you wait for a capital refurbishment programme to be brought through Cabinet,

you leave the Hospital without a capital budget. The last capital budget for the hospital was in 2005, when they borrowed a loan of \$25 million in this Honourable House. As a result of that...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member ought to know full well, that there was an agreement between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Health, and the Hospital Board, that the capital acquisitions to be taken by the Hospital would be financed by way of a bond of \$58 million spread over three years.

He would not have seen a capital allocation in these Estimates, but when he speaks about it, I want him to speak about the absence of all of the other capital allocations across the entire Ministries, including his own, and to speak to the fact that the Hospital asked him for \$168 million in this financial year, and it got \$151 million. Sir, if he draws me out, I will also make other things documents of the House, too.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East cannot tell me what to speak about. I never heard such foolishness in my life, Sir. I am going to restate my position. It is even more fundamentally crazy for the Honourable Member to get up and say, that there was an allocation this year of \$150 million first past, when the allocation last financial year was only \$110 million.

At least the Honourable Member for St. John understands the importance of health care systems in Barbados, and the renovations and requirements that we would have found, even with fiscal difficulties a \$150 million to be allocated to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which is a significant increase, a major increase beyond the paltry \$110 million that was allocated last year.

Sir, I am only going to speak today on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I am not going to go any Other Place at all. Sir, five out of eight elevators are not in adequate condition. Elevators have to be used to transport food, garbage, as well as cadavers. The electrical system has absolute problems; major difficulties with respect to bringing on new services at the Hospital, because of potential overload, and the laundry is operating significantly below capacity and problems with dryers and washers.

Sir, what is sad about this whole thing, under these circumstances, this data would have been known by the Honourable Member for St. Peter previously, but the Hospital was left for an entire financial year to fend for itself without any money to solve these problems. That is what I am talking about, Sir.

Sir, autoclaves, a fundamental piece of equipment that helps control widespread infections in the Hospital. The ones that have been bought have not been installed for three years, because they cannot fit in the room they were bought for.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, I have been getting requests from the hospital, no money for basic supplies. It got so bad that until recently, even the Hematology Department did not have money for basic reagents in materials and supplies, and this is what the Honourable Members on the Other Side described as a great job that they have done.

Sir, there is a cafeteria which has been out of order, probably for 14 years. They barely renovated the roof of the cafeteria. Can you imagine that there are air conditioners in storage for five years at Warrens? Sir, five years. Can you imagine that with all the talk over there that basic diagnostic test that is known as fluoroscopy cannot be performed at the Hospital? How low can you go?

5.10 p.m.

Sequence 18

Estimates - Monday, March 17, 2008

House A5A, Sequence 19, 5.10 p.m.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: This Administration is now left with the serious problem of having to try to find the revenue available to correct these problems that were there languishing for the last 14 years.

I am very well aware that we are looking at a \$58 million bond. Sir, the money that will be looked at very shortly, should have been in the system from as way back as 10 years ago. Therefore because the previous will now want to get up and say that they were trying to rectify the problem in 2007. I ask this question. What was happening for the last 10 or 12 years before? Sir, that is the point, so when the Honourable Member for Christ Church West gets up and attempts to speak on this matter, he must answer what was happening for the last 10 years before that particular situation, unless he is going to be very much like a lot of hot air like the former Honourable Member for Christ Church South. Sir, because of the level of hot air, my first act was to make sure I have my chair fumigated.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what I find to be distressing? We are a 600-bed facility essentially, and under the International

Convention, to a large extent, we need to have close to 60 critical care beds in the Hospital. Sir, we were languishing as well, below 20.

I wonder what was going on during the last 10 to 12 years of this Administration? There is now a move afoot, because the necessity to move the Primary Care Services from the Hospital, has become a priority of this Administration. We cannot sort out the problems of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, unless we have a movement of the Primary Care Services of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital into other areas of activity.

Sir, to go along with that, one of the fundamental tenets of the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto was to highlight and create a fiscal set of programmes for healthy lifestyle development in Barbados. Sir, not only is that a Manifesto pledge but we have gone beyond that, to look at ways and means how to give that some additional strength, through fiscal measures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to also commit that we will not subscribe to user- fees at the Hospital, as a fundamental pledge of this Administration. We want to ensure that the fundamental shortage of nurses that now plague the Geriatric Hospital, the Polyclinics, the Psychiatric Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, we will resolve that problem. We are not going to bungle the problem, like the former and the former Administration and the former Minister of Health, when he went very far away to recruit nurses.

I can tell you that as of last week, some staff members at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Chief Nursing Officer went to St. Vincent to bring 25 nurses here to Barbados, who were trained under the General Nursing Council. We do not have to go to the Philippines and bring people who cannot speak English. Sir, that is the fundamental difference here.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, when we integrate those nurses into our system, I have said openly before, that I will do what is right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to continue with the expansion of the Medical Intensive Care Unit, and the expansion of the Surgical Intensive Care Unit. I want to deprecate on the Members on That Side for leaving the Lions' Eye Care Centre in an absolute shell for years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is even distressing is the fact that I know of a proposal by the specialist cardiologist in Barbados, which was advanced to this Administration to use this facility. When our Cardiac Unit malfunctions, as it does often because of poor equipment, Barbadians are left

with no place to have proper cardiac catheterizations done and those types of operations.

The end result is that even though there were funds up to \$10 million made available by the European Development Fund, do you know that for the last five years, no work was done on the Cardiac Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital? I went up there and saw a shell, where the new Cardiac Facility was supposed to be placed. Sir, where you could have had a facility that would have been able to provide cardiac services throughout the Region and internationally, it is now a shell up there, because of an inept group of former leaders, led by a bunch of pompous people.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will tell you one of the things that this Administration will do. Sir, we are committed, as is a Manifesto pledge, to the expansion of the Accident and Emergency Unit.

What saddens me most of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that when I toured the Hospital, I could not believe that there were about 15 000 to 20 000 square feet of available space, directly adjacent to the Accident and Emergency Unit, storing old pans and beds, while the Accident the Emergency is crippled for space. Sir, the Records Department is also crippled for space. The foresight and vision was never there to appreciate that the space could have been used to create a Holding Bay.

Sir, one of the problems of the Accident and Emergency Unit is that if you go in there with a particular ailment and you have to be diagnosed by a diagnostic test, while you are waiting for the test, there is no place to put you. Therefore, if there are 15 people, in that case you block 15 beds, but if there was a Holding Bay on the same floor, you could move those out and create space. Sir, there was no vision, and these are fundamental pledges in our Manifesto.

The other element that we always said we were going to do was to establish a Day Care Unit. The doctors at the Accident and Emergency call it a "Seeing Tree" that will fundamentally assist the A&E, with respect to backlogs and waiting times, et cetera.

We also pledge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we will upgrade three polyclinics in Barbados to make sure that they have diagnostic capability and can provide secondary services. I want to say, at the outset, now that the Honourable Member for St. John does not have to fear. Sir, \$1.8 million has been allocated for the renovation and the setting up of the St. John Polyclinic to bring it into operation.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, he does not have to fear that neglect and abuse of the people up there with respect to getting access to proper health care, because that will come to an end under this Administration. .

House A5A, Sequence 19, 5:20:14

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Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, we will treat the people in St. John well. We will make sure that on the bottom floor there would be day-care facilities, a community centre, etcetera. Where was the vision, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you tell me?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that this Administration is also committed to - and when we get a little bit later on in the Estimates, a lot more would be said then - is ensuring that the Accident and Emergency Department is given an uplift in terms of its ambience. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is enough for me to say that if one of you get sick tonight, God forbid, and you go the Accident and Emergency Department where you go in a room, that there is not even some water there to offer you, not even a picture, not a plant, not even a glass of juice and nobody to come to you and say how are you doing, let me touch you, you feel good. It is a barren place that needs to be upgraded.

I am committed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensuring that there is personnel there that would act with a human touch and give you a feeling as though they are here to help you.

I am also committed, Mr. Deputy Speaker - I know the staff of the Hospital understand what I am saying - to entering into contractual arrangements with the National Initiative for Services Excellence and other agencies that can uplift the human resource activities and so on to have them go into the Hospital to assist us to turn that institution around in respect of certain level of attitudes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with many of these things that the Honourable Member for St. John would have set out clearly in the Manifesto, we have had a number of constraints, which were set in financial ways. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important for us to understand these things because the Honourable Members on That Side speak to how good things were.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to find out how good things were when the Barbados Water Authority is losing about \$25 million every year. I want to also find out how good things were when 60 per cent of the water pumped into the Distribution Network goes down in the ground.

There are over 10 000 water meters that are not working now. They do not know where they are. There is no technological input to assist the system and I, therefore, have to try to bring the Barbados Water Authority into the modern world after 14 years under that Administration and with the introduction of technology so as to know where the mains are, where the leaks are so as to try to patch those leaks with whatever technologies there are. We have to put in skater systems to try to determine what would happen if we build 500 houses here and how would it impact upon the Distribution Network and affect the reservoirs. I know of reservoirs that overflow at night. This is what I am talking about when I say that the Honourable Members on That Side had no clue of what was going on, and how to solve the various problems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it goes back to the financial difficulties that were left by the former Administration. Ninety-six per cent of the revenue for the Barbados Water Authority comes from the sale of water. That revenue accounts for about \$88 million, and your expenditure, minus pension payments, comes to about \$93 million. When you add in the pensions, you have a deficit of about \$12 million. That does not include \$19 million in capital expenditure. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am trying to understand what the last Administration was doing for 14 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have now two capital projects for The Belle that I thank the Lord that the Minister of Finance agreed to look seriously at because for all the years that there was a lot of talk on That Side, we were having grave difficulties with certain aspects of our water in the Belle.

There was a former Member; I thought he ran against you at one stage, Sir, who spoke about building a sewerage system in the Belle. He canvassed even against his own Party with respect to building a sewerage system in the Belle, and for 14 years not one thing was done. It has now gotten to a stage where this Administration has to do something in the interest of environmental health in Barbados. That is the difficulty that was left for this Party. If we do not do something, there are going to be certain problems in Barbados.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member ought not to mislead the House. The matter in relation to the Reverse Osmosis Plant at The Belle as well as the seweraging of the Belle was a decision taken by the Cabinet more than a year ago. During the period of time, the Barbados Water Authority agreed that it would go out as a publicprivate partnership in relation to having the Reverse Osmosis Plant built at The Belle.

In November or December of last year, I made the point, as Minister of Economic Affairs, and dealing with

capital projects, that since the Ashton Hall well had the same problem as the Codrington Waterford and the Belle wells, that instead of going out on two separate occasions to be able to build Reverse Osmosis Plants, to deal with what in effect is chemical contamination as opposed to biological contamination, because our zoning system in the 1960s was set by the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow on the basis of the threat of biological contamination... What we face in Barbados with the increased use of chemical and the impact of nitrates is chemical contamination.

In the circumstances, we took a decision that the public-private partnership... In fact, I am not going to unfair the Honourable Member for St. Philip West because I would go and get the ads that were in the papers that were advertised late last year in either November or December asking people to come to offer expressions of interest in order to be able to construct the Reverse Osmosis Plants both at the Belle and at Ashton Hall so that you would not face two different sets of mobilisation.

Now, if the Honourable Member says that he is going to continue the policy, that is fine, but the Honourable Member must not come in here and make it seem as though this is his wonderful rescue effort to help your constituents without realising that its genesis and its communication to the public was indeed by a Barbados Labour Party Administration at the instance of your predecessor as representative.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am indeed grateful to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, because the Honourable Member just confirmed my point. What were they doing between 2004 and 2006 then may I ask? If she is only speaking with respect to 2007, what were they doing between 1994 and 2006, for 12 years? In other words, she only woke up like Rip Van Winkle from a sleep and realised that there was a problem in the Belle.

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Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is that this Administration now has to look to finance those projects.

Sir, now that the Honourable Member is awake, let me shift for two minutes and go to the solid waste management system in this country. Sir, I want to understand what was the delay, or why it would have taken

this Government so long to recognise we were beginning to develop a problem at the Mangrove Pond Landfill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am, indeed, very concerned and as a result, I have read all the files and all Cabinet Papers and I am going to say that for the past 14 years this Administration stood by and allowed a situation at the Mangrove Pond Landfill to deteriorate to a point of crisis management.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying there is a problem with equipment, and there are over 200 000 tyres already out there. Furthermore, that landfill receives about 200 tyres per day. Sir, furthermore, this Democratic Labour Party Administration now has to find a solution to that. Sir, what is even more distressing is that with respect to a long-term solid waste management programme, we have to come to grips with two things, one being the question of going ahead with the Vaucluse Project. Sir, I think that given the state of affairs in Barbados, and in the interest of environment health in Barbados, that is a project that will have to be continued.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would want to say that I am going to be pursuing very rapidly a waste energy project, which is now a new strategy and a new policy of this Party. Sir, given the cost of oil, it now becomes critical that we begin to see waste as a means of producing energy. We are going to make sure that we restructure waste energy projects in Barbados, and that has nothing to do with the landfill gas project, so do not even rise on that point.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the absolute sake of clarity, there is a landfill gas energy project which was approved by Cabinet last year, and I believe that negotiations are taking place as to the terms and conditions...

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: It will be for the landfill at Mangrove and eventually at Greenland. In fact, I believe the name of the company is Burnside, but I will provide it for you.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, before wrapping up, let me make the point that the system this Administration is speaking about is a system where we would be utilising composts and other semi-hazardous materials in Barbados to produce energy. That is a fundamentally different system from a landfill gas to energy project. That might be something we might consider

later. That was your Administrations view, but we will have a completely different approach to the problem. You could rest assured that we intend all of what we call municipals to produce energy in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I enter this debate on the Estimates 2007/2008, with a lot of curiosity, especially after hearing the contribution from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. Sir, if I were not seized of the reasons underpinning why the people of Barbados voted in their numbers for a new Government on January 15, I might have been fooled by the meanderings of the Honourable Member, as she sought and fought, almost valiantly, to deflect the blows coming in her direction from the Honourable Prime Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to begin my contribution by applauding the efforts of the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Members today. Sir, you would not believe we are talking about an Administration that has been in office for almost two months and the kinds of standards I am hearing being set for us by the Other Side. Sir, if only they had set those standards for themselves, this country in terms of our economic position would not be in the state in which it is in today.

I also want to compliment the Honourable Prime Minister for recently taking public debate and the Office of Prime Minister to a very high level. Sir, at the meeting of the CARICOM Heads of Government, the Prime Minister basically indicated to, and encouraged his colleagues to recognise the efforts of the Honourable Member for St. Peter, as it related to his contributions to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the Prime Minister to do so, I thought that was taking a very high ground because I am 160 per cent sure that had it been the other way around, the former Prime Minister would not have been generous and would not have taken that high road in recognising the efforts of the Honourable Member for St. John.

Sir, I believe this could only be seen as a move in the right direction. It is an indication of the kind of Government that we will be in this country. It is an indication of the kind of Government that Barbadians have been lacking for so long. Therefore, I want to commend the Honourable Prime Minister for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I can say equally is that on This Side we cannot be as generous. We cannot give the Honourable Member for St. Peter any accolades as it relates to what has been happening here at home. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has made the point that we had a plan how we would win the

Government, but that we do not have a plan how we would run the Government. This is the first time I have heard the Other Side admitting that we had a plan to win the Government, because they were saying we did not have any plans. Sir, it is very good to hear they have now acknowledged we had a plan to win the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the other hand, if we did not have a plan how to run the country, the tone of these Estimates debates would not have taken the direction in which they are taking. Sir, I felt all along that before we embarked on any mission, in terms of our programme for this country, that it was incumbent on us as a new Administration, to tell the people of Barbados how we found the public finances of Barbados.

Sir, I am very encouraged by the fact that the Honourable Prime Minister took time to indicate, in no uncertain terms, what deal we have been dealt by the outgoing Barbados Labour Party Government.

5.40 p.m.

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Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Sir, it amazes me, because I do not know if the Honourable Members on the Other Side take their responsibility to their constituents seriously because I am faced, as a new member of Parliament, in trying to deal with so many concerns from my constituents, as it relates to employment and as it relates to housing but these problems were supposed to have been dealt with by the Barbados Labour Party. They have said that they dealt with them and have boasted that unemployment in Barbados is now six point something per cent.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order, please.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Sir, I too have attacked those statistics as being unrealistic and bearing no resemblance to what I have encountered as a Member of Parliament in terms of the reality of what is happening in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is simply amazing because this Barbados Labour Party, former Administration, will not tell Barbados that they have inherited when they came to office a Treasury that was overwhelming with finances and that they had the money to take this country forward, 4.3 per cent growth. They had the money to take this country rapidly forward and to achieve all the things they claim they wanted to achieve.

Sir, I spent a lot of time reading, because I like to read, and I am not in any way surprised by what has happened and what led to the demise of the Barbados

Labour Party. I really thought that when this House gathered for the first time, given the record of the Barbados Labour Party, I really felt that the Members on the Other Side would be hiding and not come to Parliament because of the damaging record, which has been left...

Asides.

Mr. S.A. LASHLEY: Sir, not by us because I will reveal some of them in the course of my contribution. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spent a lot of time going through the various Manifestoes of the Barbados Labour Party and it is amazing because one thing I can say is that the themes were eye-catching. I remember seeing themes like Every Bajan a winner. There was another catchy one No one will be left behind, Job No. 1 is jobs, We Going With Owen and Owen More Than Ever. Sir, when Barbadians reflect on these slogans, we can only say that they were laughing at the rest of us and they were making "mock sport" at Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened very carefully to the Honourable Prime Minister and I also reflected the various country reports of the International Monetary Fund - the 2007 one and the 2006 one - and the prescription and judgment they made in relation to the stewardship of the Barbados Labour Party as it relates to the public finances of Barbados, many of which were not carried in the media.

Sir, for some reason, the Barbados Labour Party succeeded, not only in frightening Barbadians, but in scaring the media into delving into the bowels of the country reports of the IMF. Sir, those reports also said that the Barbados Labour Party did not have a debt management programme and, therefore, when I see our public debt at the mammoth size that it is today, it does not surprise me, because they were "hard ears". They did not listen. Sir, the only problem in not listening has been that the rest of Barbados in terms of our social policy programmes has suffered significantly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, the Honourable Minister of Health, speaks of the problems at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, it is shameful and it is simply amazing because the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East very carefully crafted her speech in a way that she did not connect with any of those issues that we now have to face head on. Sir, all of the gross mismanagement practiced by the Barbados Labour Party, former Government, has now come home to roost and we are finding significant neglect in terms of how we will fund and manage health care in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not surprising either because when they talk of the need to build a new hospital as the sole remedy for dealing with health care in

Barbados, it becomes a bit laughable because they also promised many moons ago, it is in their Manifesto, that they would turn the St. Joseph Hospital into an acute care facility and, Sir, that is why you cannot take their Manifesto seriously.

Now I was shocked to look in the newspaper and see the Honourable Minister of Health being forced to tour a facility, and I am sure he had to use a cutlass to get through the bush and twigs at the St. Joseph Hospital. How can they face the public of Barbados with such neglect and seek to put pressure on us only after two months in Government when we have not even begun to scratch the surface of tidying up the mammoth wastage and squandermania left by the former Prime Minister of this country?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is certainly no excuse for any of the members on the Other Side, who sat beside him in Cabinet because, all of a sudden, we do not understand the tenets of collective responsibility in Cabinet but, Sir, it is usual for the Barbados Labour Party tactics to begin to lose memory and so on and begin not to understand certain things after the public has dealt with them in the manner that they have. Sir, they have convenient memories.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the issue of where we go from here is really the business of this Government. The reality though is that we have to tell Barbadians what the state of this country is, and the extent to which the Barbados Labour Party has been culpable in where we are at today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to disabuse ourselves once and for all about the whole question of the Supplementaries that the Honourable Prime Minister referred to. These Supplementaries are not usual Supplementaries, in my view. They cannot be usual Supplementaries because when you look at figures such as \$33 million to deal with the National Housing Corporations overdraft; \$11.4 million to deal with Urban rehabilitation; \$25.5 million to deal with the Barbados Defence Force pensions, The Regional Security System and so on \$20 million to deal with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to fund the payment of suppliers who have been knocking on the doors of this Government for payment; \$10.2 million in providing for cost of living allowances and \$2.1 million for welfare grant and so on.

H/A5A/5:50

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Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: What does that speak of? That speaks of gross neglect and a government that did not pay attention to its homework. It is scandalous, because they have always touted that they were the economic gurus who

knew how to manage the economy better than anybody else, the brightest and the best as it relates to fiscal management.

Sir, we have had to deal with all these issues in our Manifesto, not because we have been dreaming. Long ago, we knew that every ounce of our energies would be spent ensuring that this former Barbados Labour Party Government was not allowed to continue its destabilisation of the economy of Barbados. That is why we ensured that the public of Barbados was made privy to the many areas of squandermania and other areas of wastage.

Sir, we are also at this stage, Honourable Members of this Chamber, because we have had an inept approach to management of key projects in our country. Many of them have been highlighted in the various reports of the Auditor General. Sir, the Airport Project, \$70 million in cost overruns, causing us to spend a lot of time dealing with cost over-runs in excess of \$70 million. Further, we have had the new Prison at Dodds, and if there was one issue over which a minister ought to have tendered his immediate resignation, it is the scandal that unfolded as it relates to the pricing of Dodds. Sir, for the first time in the history, as I know it, in terms of Cabinet Government in Barbados, we have had a minister telling the country that the cost of a project was quoted in US dollars, and not in Barbados dollars.

Sir, as far I am concerned...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member really ought not to speak on matters with which he is not familiar. If it is his habit to rely on hearsay, then, perhaps, he ought to change it. The reality is, when the sum to which he is now saying was referred to in US currency, it was not a cost figure from any contractor, but it was an indicative estimate to the kind of scale of expenditure that we would have faced.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I expect the political tricks in here, but the reality is - that is why I said that I walked with this and I am going to have it all week, which sets out where there are costs overruns and where there are not. The reality is, the contractual arrangement for the Prison, and the Honourable Member for St. Joseph can confirm this, was \$288 million, and far from there being cost overruns, it came in under budget.

In relation to the Airport, it came in under budget at about \$7 million, and that money would have then been used to build the new Summervale, the building that was burnt, as the Minister of Home Affairs would be aware.

Sir, in relation to the Honourable Member misleading on the point of the airport, the airport also was not a cost over-run of seventy-something million dollars. In truth and in fact, the Airport would have had a cost of \$139 million, as its original estimate. Sir, to be precise, \$139 149 905. That was the contract price, and the revised cost was \$142 198 388. There may have been an arbitral proceeding matter emanating out of the Airport, which has to be resolved, or had to be resolved, as a result of the electrical sub-contractors work.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I did not interrupt the Honourable Member because she was on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has been quoting today extensively from a document, and I would like that document to be made a document of the House, and the Honourable Member must state what the document is that she is quoting from.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, those are not notes. That is a document.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member said that she received a document from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. It is to the end of December 2007. I am asking you to rule, Sir. That document has been quoted from extensively and it should be made a document of the House.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I received it electronically, I would make it available to him. It would have come from one of the officers in his Ministry, in the Public Investment Unit. He is entitled to get it from her. He is entitled to get on her computer and see what she gave me before the end of December, when I was Minister of Economic Affairs, and he would see that it is dated, but if it is a problem, I give the Honourable House the assurance that if he provides me with the email, or I could in fact print it and bring it to the House next week. What I have is not that.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. I want the document to be made a document of the House now, to be made available to Honourable Members. The Honourable Member quoted from the document. I am asking you to rule on it. It must be made a document of the House now. I do not want any undertakings. I want the document that the Honourable Member is quoting from, and it should be made a document of the House now, and I am asking you to rule on that matter, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the document that you referred to, can you make that document a document of the House now? Honourable Member for St. Michael North East the document is to be made a document of the House now.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, would you please hand over the document to the Clerk, please?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, if the Honourable Member is not making it a document, all that she has said, in quotation, from that document, must be struck from the record and withdrawn. I cannot imagine, there are basic courtesies, that in the 20 years that I have been in this House, that are extended to Members. I am saying that if the Honourable Member is not willing to make it a document of the House, then all that has been said, purportedly, in correcting the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central and me, must be struck from the record and withdrawn by the Honourable Member.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I have been in this Honourable House long enough, and the Honourable Member is preying on the fact that you are new. I have seen this Honourable Member, who has just sat, refuse to give this Honourable Chamber notes of his. I will continue to recognise the right of Members to speak from notes. Sir, you can look in the Standing Orders and see that.

Sir, I have told this House that I will willingly make a document of the House.

6.00 p.m.

Sequence 23

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House A5A, Sequence 24, 6.00 p.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The document that came from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and I am going to do it, because it makes a nonsense of all of their claims about cost over-runs, in relation to the Election campaign that they ran.

The Honourable Member cannot reprobate and approbate at the same time. Earlier today, he indicated that he did not want to make the document from which he read, which was from a government file, a document of the House. Sir, I would like also to see that, in the same way.

This Honourable Member for St. John, for the last 14 years in this House, refused to hand over notes to the Speaker, and if it is that we have to go back in Hansard and we have to consult...

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: No. I am not dealing with that today. The Attorney-General can now try to protect him, but the reality is that a Member is not required to hand over notes. He knows it and I know it and if he wants to waste time until 6.30 p.m., then he is entitled to do so. Sir, he thinks he can bully people in here, just because the rest of them are new and they do not know the Rules of the House.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, I am now sitting in the Chair and I do not know what would have transpired in the past, but I am asking the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East to hand over the document.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I do not have anything that can be delivered. If you want me to be a Houdini, then you would have to allow me to go to my computer to print the document and bring it for you. Sir, if you want me to produce that which I do not have, I cannot do it, because I only have my notes.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier in today's debate, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East purported to quote from a document, which she said was given to her by an official of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, prior to December 2007, but it related to projections to the end of December 2007. I did not ask to make it a document of the House then, because I believed it was a valid document.

Sir, since then, I have heard that same document being used to challenge contentions made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central, and now that I have heard the contents of that document, I am saying that the document needs to be made a document of the House because I do not believe its contents. I believe it is a ruse.

I also believe it is unworthy of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East to come in this Chamber and say that she is quoting from a document when it is, in fact, not an official document. Sir, I have never heard of that in the 20 years that I have been in this Chamber. Sir, Members are entitled in a debate to refer to their notes. However, if you quote from a document, that document has to be made a document of the House.

Sir, in a Budget debate in this House, a gentleman quoted from a pack of okras, imported from Equador in my presence, and the then Opposition required him to make that box of okras a document of the House. The person was Edgar Bourne, the then MP for Christ Church East.

Sir, I am saying that the Honourable Member held the document in her hand and quoted from it, and that questions the integrity of the document. Sir, a senior Member of Parliament should not purport to be quoting from false documents. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is trying to bring debates in this House into disrepute by quoting from false documents, and I am challenging her to make it a document of the House, so we can inspect its authenticity.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Honourable Member for St. John cannot get in here and accuse anybody of quoting from false documents. My notes with my handwriting, which under Rule 28, I am allowed to use to refresh my memory, cannot be a false document. Sir, it cannot be that you can sit in the Chair and ask me to produce my notes, and allow a Member to refer to another Member as trying to quote from a false document.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we claimed privileges when we came into this House and there is not one Member of this House who has more privileges than the other, not even the Prime Minister, and the rest of them in here better understand that, Sir.

Sir, you would not believe that this is the same Honourable Member who quarreled about the effectiveness and fairness of the Chair and who justified people walking out, in December.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I say to you that I will produce the document tomorrow morning, I will do that, Sir. I am not a criminal who comes in here and accuses the Chair of certain types of remarks, goes out and repeats them and then, all of a sudden, believes that you are more holy than the Holy Ghost when you come in here, Sir, that is not my behaviour.

Sir, I am not going to give up my rights and privileges and if it is that we are to conduct a campaign in this country to protect the privileges of Members of Parliament, whether on This Side or That Side, nothing will give me greater pleasure.

Therefore, if you want me to produce it tomorrow morning at 10.00 a.m. when the House convenes, I will do it but I am not producing my notes, if not, I will ask the Honourable Member for St. Philip West for his. I will ask

the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central for his. I will ask the Prime Minister for his, and for the rest of the week, I will be asking everybody for their notes as well.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, when you referred to the document, you never indicated you were reading from your notes. The Chair has ruled and could you please make the document a document of the House?

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is nothing to hand over other than my notes. If you do not accept that they are my notes, then you will have to take the appropriate action. I have given this Chair, with all due respect, an undertaking that the document will be provided. I will also provide the name of the Officer in the Public Investment Unit, if that is what is wanted. I am not going to let the Honourable Member for St. John, as usual, throw the ball off the wicket to ensure that it is out of play, in order to avoid the fact that those allegations which were being made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central are not true.

Sir, I cannot do better, than to undertake to give it to you tomorrow morning.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please.

House A5A, Sequence 24, 6:19:08

Monday, March 17, 2008

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John gave an undertaking earlier today on or about 12 o'clock. We are yet to see that document six hours later. It may have been there, but we are yet to see it.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: He now got it at a quarter past six. I have given an undertaking that you will get the document.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East could you please provide the copy to the Chair for inspection so that I could ensure that it is the correct document you would produce tomorrow at 10 o'clock?

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of order. I have been a member of this House since 1991 and it is traditional for

the Chair to accept the words of Honourable Members with respect not necessarily to an undertaking, because it was not even necessary for the Honourable Member to give you any undertaking. The statement with respect to their notes established in this House...

Where an Honourable Member has indicated that they are speaking from their notes, it has been traditional for the Chair to accept that. It is unfair for Honourable Members on That Side who have been in this House for a long time, to be taking advantage of your short stay in here by making a demand like that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you are insisting on that, and the Leader of This Side is asked to produce notes which she does not have, we will walk out. It is as simple as that.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is true that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew has been a member of this House for a long time. He has not been in here often and maybe the Rules might have changed in his absence, I do not know.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when undertakings are given, normally Honourable Members comply with those undertakings on the same day. Sir, I do not want any public officers name called in this Chamber because the interpretation may end up being very unfavourable to that public officer. The Honourable Member is adopting a very cavalier approach to the Rules of Parliament. The Honourable Member quoted from a document twice today. When she first quoted from it, we did not ask to make it a document of the House. When I was speaking, the Honourable Member asked for a copy of the Minutes that I quoted from, I put it there when I finished quoting from it.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I said I cannot give you now because I am speaking from it, but when I am finished you can have it and it is now in the possession of the Clerk.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You cannot bring it here tomorrow morning. Sir, I speak for myself. I have had my experiences with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and I have asked for it to be made a document of the House, and I need to see the document today. I am not relying on any basis of any tradition, and there is no such tradition.

The Honourable Member for St. Andrew has forgotten what the traditions have been in this House, having been fired from the Cabinet and opting not to carry out his Parliamentary duties in here for over eight years. He is now coming in here telling me and other Honourable Members who come here every week what are the Rules of the House. Sir, he does not even know what the book of Standing Orders looks like.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East the Chair will accept the undertaking to produce the document and a written ruling will be given before the end of this session.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of privilege. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you said a written ruling would be given, but based on what submission?

Asides.

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

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have expected that the Honourable Member for St. Joseph would have risen in his defence as it relates to my assertion that he gave the cost of the new Prison at Dodds in US dollars. He was unapologetic in that regard. It is public knowledge that the Honourable Member gave that price. He indicated that the contract price was mistakenly given in Barbados dollars when it should have been in US dollars. I challenge him to say that he did not say that.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in relation to the cost of the Prison, as Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs, I have never said that a price was given mistakenly in any other currency. I said that the contract price was cited in US dollars. I never said that it was given mistakenly in US dollars. The contract price was stated in US dollars. It is as simple as that. There was never any statement or inference that anything was mistakenly quoted or cited as anything else. The file is there. They can see it.

House A5A Sequence 25

6.10 p.m.

Monday, March 17, 2008

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, my recollection of what the Honourable Member told the people of Barbados was that the cost to the project at Dodds was erroneously stated in Barbadian currency, when it should have been quoted in United States currency. Sir, I

say that to say that is only one of the incidents that has been used in Barbados to create the kind of fiscal confusion we have today, as it relates to the public finances and cost overruns.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, the former Government of Barbados entered into a contract for the construction of a prison at Dodds, and the figure quoted in the contract was in United States currency. Sir, there is no question of a mistake. The entire transaction was negotiated on the basis of, and it proceeded on the basis of a contract figure quoted in United States currency. Sir, the Honourable Member must not mislead this House.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a Barbadian in this country, I am extremely offended that there could have been a contract being quoted in United States currency, in relation to a project being conducted in Barbados. I am even more offended that the Honourable Member, as far as my recollection goes, could have indicated to Barbadians that the project was stated in United States currency, when it should have been quoted in Barbados currency.

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: I am just saying it is a first. I have never heard it before.

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: I can only speak to what I have heard before, and it is not usual as it relates to how Cabinet operates in Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my view, this is only one of the incidents that has affected the fiscal prudence of the management of Government in Barbados. It shows the lack of accountability that Barbadians have been talking about, and we have identified that this is a glaring example of the kind of impudence as it relates to the management of the fiscal affairs of Barbados.

Sir, I want to go further because I believe these are very much connected as to the reason we have to come here and make significant provision for Supplementaries far beyond what would normally be provided for. That is why we are in a position today where we have to say to Barbadians that we, within two-and-a-half months of being in Government, have no choice but to expose the fiscal impudence of the former Barbados Labour Party. That is what we have to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that we are not mistaken in relation to any documents, I want to refer to the Auditor Generals Report, 2007, which is a document of this Honourable House. Sir, I want to point to some examples of glaring mismanagement by the former Administration, for which, in my view, they must be held fully accountable.

Sir, I refer to page 61 of that Report, falling under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. I want to refer to the example of the rental of a crane, where the Ministry rented a crane in 1997 to a firm, on certain conditions and to date, based on the Auditor Generals Report, the Ministry is yet to collect on arrears of rentals to the tune of \$44 000.

Sir, what is worst, based on the Auditor Generals finding, the same Ministry turned around and rented the same crane that was supposed to be owned by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. Sir, that is the most glaring example of fiscal ineptitude by the former Government, and it must be exposed.

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

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want briefly to move on to some of the key policy positions that we have taken, and one of the most revolutionary positions relates to the establishment of Constituency Councils. Sir, I am happy that provision has been made in the Estimates for the move towards the establishment of Constituency Councils.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I recall in this House the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East raising questions as to whether or not there was a policy on the question of Constituency Councils. Sir, I was able to do my homework, because I want to inform the Honourable Member that her former Government has had a policy on the kind of decentralisation...

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am reading from their 1994 Manifesto, at page 40. I see the Honourable Members photograph as well. The Honourable Member was a candidate at the time. This connects to the same problem where they point to inefficient functioning of statutory corporations, and the need to decentralise Government in a way that makes it more meaningful for participation by the broad masses of persons in their various Constituencies. Sir, I find it appalling that today, the Honourable Member cannot connect with a policy that is so visionary.

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

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, my time has expired, but I want to say that I endorse the focus of the Estimates and the fact that we have to take corrective measures and to expose what we found in coming to Government. Sir, I am obliged.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until Tuesday, March 18, 2008, at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until Tuesday, March 18, 2008, at 10.00 a.m., was put and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

6.28 p.m.

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SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

ARTHUR, Rt. Hon. O. S. (St. Peter)

ESTWICK, Dr. the Hon. D. C. (St. Philip West)

JONES, Hon. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)

LASHLEY, Mr. S. A. (Christ Church West Central)

MARSHALL, Mr. D. D. (St. Joseph)

MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M. A. (St. Michael North East)

PAYNE, Mr. G. W. (St. Andrew)

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

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

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

Q1. Masthead and date. The convening sentence in the source gives the date as Tuesday, March 18, 2008, but the heading and file name give Monday, March 17, 2008, which is used. Please confirm.

Q2. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q3. Minutes. Mr. Deputy Speaker calls ‘The Minutes of Tuesday, February 15, 2008’, but the motion to confirm refers to the meeting of ‘Tuesday, March 11, 2008’; 15th February, 2008 was a Friday. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Papers. The paper laid is described as the ‘12th Actuarial Review of the National Insurance Scheme as at December, 2008’, a date after this Sitting; perhaps December, 2005 or 2006 was meant. Printed as in the source.

Q5. PRESENT list. In the source several Members’ names run together on single lines of the PRESENT list (for example ‘Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.) Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.) (Prime Minister, ...) Mr. G. W. PAYNE ...’), so the list does not print one Member to a line. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 1, deficit figures. The Prime Minister gives the deficit to be financed in 2007-2008 as \$737.2 million; Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick later gives it as ‘\$735.7 million’. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Order No. 1, Mr. S. A. Lashley’s speech. Mr. Lashley opens by saying he enters ‘this debate on the Estimates 2007/2008’; the Estimates before the House are for 2008-2009. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Take-slips about 6.10-6.19 p.m.. The take-slip ‘House A5A, Sequence 24, 6:19:08’ is followed by ‘House A5A Sequence 25, 6.10 p.m.’; the times run backwards. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Monday, 17th March, 2008 at 10.00 a.m., with the Deputy Speaker, His

Honour K. St. C. Best, in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood. The Leader of the House, Hon. R. D. Jones, moved the confirmation of the Minutes and laid the 12th Actuarial Review of the National Insurance Scheme, and Standing Orders were suspended for the day.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, moved the second reading of the Appropriation Bill, 2008, the first for the new Government. He said fiscal prudence would be its hallmark and that it would aim for a balanced Budget with small manageable deficits. He gave the Revised Estimates for 2007/2008 as revenue of \$2 469.7 million and total expenditure of \$3 205.5 million, with a deficit to be financed of \$737.2 million, which was to fall to \$653 million in 2008-2009. His assumptions included real GDP growth of 3 per cent, inflation of 3.3 per cent and import cover of 17.6 weeks; taxes on incomes and profits were projected at \$936.9 million and Corporation Tax at \$550.8 million.

Much of the Prime Minister’s speech dealt with what the Government had found on taking office. He quoted the Auditor General’s Special Audit of the Urban Development Commission, reading twice the finding that persons who were ‘unemployed, unemployable, homeless, vagrants of Bridgetown, criminal deportees’ had remained on its register of contractors, and said a forensic audit had been requested. He spoke of an additional \$2 million for a committee to produce Crop Over and of the allocation of land to Mr. Hallam Nicholls. The Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur repeatedly rose on points of order, saying he had referred matters to the Attorney-General and that an FBI investigation into two public officers had produced no report, and Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley claimed privilege to call for the Hansard of a disputed matter.

After the suspension, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley replied for the first time as Leader of the Barbados Labour Party. She contrasted the economy her party inherited in 1994, including a 20-year telecommunications monopoly granted in 1991, with the one it was leaving, and urged that part of \$108 million be used for a Wages Fund to offset rising prices for the working poor and the middle class. She said removing VAT on electricity would cost the Treasury at least \$60 million, and the Prime Minister rose on points of order over arrears of nearly \$60 million for the fuel subsidy.

After a further suspension until 4.55 p.m., the Minister of Health, Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, said the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, a 600-bed facility, needed close to 60 critical care beds but had fewer than 20, and that over 200 000 tyres were at the landfill, which received about

200 a day. Mr. S. A. Lashley criticised the former Government's management, citing the cost of the prison at Dodds, which drew points of order from Mr. D. D. Marshall, and the rental of a crane by the Ministry of Public Works recorded in the Auditor General's Report, 2007; he also defended the policy of Constituency Councils.

During Mr. Lashley's speech the Prime Minister asked that a document from which Miss Mottley had quoted be made a document of the House. Miss Mottley said she had spoken from her notes and undertook to provide it the next morning; Mr. G. W. Payne rose on a point of order on the traditions of the House, and the Deputy Speaker accepted the undertaking and said a written ruling would be given. The Sitting was suspended at 6.28 p.m. until Tuesday, March 18, 2008, at 10.00 a.m.