
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday, March 20, 2008

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.
The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move the postponement of a discussion on the Appropriations Bill, for discussion on the Supplementary which was tabled yesterday.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to second that, Sir.

The question was put and agreed to in the affirmative.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES (recommitted)

RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$25 528 804 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2007/2008, AS SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 15 2007/2008, WHICH FORM THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION.

On the motion of Hon. R. D. JONES, seconded by Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, Chairman of Committees in the Chair. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, Head 13 is a request

for a Supplementary under the Office of the Prime Minister, particularly to deal with payments to the

Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation for service rendered to the State, vis-a-vis, the community-type of programmes on the behalf of the State by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. Sir, the request is for \$8 093 736, which is owed by the State to the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation.

Sir, this is a very simple matter, one not worthy of much debate. It includes such programmes as “TeleVision”, “Community Files”, CARICOM questions and answers, G.I.S. promotions, promotions of the Senior Games, Legacy Barbados, et cetera. Sir, it is those kinds of programmes that go back from January, 2007, to March, 2008.

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

Rt. Hon. OWEN S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I rather doubt that my Government would have owed the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation \$8 million for just one year. It is quite probable this is what the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation is claiming that Government has owed it for all the years. Sir, \$8 million in advertising for ten months is a lot of money. Sir, I do not want to make too fine a point of the matter but in respect of the Parliamentary debates, although this matter is being charged to the Office of the Prime Minister, there has been an arrangement between Parliament and the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation for the broadcasting of debates. Sir, it would be better if that aspect of it were to fall, for accounting purposes, under the Management Commission of Parliament, rather than it being put under the Office of the Prime Minister.

Sir, having said that, I just quickly want to say that it is important that some protocol be drawn up with the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation in respect of these broadcasts, and I do not know that there has been an agreement between the Management Commission of Parliament and the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation in

respect of these broadcasts. As I understand it as well, our debates are also broadcast on other private radios and I am not aware that there is a claim on the Treasury for those broadcasts, because people also have an interest in them and it might be that we are being fleeced here by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation but I would say no more. It is being brought to account, I do not think it is accurate to say that this is all money for one year, it seems to be a large number, I have never seen it before, but I think that the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation is getting away with murder.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I am thankful for the comments by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter. The billing goes back from January, 2007, to March, 2008, which is some 14 or 15 months and many of the issues covered the issue of Parliament, "Community Files", the NISE activities, the "Giggard" and "Boo" Drug Service acting, et cetera. They are all issues which fall under the portfolio of G.I.S., they are mostly television-type activities. These are being submitted by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation but there is always need, from time to time, to audit and to look across to ensure that they are, in fact, in sync.

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Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, as I said, it is quite a large Bill, \$8 300 736 but I think we will meet the commitment and ensure that we have greater scrutiny of the process. The other item, which is of interest to the House would be monies to meet commitment of \$507 316 for an activity, which was put on by the Commission for Pan African Affairs, the Bicentennial Global Dialogue. As a result of some partners not meeting their commitments, and some other issues relating to that conference, a deficit was recorded with some monies still outstanding. Therefore, this Supplementary is being sought for a sum of \$507 316. Sir, the conference moved from the projected cost of \$1 000 000 to the specific amount called for in this Supplementary.

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

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

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

HEAD 27

Ministry of Tourism and International Transport

- \$10 794 055.

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

Hon. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, the amount required here to supplement the original vote is \$10 794 055. This amount relates to the completion of Kensington Oval. I say completion as it predominately relates to the Australian tour as there is quite a bit of completion to be done there.

Mr. Chairman, not to prolong the matter but we all know that in order to meet the World Cup deadline a number of temporary structures were put in place that had to come back down but, clearly, you cannot have a world-class sporting arena without basic things in place. In order to meet our commitment in hosting the Australian tour, which is early in June, there are a number of things which need to be done to Kensington, and need to be done urgently. Therefore, the sum of \$10 million is required to acquire the following items, which are needed for the Australian tour:

The purchase and installation of a video board and an electronic score board. In this day and age, Mr. Speaker, you do not see the old-time score boards now, everything is done digitally and electronically so that you can have your replays and umpires' decisions being reviewed et cetera. We have to enclose the Press tribune to the media centre and also provide some furniture to the same. We need to convert the space under the Hewitt and Inniss stand and the Greenidge and Haynes stand to provide a medical station and an area for volunteers and security personnel. We also need to purchase and install a chlorinator to ensure that the proper water quality is maintained at Kensington Oval during high and low capacity.

Mr. Chairman, while we are at it, there are two other items, while not imperative for the Australian tour they need to be done to complete the facility. Sir, the majority of this \$10 million is going towards the purchase and installation of the lights including some generators and some infrastructural activity that needs to take place in order to erect these lights. Also, a plastic field cover is needed to facilitate the hosting of non-sporting cultural and entertainment events. The original purpose of Kensington Oval was for it to be a multi-use facility and so we need to have the lights and the plastic cover so that you can host events after 6.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, I do not propose at this time, because of the other events that the Committee of Supply is occupied with for the entire week to get too much into the political end of this. A lot has been said when I was over there about Kensington Oval and the way it was handled and a lot more would be said.

Mr. Chairman, at this stage, we need to complete the items and we do not need any embarrassment with the Australians coming here in June and we will have many other opportunities to speak about the way the Kensington Oval activities have been handled.

Mr. Chairman, with those few words, I ask that this Head do stand part.

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

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I do not rise in an adversarial mood but, I have already said that I will support things in Opposition that I have supported in Government but I would have taken a very clear position in this matter when I was the Minister of Finance. I indicated that I did not feel that the Government should commit any more resources to Kensington Oval no matter how deserved might be the purpose until the Barbados Cricket Association (BCA) agrees to resolve the issues in respect of ownership. A very clear proposal that was developed by the now Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance was put and approved and we thought it had been agreed to by all sides in December. Mr. Chairman, I am now being told that there is now still on the part of the BCA those who now want not to agree to what is in my judgement a reasonable proposal. I feel that the BCA has taken the people of Barbados for a ride, Mr. Chairman, and that they want to continue to take the people of Barbados for a ride. Two years ago, the present Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and others drew up a proposal in respect of ownership arrangements at Kensington Oval even before we committed ourselves to spending on the World Cup. Sir, a committee made up of Sir Neville Nicholls, Sir Stephen Emtage, Mr. Darcy Boyce and others put the proposal that they would not deal with them for more than two years. Now, more proposals have been put but I made it very clear that there should be no more money until the BCA has got its act together.

Mr. Chairman, we are now being told that there are people at the BCA who now want again to say that they will not agree to the proposals that have been put and we thought were agreed in December. Sir, I am not quarrelling with the Minister, but I made it very clear that if it wants the Government of Barbados to continue to spend money on Kensington, then resolve the outstanding issues with respect of ownership that have been before them for more than two years, drawn up by serious people in this society.

Mr. Chairman, I really now feel that in the same way they use the deadlines for the World Cup for us to commit large sums without resolving the issue and now hearing again the same argument that I have heard when I was in the Ministry that because of the Australian tour, we have to act under duress, Sir the BCA has to stop taking the

Government of Barbados and this country for a ride. While this expenditure might be necessary, I think that arrangements entered into, in good faith, must be concluded, in good faith and, Sir, somebody must tell the people of the BCA this. There was an arrangement agreed to in December that everyone thought was...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Yes, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance is who drew it up. Your Prime Minister can tell you the nature of the discussions that he has had with the BCA and now we have an agreement drawn up, people are now 'dog-dancing' about the agreement and want you to spend \$10 million. Sir, I take a strong position on this matter on this side that I could agree that we commit more resources to the finishing of Kensington but on the condition that the ownership issues are resolved.

Mr. Chairman, the reality is this. The Government entered into a good faith relationship with the Barbados Cricket Association. The land was their land.

H/5B/10:20

Sequence 2

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Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Government entered into a good faith arrangement with the Barbados Cricket Association, the land was their land, but we entered into an arrangement to build on their land, understanding that we would have an equitable interest in the new Kensington. It is an impasse. Sir, it was agreed in December, and now the people at the BCA will not allow the agreement to take place. Sir, I am not crying about the matter, nor am I crying about the Government either. I am trying to say that I will have a difficulty agreeing to this \$10 million, unless the ownership arrangements are resolved, and the Government itself cannot acting alone, resolve the ownership agreement. The Barbados Cricket Association, through its membership, has to meet and say that they agree with what is before them.

Sir, I am asking what is the status from what appeared to be the most recent impasse that you have to deal with, and is the BCA prepared to come to terms on this matter so that we can proceed in good order?

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

Mr. D. ST.E. KELLMAN: Sir, this problem could have easily been solved had the Government accepted good advice from this side. I told the Government, at the time,

that it was in its best interest to build this stadium on lands they owned. It is public knowledge that the lands to the north of Barbados, at North Stars, was very much owned...

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. The Government really got a confusing set of priorities from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. We were also told to build an airport in St. Lucy, and we were trying to raise the money to build an airport in St. Lucy, but we could not do both.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: No point of order. Honourable Member for St. Lucy, please continue.

Mr. D.ST.E. KELLMAN: As I was saying, the lands at North Stars are owned by the Government of Barbados. If we had accepted the advice we would not be today arguing whether to spend additional money at Kensington. In addition, the original Kensington would still have been there, the tourism heritage would have been intact and this particular situation would never have arisen.

Sir, the point is, we have to recognise that even though we have a problem at Kensington, and I can share the views of this Honourable House on certain matters - cricket must be played, it is not just a game anymore, it is part of the development of our tourism industry, therefore, we must continue to spend these funds to ensure that we have an end product that would be in the interest of Barbados.

I said previously the only way we can solve this problem is by doing exactly what we would have done, if we had to acquire a piece of land that was owned by some poor person in Barbados. This is only my idea. Sir, this situation cannot continue. Sir, this confusion cannot continue.

Sir, in my opinion, it is in the best interest also of the BCA, for this land to be acquired and taken out of the realm of confusion. We have to rise to the occasion and recognise that this is a very serious issue, an issue in the interest of Barbados and it has to be resolved. Based on what is occurring now, if we allow the present circumstances to continue, it will become contentious, cricket will suffer, tourism will suffer, and the good name of Barbados will suffer. We have to make a decision on this. We have to admit that we made an error, and we went to bed on an occasion when we should not have gone to bed. Now we have a situation that is not operating in the interest of the public of Barbados, and some action must be taken.

It also demonstrates that sometimes when things are done in good faith, you also have to recognise that what

you think, is not necessary what other people are thinking. I think that it is in the interest of Barbados to recognise that we have to solve this particular problem, and this Honourable House would do well to debate the Resolution under the Land Acquisition Act to resolve this problem, to allow the BCA what it deserves, and the country of Barbados what it owns.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. H.L. SEALY: Sir, I noted the Honourable Member for St. Peter started by saying that he is not rising adversarially. I do not know if I should say whether I appreciate that or not, but in keeping with that tone, I would say, discussions are ongoing between the Ministry with the responsibility for sport and the BCA at resolving the ownership of the Kensington Oval. As I understand it, they are at an advanced stage. Eventually the management of Kensington Oval will be transferred to the Ministry of Sport, but in the meantime, we still have an incomplete facility costing more than \$150 million already, and we have to complete it. I do not think that the Honourable Member for St. Peter would want us to have a facility that can only be used for daytime activity, a multi-purpose facility that has really been used for nothing after the World Cup Final, other than a funeral and the Swearing-in Ceremony.

Asides.

Hon. H.L. SEALY: Sir, we understand that there will be other opportunities to discuss this, including the comments of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. In the meantime, we just want to get this facility finished, so that the people of Barbados can once again enjoy the major cricketing events and other activity at Kensington Oval. I beg that this Head stand part.

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

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I will support the Government in every reasonable endeavour to bring this matter to conclusion. Sir, immediately after the World Cup, I met with the leadership of the Barbados Cricket Association to settle this matter, so that we could commit the resources. This matter should not be here now.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, two years before the World Cup, a Committee of Steve Emptage, Neville Nicholls and Darcy Boyce, made proposals in respect of the ownership of the Barbados Cricket Association. They

refused to act upon them, and the Government of Barbados, the Government is one Government in a sense, is being held up to ransom by the refusal of the Barbados Cricket Association to take action on what was before it. If nothing had been presented specifically, then I would accept the responsibility, Sir. Sir, two years in advance of the World Cup, specific proposals were presented in respect of how we are going to own, what we are investing in, and they refused to act. The excuse then was, that you had to act under pressure because the World Cup triggered the expenditure. We are being told again, we have to act, now, because of the Australian tour, although more than a year ago, this matter was sought to be resolved. In December a specific proposal on both sides was presented and they are now acting on what they agreed to. It is unconscionable, it is disagreeable, it is disgusting that a serious institution wanting to deal with a Government should believe that by drawing out a process, they can have their way.

Sir, I will support, and I strongly will support actions to be taken by the Government to bring this matter to a resolution. We are committing the tax payers' money to an enterprise that people are saying is theirs entirely. The point I want to make to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, is they are not only claiming the land now, they are saying that the Government has built on their land now and we do not have an equitable interest in it, although we sought to negotiate that equitable interest from the outset. In their view, it is not just a question of acquiring the land, they now want to acquire all things in which they put \$150 million in.

Sir, I will support the strongest action taken on this particular matter, because what is being done by an institution is wrong.

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

The question that Head 27 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 37

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS

AND TRANSPORT

\$683 147 000

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

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, this Supplementary allocation under Head 37 is as stated...

5B 10.30 a.m.

Sequence 3

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House 5B, Sequence 04, 10.30 a.m.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, this Supplementary allocation under Head 37 is as stated, \$686 147 000 and this is for two specific areas. One is for road rehabilitation under the programme set up with Rayside Construction and C.O. Williams Construction. The details of the roads that were actually completed are listed for the scrutiny of those who may. Sir, that amount is \$2, 965 539. 48. The other amount is for utilities, basically for the street lighting and metered billing, and that amount is \$3 117 607.

With those details, Sir, I beg to move that Head 37 stand part.

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

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the Honourable Member would please give us the details of the roads in St. Michael, Christ Church, St. Philip, St. George and St. John, because only the parishes are here in the addendum. Therefore, I would be grateful to have the list for those roads.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, I would not have the kinds of details that I am sure the Honourable Member may require, but I will make sure that the officers in the Ministry make that information available to the Member.

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. Sir, if I may give way, I would like for all five parishes. I just want to see where the programme has gotten and what these roads are for, so I am not being contentious.

If the Honourable Member who is trying to create disturbances in this House would do his best and speak to the Deputy Speaker and to the Attorney-General, then he would know, as usual, he is making false allegations, because those documents were submitted since Tuesday morning at 10 o'clock. Therefore, in the spirit in which I have treated this House, I am asking the Honourable Minister to provide before the end of the day, the list of the roads. Sir, you cannot come and ask for \$2.965 million, and while I accept the Minister may not have it in his head, but it is a phone call away from his PS. Sir, I am asking him to give this Honourable Chamber an undertaking that in the

same way that I submitted what I had to submit, he will submit his information before the end of the day.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, I do not know why the Honourable Member is fulminating like this under a very small issue. In actual fact, this is information that she should already be armed with. It is their programme that we are paying for, so I am really amazed. Maybe, she should ask the Honourable Member for St. George North, because before he demitted office, he should have had that information.

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I am not aware that the Honourable Member for St. John made the Honourable Member for St. George North the Minister of Public Works. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South is now the Minister of Public Works. We are not on a political platform, and the Honourable Member has a duty to provide it to this Chamber, if he wants us to agree to the Supplementary.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, for the third time. I am committing to this House to provide the details that the former Minister should have provided. I will provide the information, not only for St. Michael but for all the other parishes that she may want.

I beg to move that this Head stand part.

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

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

HEAD 43 - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS - \$50 550

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

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Chairman, I stand to request the amount of \$50 550 for the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, Programme 277 Youth Affairs and Sports. This amount is required for staff payments. The cost of payments for substitutes for officers who had their sick leave extended, during this financial year, and payments to substitutes for officers acting in higher posts, outside of the Ministry. Sir, it is quite a simple matter and none that should cause any contention in this Honourable Chamber.

I therefore move that Head 43 stand part.

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

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

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

On the separate motions of Hon. R. D. JONES, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, the Resolution was read a first and second time and passed.

House 5B, Sequence 04, 10:40:14

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ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Honourable House recognises the presence of the following visiting Members of Parliament of Canada, Cheryl Gallant, Member of Parliament; the Honourable Consigilio Di Nino, Senator; the Honourable Michel Biron, Senator; Mr. Marcel Lussier, Member of Parliament; Douglas Holland, Counsellor, Political; Mrs. Charlotte Blumenshein, Political Officer; Ms. Danielle Labonte, Member of Parliament; and Mr. Michael Holden, Member of Parliament; and His Excellency David Marshall, Canadian High Commissioner.

The House reverted to Committee of Supply.

ORDER NO. 1 (RESUMED)

HEAD 53 (RESUMED)

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, this morning I intend to continue to speak on Head 53 as there are one or two areas on which we want to spend a little time. The first is the area of national insurance. This is a new addition to the Ministry of Health. It was formerly under the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the hard work that the employees and the former board members of the National Insurance Board would have carried out over the years, sometimes under very trying circumstances.

Mr. Chairman, after having to review some fundamental issues with respect to our national security net, I have some concerns that I have to raise because the future of pensions in Barbados must be protected. Mr. Chairman, it has become necessary that some changes are to be made with respect to national insurance especially

with respect to how the national insurance funds are spent in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, the former administration engaged the national insurance funds in ways that this Government, while in Opposition, has had to criticise. Mr. Chairman, I am going to ensure that this administration maintains the use of the national insurance funds in ways that would solve a number of fundamental and critical social issues in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, we need to move way beyond simply whether or not you get five or six per cent return on the investment, whether or not we are looking at short term investments, on-lending to banks or other financial institutions or whether or not we engage in longer term investments.

Back then, Mr. Chairman, I questioned the logic of the heavy investment of the national insurance funds in a lot of Government paper. Mr. Chairman, I still hold the view that if 60 or 65 per cent of your investments are tied up with respect to Government paper, that there are some fundamental risks there.

Mr. Chairman, one of the new strategies of this Administration is to utilise the national insurance funds to help with providing housing solutions in Barbados. We are not going to get involved with the establishment of office complexes that would start out at \$33 million or \$35 million and end up at the present time costing \$91 million and escalating. We intend to bring down quite rapidly that backlog of over 16 000 applications for housing solutions at the National Housing Corporation.

This Administration thinks that we can safely and effectively utilise the cash risk capability of the national insurance and safeguard returns on the investment and that it would not provide any risk with respect to the national insurance funds being solvent while at the same time allowing for Barbadians to have an opportunity at owning a home.

Mr. Chairman, the plan is very simple. Very soon we are going to be enunciating a joint arrangement where we would establish a collaboration, to this end, we would engage a financial institution. We would on-lend to that institution and we would ask that institution to utilise those funds to on-lend to Barbadians in terms of mortgages. In doing it this way, we could contain the interest rates spreads and make sure that we maintain an investment return that is significantly above that of the short term investments in Barbados, whether they are three months or six months short term investments, and at the same time we would be solving a fundamental problem in this country, which is the provision of housing solutions.

House 5B Sequence 5

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Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, that is why I said at the beginning that we are going to shift our focus, and I intend to move very shortly in that direction, with respect to how the funds of the National Insurance Scheme are used in this country.

Mr. Chairman, another area of concern which I intend to address very soon is staff shortage at the National Insurance Office. I understand how the financial operations, especially in terms of auditing and reconciliation, are being hampered by the lack of human resources. Sir, what has happened is that many of the persons who were formally trained, would have taken up private sector jobs because of increase in their salaries.

Mr. Chairman, what has constrained the National Insurance Office, even though it reimburses Government, is its capacity to be able to hire its own staff directly, even though it is a statutory board. Sir, the National Insurance Office now has to go through the usual Public Service route in order to hire persons, and that is part of the reason there are major staff shortages. It is also part of the reason why the institution is suffering at the core, with respect to its technical personnel getting the job done.

Mr. Chairman, I have a responsibility to protect the people's money in Barbados and what I find even more distressing is the fact that the National Insurance Scheme has not had an audit done since 2001. Sir, something is fundamentally wrong. Sir, I have also been informed that the 1998/1999 Financial Statements have not be signed off on. Sir, this is a serious state of affairs with taxpayers future in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, that is what occurred under the former administration and under the former Minister of Finance but you can rest assured this new administration is going to revise the legislative framework, to ensure that the National Insurance Office could adequately staff itself, given that it provides its own remuneration to staff. That will be altered under this administration.

Mr. Chairman, I also have a problem with the fact that we have spent about \$36 million to establish an Information Technology programme in that institution and after spending \$36 million and several years of attempting to implement it, the programme is probably about 60 per cent introduced. Sir, what is even more frustrating is that the three most integral modules required for the institution to carry out its mandate, which are a reconciliation module, an audited module and a benefits module, are not in place.

Sir, how could an institution function like that, under the watch of the former Prime Minister? Mr. Deputy Speaker, you could rest assured, come hell or high water, it is going to get straightened out.

Mr. Chairman, it is no wonder that Barbadians have been made aware of the misappropriation of taxpayers money. Sir, we have to clean those things up. There has already been \$36 million spent, would it be \$100 million now to put it right? And that side could come here and pontificate now they are in Opposition? That is why they are in Opposition.

Mr. Chairman, I want to assure workers at the National Insurance Office that I will create the legislative framework for them to be able to hire their own staff. I will also ensure that whatever obstacles that are in place, that are preventing the completion of the implementation of that Information Technology programme will be resolved. Mr. Chairman, I have already said that nationally audits will be done, and certain instructions have already been given.

Mr. Chairman, I will leave the National Insurance Head by simply restating a policy position that is fundamental, that is that the National Insurance monies, the people's monies, are going to be used to help solve some of the more pressing social problems in Barbados. It is not going to be frittered away in large office complexes here and there, with massive cost overruns and other things like steel in there.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, very shortly when the Minister of Housing and Lands is in better health, we will announce that joint policy position in the interest of Barbadians.

Mr. Chairman, I know the National Insurance Office is also responsible for the Severance Payment programme and the Sugar Workers' Providence Fund. Sir, our responsibility as a Government is to ensure that Barbadians and our children have a future, with respect to their pensions and security structures. Sir, I remember the former administration establishing the Catastrophe Fund and increasing the National Insurance contributions and that while they were doing that, the policy framework has been one where the risk and insolvency have continued.

Mr. Chairman, it not only relates to the demographic changes in Barbados, in fact, after going through the financials of the National Insurance....Mr. Chairman, the National Insurance Scheme is a cash-rich entity, therefore, I would want to know from the former Prime Minister what was the real motive behind some of the adjustments made to the National Insurance Scheme. Sir, I am very well

aware of the demographic changes. I have also read the actuarial reports and at some stage this debate will get to the level I want it to reach.

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Dr. the Hon. D.C. ESTWICK: ...because there are some things I want to expose so I want the debate to go down that road.

Mr. Chairman, I know my five minutes are almost up so I will sit to come back and give the Honourable Member for St. Peter a chance to speak.

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

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, this is the first time in a debate in this House that a Minister has called for assistance from the other side because even before I have risen to speak, he called upon me to speak. Sir, I am glad for this debate because I feel it has to be joined. Mr. Chairman, all across the world, the management of social security systems are proving to have some of the most intractable difficulties. There are states in the United States of America where the social security system has not been fixed. The cash position of a social security system at a moment in time does not reflect its obligations; its obligations to sustain itself through history. The Honourable Member says that the National Insurance is in cash and, Sir, of course, it is in cash. The question is what is going to happen in 2010 and what is going to happen in 2025.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, I listened to the gentleman in silence and I would like to speak. I want to start where it ends. Sir, Barbados is an aging society and with nothing more, although the system is in cash today, if we did not fix the system over a period of time by sometime in the known future, based upon actuarial studies, it will take the income of four working people to pay the pension of one person or, at that moment the contribution rates would have had to rise by up to 35 per cent. Sir, what you have to do is to carry out now a programme of reform to avert that potential catastrophe. Sir, in some countries in the world, it has not even been engaged.

Mr. Chairman, a few years ago, the Government of Barbados, the private sector and the best actuaries in Barbados had a special consultation as to how we will fix the National Insurance Scheme of this country to avert the situation, where the children of today could not get a

pension tomorrow despite the cash position of the Fund today.

Sir, the cash position of the Fund today does not bear upon how the Fund is going to deal with its obligations into the future. This is why there is such a fierce debate taking place in the United States of America in relation to when are they going to fix their social security system.

Mr. Chairman, you know sometimes a little learning is a dangerous thing. Actuaries do projections of the obligations and the financial circumstances of a social security system, taking into account things pertaining to the ages of the population, life expectancy, and especially life expectancy. We are now living in a society where the life expectancy is greater than it was 25 years ago and with the changing conditions of medical science, it is possible that the life expectancy of tomorrow's generation will be greater than that of today and, Sir, all these things have to be taken into account by determining how the National Insurance is to be structured.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say that if the Minister is reacting to the cash available immediately, that is available today as the basis upon which he wants to change an insurance scheme whose viability sometimes have to be projected 30 years into the future, I would urge that he resubmits it to serious review because what we have in place is as a result of the best people in the insurance industry in Barbados, the Government and the labour movement sitting at a special consultation and trying to fix it. The immediate cash position of the National Insurance Scheme is of no serious consequence in making decisions that would affect what happens in 2024 because that is what you have to plan for now.

Mr. Chairman, the fact is that you can either do one or two things. You can wait until 2024 and raise the rate to 35 per cent and let four working people pay for the pension of one or you make the changes now so that over a period of time what will confront you in terms of the pension can be met. (11:06:02)

Mr. Chairman, I would urge the Honourable Member to proceed with sobriety with respect to the National Insurance investments. The National Insurance has total capital of about \$2 billion and there is an Investment Committee of the National Insurance that has to make judgements as to how you invest over \$2 billion. There was a time when there was not enough local investments in Barbados to absorb that kind of investment. The National Insurance would have run up almost \$200 million in foreign investments because there were simply not enough local investment to absorb the surpluses of the National Insurance. The National Insurance is building surpluses now and will continue to build surpluses and every year you have to find a way of investing these

surpluses. As much as \$200 million have been invested abroad because there was always not enough local investment. In fact, I still support that to have a sufficiently diversified portfolio that some proportion of the National Insurance Fund, for safety and other reasons and for yield, will have to be invested abroad.

Mr. Chairman, I have said that a little learning is a dangerous thing. The present director of Finance and Economic Affairs was the former director of the National Insurance. The present Permanent Secretary in the Minister of Finance succeeded Mr. Smith in the National Insurance Department and I give you the assurance that there are no persons who are more assiduous in ensuring the viability of any investments made by the National Insurance than the Director of Finance, who was the former Director of National Insurance and the Permanent Secretary in the Minister of Finance. Sir, in every instance where they have to make a local investment, they have made sure that the returns to the National Insurance have been strong and sound. We have had to find with a portfolio of \$2 billion, every year the Investment Committee of the National Insurance has to find ways of investing the surplus. We have had to find investments for the National Insurance at home to prevent so much of the surpluses of the National Insurance having to be invested abroad.

Sir, for example, the UN House is a National Insurance investment but the Government had to build into the Estimates a lease payment such that the arrangement could meet any actuarial review. All of the local investments that the National Insurance would have made would have had to meet actuarial review. The Government has the responsibility for that as well and gives assurance that we will get a good return on it.

Mr. Chairman, I wish the Honourable Member would look at the portfolio of the National Insurance because, as I have said, a little learning is a bad thing, he will find that increasingly, the National Insurance makes local investment. Sir, the United States of America's social security is part of central Government's revenues and when you speak about the savings of National Insurance in the United States of America, it is because the Government is using National Insurance to pay for the war in Iraq but in our instance, it is separate and distinct.

H/5B/11:10

Sequence 7

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Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, when one speaks of saving National Insurance in the United States, it is because the Government is using the National Insurance to pay for the war in Iraq, but in our instance, it is separate and

distinct. The National Insurance has increasingly been steered away. It invested in Government securities, because no Government in Barbados has ever failed to be able to pay its debts.

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

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, I will come back, because this is a serious debate.

You will find that the Investment Committee, and there is an Investment Committee that makes operational decisions in collaboration with the Director of Finance and the Parliamentary Secretary of in the Ministry of Finance, have made sure that you more and more steer the holding of Government Paper in the direction of debentures, the longer term and better yielding, than the short-term.

Sir, when I return, I will discuss with the Minister the implications of now allowing the National Insurance to hold Government debt. He is saying that he is opposing National Insurance holding Government debt, but he wants the National Insurance to lend to the National Housing Corporation, which is a Government agency.

Asides.

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: On a point of order, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. I never said that I was opposed to the National Insurance holding Government Paper. I never said that.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, I thought I heard that there was a criticism that it had meant to hold a lot of Government . . .

Sir, the point I am making is, the Honourable Member is now saying that he wants the National Insurance to invest in the programme of the National Housing Corporation, for housing. Sir, that is an investment that the Investment Committee and the actuaries will sit down and appraise.

Sir, it lends to the central Government. We wanted seriously for the National Insurance to be able to be part of the investment in the Port, rather than our having to borrow. The Port is ours and we feel that part of the surpluses of the people should be invested in the people's infrastructure, and we feel that the corporatisation of the Port should allow the National Insurance to invest in the Port. We feel that the airport, as well, should be put on a sound corporate footing. We want to corporatise it to be able to generate returns, and offer itself as a place where the National Insurance can invest.

If this Government now wants to feel that the National Insurance should invest in housing, that is its right, but understand that you will have to sit down and make sure that decisions about the National Insurance are not taken about today only. Actuaries try to project the viability of the National Insurance well into the future, and what we have now is a programme to make sure that a fund that was going to go bust. That is the point, Sir. The Fund can go bust in 2034, although it is in cash today. Sir, all that I am therefore saying is . . .

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, I made it very clear that what we have now in place as a programme for the operation of the National Insurance Fund and its reform was not something that I devised. I am no repository of knowledge. We constituted a task force drawn from the labour movement, the private sector, the insurance community, the best actuaries, and sought to devise something to reform the National Insurance. It was not of my doing. It was presented to the stakeholders of Barbados at a special consultation. I am urging that if you now feel that what has been put in place, based on the best actuarial advice, is not sound, before you rush in to effect something that is as complex as managing funds over a 30 or 40-year period . . .

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has one minute wind up.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, I will come back and deal with issues in respect of the operational independence in relation to the National Insurance. I will write books about these, I will.

Thank you.

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

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, perhaps it is appropriate that I come in and amplify what was also said and reinforced by the last Honourable Member, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, because a part of the difficulty is, the Honourable Minister is speaking against a background, where the majority of Barbadians, who may be listening to this debate, may not understand fully how the National Insurance Scheme functions. They are therefore likely to react to his allegations, and his manner of speech in a way, that will cause them to have no confidence in their social security system, in circumstances where the one thing this country has always been able to do, since the establishment of the National Insurance Fund, in 1967, by the late Mr. Barrow, has been to have confidence in it. Every employee and every self-employed person in this country, is required to contribute to that Fund with the understanding that when

they reach a certain age, or in the event of certain incidents happening, they can draw from it. Sir, the difficulty is, if you were to listen to the Honourable Member's speech, alone, you may be left to feel that you are in a dangerous murky situation.

Sir, let me start from the beginning. The composition of the Board of the National Insurance Scheme is required and set out in law. The Minister who is in charge, and in this instance is the Minister of Health and Social Security, only have the option for two members, the rest of the Board is determined by legislation. There is a representative of the labour movement in the form of the representative of the Barbados Workers Union, and more often than not, it has been Sir Roy Trotman. There is a representative of the National Union of Public Workers. I believe now that is Mr. Dennis Clarke, and prior to him, it was Mr. Joseph Goddard. There is a representative of the Barbados Employers Confederation; a representation of the tourism community, because of the scale of investments there. Indeed, the two persons who the minister has chosen to appoint, in our case, initially when we came to Government, were Sir Henry Forde, as Chairman, and Mr. Stephen Alleyne, who was an actuary by profession, and when he demitted office, Mr. Codrington, a former employee of the Central Bank, I believe Bernard Codrington is his name. Sir, the composition of the Board has always been something that has been taken very carefully.

In addition to that, as the Honourable Member for St. Peter said, the staff at the Ministry of Finance, because of their previous experience in leading that organisation, have strict rules as to what can constitute legitimate investments. Unless the appraisals meet the returns on investment that are necessary to sustain a pass by an actuarial review, there are refused, but I go further. Sir, there is a cap, and I am not sure that the Minister is aware of this, of 10 per cent in terms of investment into local companies. That 10 per cent holding, in any holding company, can only be exceeded with the authority of Cabinet. It was exceeded in relation to the Barbados Light and Power Company, simply because it was felt that Barbadians, for the same reasons that the Honourable Member for St. Peter outlined in relation to the Port and airport, that it is a monopoly situation that must provide power supply to the entire island, and that it was a worthy investment, particularly since the Government was also guaranteeing loans for the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited to the European Investment Bank, and we felt that we needed to have a larger stake in there. I believe its holdings in the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited is about 26 per cent of that institution. Sir, in every instance where the National Insurance Scheme wants to invest more than 10 per cent in any local company, it can only do so with the authority of Cabinet, because it limits its exposure in the event of those

companies facing difficulties and, therefore, you are better able to manage risk in relation to your investment.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter spoke about the fact, that very often the limited investment opportunities in Barbados have forced us to have to agree to allow it to invest some of its portfolio outside of Barbados. In addition to that, if were to look at the domestic scene in relation to Government Paper, the National Insurance Scheme is very often competing with commercial banks and other financial institutions. It does not have the whole range of options to attribute to itself the opportunity to invest in all of Government Paper. Indeed, if you speak to members of the Board, or former members of the Board, you will understand that there were some days when they were forced to hold as much as \$175 million overnight or for days, simply because there were opportunities other than putting it in a bank. Sir, that is not going to give ...

11.20 a.m.

Sequence 8

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House 5B, Sequence 09, 11.20 a.m.

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: ...

Sir, you would understand that there were some days when they were forced to hold as much as \$175 million overnight or for days, because there were no opportunities, other than putting it in a bank. Sir, that is not going to give you necessarily your best yield. I want to come to a broader issue because as we have indicated, you are free to make decisions, as to what you believe those investments should be in, that is your right, but they must pass muster with the Investment Committee, such that when the actuarial reviews are done, there is no threat to the viability to the fund.

I go further. In relation to the question of how you do it, and what you do, I trust and hope there will be a greater degree of caution, than the promise which you have made in your Manifesto to upfront, increase contributory pensions of the National Insurance Scheme to \$7 032 a year, without reference to the fact, as to whether an actuarial review has been done, such that it could be sustained.

I only ask the Minister to give this House the assurance that the Actuarial Review will be done before seeking to raise the pension, such that the work which was done to reform the NIS Pension Scheme in the last few years will not come to naught, as a result of decisions that may not, as I said, pass muster with the Actuarial Review.

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

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

It is a serious matter and to that extent, I ask the Minister for that, Sir.

I want to make one broader point. Sir, what is going on in the international economy is of serious worry. You have effectively seen a credit crunch that has punched a \$400 billion US dollar hole in the capital of major banks. Sir, what has transpired with Bear Stearns this last weekend is of serious concern to us as well, particularly since Bear Sterns has been the investment bank that has shown the greatest interest in the region.

Sir, you have a situation, where it is likely that the volatility and, indeed, the risk aversion that is now being shown in the markets, may well affect our capacity for external borrowing in the near to medium terms. This Government will have to make judgments about its programme, not only based on the revenue that it collects in the context of this Estimates, but in terms of the financing of the deficit, recognising that the international environment within which it is functioning, is highly unstable.

Sir, the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter had to make similar judgments in 2001, after 9/11 and we were pilloried as a Government for taking precautionary action, in circumstances where there was likely volatility in the market because of the event that had occurred in the world. Sir, we would have then taken those decisions.

I raise it also in another context. The Neal and Massey decision to acquire the shares in BS&T will potentially lead to an additional \$300 million in liquidity in this economy. Sir, unless we find appropriate ways as a matter of urgency, to be able to hold some of that liquidity in savings, we run the risk of it going outside of the country first and foremost, and we run the risk of it being expended in consumption related activity, which will have pressure on the balance of payments. At the end of the day, I believe that it is not just for the Government in the current international economic environment to take a hands-off approach, such that its own programme, the stability of Government finances, and the ability of the Government to finance its deficit, is left to serendipity.

I trust and hope that this will also be taken into account, when looking at what should appropriately be the investment opportunities from the surpluses of the National Insurance Fund, so as to be able to maintain its viability as the key institution, which will protect the welfare of Barbadians in their elder years.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I would like to specifically address issues in respect of the status of the employees of the National Insurance Board and the capacity to change it, Sir.

The Social Security System that Barbados has inherited is, in my judgment, one of the best things that the National Hero, the late Rt. Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, did in this country. It was established in 1967. One of the provisions of the National Insurance Act that has survived throughout the years, is Article 11, which indicates that the Minister shall by order under section 2 of the Civil Establishment Act, establish the offices which shall constitute the offices on the Board's establishment, which offices shall for all purposes be deemed the offices in the public service.

Sir, from 1967, the persons working at the National Insurance Board, although they were working for a Board, under Chapter 11 of the Act, were persons appointed to established posts in the public service of Barbados, and by that condition, enjoyed Security of Tenure of office and rights of pensions - which at that time were different from now - that were very clearly defined, insofar as they were set out under the Civil Establishment Act.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: There are some people in Barbados who want to enjoy the security of employment that comes from holding established posts, being designated as public officers, while at the same time, they want to be able to enjoy the benefits of being sometimes treated as if they were private employees. Sir, if the Minister is going to rush ahead as he says and change the status of the employees, he should remember that he is going to have it on both sides. There are some, and we had to face it, who said that they are in established posts that are parts of the Civil Establishment Act, and they are public officers within the meaning of the Public Services Act, and you cannot just alter our conditions of service to our disadvantage, by the implication of now wanting us to be put under a condition, other than being public officers of Barbados.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I am saying that if you now want to make a change, then you have to make a fundamental change to the Act, which would stop the persons who are now employed in established posts from being established posts and, I believe, you have to change something that has been of importance since 1967.

Sir, the hospital was always a full Government department, but in the case of the National Insurance, the National Insurance staff are secured but the National Insurance has full operational independence. Sir, I make that point to respond to some of the things the Member has said.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, perhaps we can come back to that issue. I want to make the point that you would notice that what used to come to the House was the full budget of the QEH, but the only thing that has ever come to this House for the approval, are the salaries of the National Insurance Scheme staff because they are enshrined in the law as public employees. Sir, the National Insurance Board has full operational independence.

Therefore, the Minister does not get involved although I know of some of the problems at the Board. He called for the Minister to say why certain operational things were not done, and why the Management Information System problems were there.

Sir, it is not a Government department in that sense of the word. He has to respect the law and operational decisions in respect of the National Insurance Board. In relation to the Management Information Systems and so on, do not come to a Minister, because of its operational independence. This is what I am making.

House 5B, Sequence 09, 11:30:14

Thursday, March 20, 2008

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, he says that perhaps you would want to do it in the case of the hospital.

Mr. Chairman, the notion of a modern hospital being run as a Government department is part of the reason the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has problems. You cannot run something as complex as a hospital in the way in which the hospital used to be run, namely that every decision at the hospital had to come through a clerk, a registry, another clerk, an Administrative Officer and then back down.

Mr. Chairman, if there are issues in respect of having it to run as a Board, you should solve them. Mr. Chairman, it is better to have an institution as complex as a hospital run with a board with clearly dedicated funding and clearly dedicated staff. Mr. Chairman, a large part of its problems was that everything had to be routed through a bureaucracy in the Ministry of Health and flexible decisions could not have been made in good time. For example, Sir, you would find that there were elevators that were bought and nobody could install them because they had to be passed from point

A to point B. Mr. Chairman, there are a few places in the world today where hospitals are run as Government departments. The people have voted for a change, and if they want to change it, they can change it, but my advice to them is to make the Board structure function effectively.

There is no other institution in Barbados that in and of itself alone spends as much money as the hospital. It could spend \$200 million a year. The primary and secondary schools together spend \$150 million and each of them has a board. Do you get the point I am making, Sir? The Queen Elizabeth Hospital as a single institution is this year spending \$151 million.

Mr. Chairman, we see the virtue of not having schools run as Government departments, but would want to have an institution employing all kinds of professional staff and having to make technical decisions and operational decisions functioning as a Government department. I do not agree with it. I am not saying that things are perfect at the hospital but it is better that you seek to allow it to be run effectively as a board rather than carry it back as a Government department, but that is their judgement to call.

Mr. Chairman, decisions have been made about the national insurance fund and its reform that I want to speak about as well. The national insurance fund in Barbados was a strange fund. There were Ministers of Finance in the past who imposed on the national insurance fund obligations that should not have fallen into a national insurance fund. Barbados is the only country in the world that has something called a non-contributory old aged pension. Past Ministers of Finance used to come here and glorify and say; as of midnight tonight the non-contributory pension shall be increased. There were political decisions made without reference to the financial viability of the fund.

Part of the reform of which I have spoken is reform as to how we treat non-contributory pensions. We have determined that persons who have never in their lifetime been in a working condition to contribute to national insurance could, on the presentation of an affidavit, still get a non-contributory pension. However, rather than having the National Insurance Board pay the non-contributory pensions, the Ministry of Finance now pays for it so people could still qualify, but it has to be on the basis of an affidavit that shows that during your lifetime you could not have contributed.

Mr. Chairman, one of the reasons there was that stress on the national insurance fund was that there was a social security system which was both paying people who were contributing to it and people who were not contributing to it. As Minister of Finance, Sir, I took responsibility for the fact that I separated them.

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

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, we also made a determination that any future changes in the minimum contributory national insurance pensions and in consequence the non-contributory pension would have to be determined by actuaries. Having fixed it, do not let us go back to a situation where a Minister of Finance for political reasons could come and say I am increasing the non-contributory pension.

Mr. Chairman, we also determined that once the actuaries had made recommendations as to what should be a minimum contributory pension, we would set the non-contributory pension at 80 per cent of it and change each *pari passu*. Therefore, in December last year when we agreed to the change in the non-contributory pension it was because actuaries had said that the social security system, taking its long term into consideration, could afford X amount as a minimum contributory pension, so you could then set the non-contributory pension at 80 per cent of it.

Mr. Chairman, it is for the Government to change the methodology, and it is the Government's right to do that, for setting the minimum contributory pension and the non-contributory pension.

We reformed the system not only with a view to its immediate cash but down to 2065 and we set in train a procedure for determining how much at any point the National Insurance Fund can pay out as benefits to those who contributed and by implication we set in train a process to determine what would be the burden that the Ministry of Finance has to take on the basis that a non-contributory pension should be 80 per cent of a contributory pension.

Mr. Chairman, if you now come and change the non-contributory pension outside the concept of an actuarial review and you increase it by 25 per cent, that is not a one-off, you would increase the base by 25 per cent for the entire period of the Fund's existence.

Mr. Chairman, I am not saying that the Government has no right to do these things, but I want them to be sure that if they are going to increase the minimum contributory pension by as much as 25 per cent, they are also going to change everything up the ladder because there is a ceiling. If they change the minimum contributory pension, they may well find that the new minimum is higher than some of the existing scales, and that there has to be a rippled effect, which may mean that the expenditure of the Fund can be changed in a drastic way.

Sir, I understand the Minister would want to change it and he has a right to change it. Mr. Chairman, I will give

him a little advice, it is not gratuitous. Almost in the modern history of financial institutions most of the problems have been caused by people making investments in real estate or real estate related developments. There generally tend to be a mismatch between the assets and the liabilities of the institution.

In Jamaica, the financial sector institutions' problems were caused in large measures by imprudent real estate and housing developments. Do you remember the Savings and Loans, Sir? The same problem occurred in the United States of America in the 1980s and 90s. Mr. Chairman, the biggest problem affecting the United States of America economy is the impact of subprime mortgages and investments by institutions in subprime mortgages.

Mr. Chairman, I am not saying that it is not a desirable thing to take social security funds and invest them in housing, but if you do that, you must wrap them in the integrity of actuarial studies to make sure that they are sound. Mr. Chairman, while one may want to make sure that there are social solutions in the countries, one must not do things without sound actuarial advice, the history is too severe. Sir, I know what I am talking about.

In housing, everybody wants subprime. Part of the issue at the National Housing Corporation is that you have subprime lending rates. When the rest of the market was lending at whatever, the National Housing Corporation and the Barbados Mortgage Finance were lending at six percent, so we already have an element of subprime housing finance in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, we introduced the concept of 100 per cent mortgages. In the United States of America that issue of a 100 per cent mortgage is now a problem because many people borrow more than one mortgage and started to invest and invest. Sir, I am not saying that it should not be considered, because if the National Housing Corporation could invest in building UN buildings and in the airport for a return, it could invest in housing.

Mr. Chairman, I am urging that if it is to take money that has to give returns on a sustainable basis over the long term, to make sure that the investment analysis is sound and that there is a clear stream of expenditure.

House 5B Sequence 10

11.40 a.m.

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Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I close on this point, the Minister will find that in almost all of the investments that we have had to make in Housing, if he would look at the Ministry of Housing Estimates, he would

see that each year we have had to subsidise, from the London Bourn Tower, straight through, because the returns on housing investments are high risk. Therefore, to force the Social Security Scheme, which has historically had returns that were high, now to pick up some of these investments where there are no returns at all, could mean that you are looking for housing solutions but at the expense of the solvency of an institution that was put there in 1967, to be the ultimate safety net for the people of Barbados.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member's time has expired. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Peter took a long time to attempt to suggest to Barbadians that we are bent on ignoring actuarial advice. Sir, I want the Honourable Member for St. Peter to understand that we have financial specialists and actuarial advisors as well. The National Insurance Scheme also has its own team, therefore, to attempt to give that impression is a little bit off the hand.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say that when one speaks about investments in real estates in Barbados...

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: I can speak to many in which the National Insurance Scheme had been engaged, under the former administration, and to some that we are committed to because of the former administration. I would ask the Honourable Members on the other side if the investments in GEMS, with the funds of the National Insurance Fund, was a good investment. I would have to bring the Shorey Report.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, I think then that, as a matter of fact, the Honourable Member should bring the Shorey Report to show that the National Insurance Scheme has investments in GEMS. I would like to see it.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. James North also asked that question and the report was produced, where it was shown to be \$10 million. Sir, if the Honourable Member wants to challenge that, then I will make sure that report comes today, because the Honourable Member seems not to have been aware of a lot of things that have been happening in his administration.

Mr. Chairman, I am also talking about monies that went into building the National Housing Corporation Complex at Warrens, and about the Honourable Member for St. George North having to lock out the contractors from that property.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, I will produce the evidence of the fiscal recklessness of that past administration using the money of the National Insurance Scheme to finance the fiscal deficit. Sir, the evidence is quite clear at page 62, Table F3, "Economic and Financial Statistic of the Central Bank." Sir, in 1994, \$400 million were held by the National Insurance Scheme in Government Papers and by January, 2008, it skyrocketed to \$1.322 billion.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, I wish the Honourable Member would not embarrass his own Minister of Finance. Sir, in this Year's Estimates, \$463 million of the Government's deficit this year is to be financed by debentures and the National Insurance Scheme is going to have a contribution to them.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, debentures are instruments issued by the Government of Barbados in which the institutional community are invited to invest. The Government of Barbados has never yet failed to honour payment of its debt on debentures. It is standard practice that the National Insurance Fund, like any other institutional investor, invests in Government debentures. What makes it wrong now suddenly for the National Insurance Fund not to participate in what is the most attractive investment in the land? Sir, some of the investments in debentures would help to build some of the houses that the Ministry of Housing and Lands wants to build. What is wrong with that?

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is simply making a casual and cavalier relationship between investment in Government debentures and wrongdoing on the part of an institution. Sir, quite frankly, I have never heard a more folly-stricken analysis.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, your point of order is made.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, I would want to say to the Honourable Member for St. Peter, if he would listen to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, that it was the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East who spoke to the crowding out of investments in Barbados, when Government mopped up too much of the investment capital available. Sir, I can also speak to crowding out and crowding in, in this broad microeconomic framework, I can speak to it if I need to but I can say to the Honourable Member that the plan of utilising the National Insurance Scheme as an institution to finance Government's programmes will come to an end.

Mr. Chairman, you can rest assured that Barbadians do not have to fear because the funds of the National Insurance Scheme will be properly invested. Sir, like the former administration, there is still a Board. Those persons who are there by right of law are still there. There is still an Investment Committee, there are still advisors to call upon, therefore, how is it that all of a sudden there is this big risk? Sir, I understand the game the Honourable Member is trying to play, that is why he is now in Opposition.

Mr. Chairman, when you have a situation where an institution processes over 850 000 cheques a year and you have not had an audit done since 2001...

Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House, and this is not the first time he would have said it. Sir, my instructions are that the Auditor-General of Barbados audits the National Insurance Scheme, and that there have been problems with the bank reconciliations that go back decades. Sir, I can tell you that the firm of KPMG Chartered Accountants were hired earlier in the Barbados Labour Party administration to get to the bottom of that issue.

Sir, that is what might be affecting the actual publication but I ask the Minister not to bring the Auditor-General into disrepute because this Honourable House would then have to ask the Auditor-General what he has been doing, if it is that the Minister is now saying there has been no audit of the National Insurance Scheme.

Mr. Chairman, I go further, the firm of KPMG Chartered Accountants would have been hired, and I believe the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance may be in a position to provide some light to Cabinet on these matters, since he was at KPMG at some point.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, I will stay on my statement, I know what the Minutes say, I am the Minister responsible and I know what decisions were taken and when they were not taken.

11.50 a.m.

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Dr. the Hon. D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, the point is that if you have that type of situation where after several years trying to implement a SAP, IT programme and your auditing module not working; your reconciliation module not working; your benefits module not working and you would have dismantled the manual parallel system. Sir, these are the facts and we have to fix these things. Sir, I know why the members on the other side would want to keep these things quiet but in another location a lot more will have to be said.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say that laws are changed every day, that laws are made and laws are changed.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The report of the Auditor-General for the year 2007, as laid by this Government in this Chamber last week. May I quote from page 84, paragraph 4.19 and 4.20 entitled National Insurance Fund:

“ 11:51:36

The reality is, Mr. Chairman, he needs to go and also ask the Auditor-General what is the problem. Sir, I am giving the facts as I understand them. It goes back even to the days of the former Chairman, Mr. Frank Alleyne, that there are serious problems with the bank reconciliation. To suggest what you are saying, I am simply saying to the Honourable Minister, will cause a panic. There was an incident, which took place, I use this as an analogy and it is well-known to the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, which took place in relation to Almond Beach in 2005 that led to the death of one person and to 41 persons being hospitalised. The Government took the decision that there were certain matters that would affect the confidence of institutions in this country. I can only appeal in the interest of the security and stability of the National Insurance Fund. Not that the Minister should not tell us that the audits have to be laid because they have to be, but that they should put in the full context of what is the problem. Sir, I am appealing to him in the strongest possible way because the problems preceded not just this Government but it preceded the last Government too.

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

Dr. the Hon. D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, I would have to say then that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is saying that all is well...

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. I have not said that and I am not going to allow the Minister to mislead this Chamber in terms of what I have said. I am saying that as Minister he has a duty to put the full facts (11:54)

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

Dr. the Hon. D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, it is passing strange that the Auditor-General would have written it in a report so it is a public document, Sir, but I, as Minister with responsibility, am not supposed to speak about it. I am not supposed to explain to Barbadians what is happening. Sir, it is taxpayers money that we are playing with. Investors read the Auditor-General Report.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. (11:55:46)

Dr. the Hon. D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, I would only make one more point on that issue, that is, that the public reads the Auditor General Report and the investors read the Auditor General Report. I think that it is quite clear that they would know exactly what is going on. All I have done is stated exactly what is the position and I stand on that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Peter attempted to give the impression that we will march ahead and make amendments to the legislation in broad, sweeping ways without having the appropriate consultations and so on. I want the Honourable Member to appreciate that in 1967 the socio-economic framework that informed that law when possibly applied to Barbados where we are battling with regional competition within Caribbean Single Market and Economy; we are battling with international competition and that some times, therefore, one has to redefine, reassess and make amendments that are necessary with respect to institutional functions. As a result of that, you can rest assured that we are going to have those consultations in the context that I would have just expressed. As a result, I would say to the Honourable Member for St. Peter, I thank him for his advice, it is up to me to take it or not to take.

Mr. Chairman, I want to move on to the Barbados Drug Service. Sir, the Barbados Drug Service provides a broad set of services here in Barbados. It has been very successful in discharging its mandate but there have been a number of issues associated with the Barbados Drug Service, namely, issues that affect directly and threatens the sustainability of the Barbados Drug Service not only with respect to the increasing volumes of prescription that have to be filled, but also the cost of new drugs being produced to treat chronic diseases. In fact, the shift in the disease profile and the significant escalation in the prevalence of chronic diseases in Barbados have put the Barbados Drug Service under significant stress.

Mr. Chairman, one of the things that we will have to do is to look very carefully at the staff allocation and the staff mix and I want to give my assurance that the Cabinet will make the necessary recommendations with respect to increasing the staff allocations to this institution. One other major area of concern that we have to deal with is an entire reform of the Drug Formulary Initiative and we have to look at cost containment strategies and generally to look at reducing the cost ...

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Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: ...of the drug formulary initiative, and we have to continue to look at cost containment strategies, and in general to decrease, because at this particular point in time, we are looking at close to \$40 million on average, and the cost is escalating every year.

Sir, we intend in that reform to create a system that will allow for a rationalisation of drug usage, within a broad re-classification framework, and we are going to create a mechanism whereby the drug service, through its public pharmacies, can more effectively compete as well as broaden the distribution channels of the Barbados Drug Service. Sir, the activities that we have planned for this financial year also include the establishment of a Drug Registration System in this country, with respect to all the drug products that are coming into Barbados, and the introduction of a form of vigilant system in Barbados. These are far-reaching restructuring of the Barbados Drug Service, for sustainability and a greater efficiency of executing its mandate.

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

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: Sir, in addition, there is a lot of wastage in the system. I want to appeal to Barbadians to understand that doctor shopping and the accumulation of large stockpiles of medication at home is an unsavoury practice, one that is costing tax payers large sums of money. I would want to implore Barbadians to seriously stop going from doctor to doctor, and stockpiling very expensive medicines that could be better used in the public service.

Sir, I also want to say that I hope to see the day when our public pharmacies could have longer opening hours. I would like to see the day when public pharmacies become part of the defined communities, to allow for a more efficient access. I know that these are approaches that the Barbados Drug Service is also keen on, in general. I know that they have had to struggle over the last few years operating in a dilapidated naturally air conditioned building with holes in it, a building that has been condemned, but at last they will be going to a new facility very soon, I have been told. I would also hope that in the not too distant future, the Ministry of Health would have a facility that would be able to bring all of its departments under one roof for its efficiency, and to more effectively deal with internal relationships, and so on.

Sir, I am indeed very pleased that, under the very trying circumstances, some persons would have been working way beyond the call of duty, I want to thank them very much for carrying out that service on behalf of

Barbadians. I want to give the assurance to all other departments that I am going to do what I have to do to improve the human resource element of these departments, and make sure that their working conditions are conditions that are fit for human habitation, and ensure that this whole notion of sick building syndrome, which is a reality, that cuts into productivity and the national economic development, is brought under control.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should wind up in one minute.

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: Sir, if it means that we as a Government have to collectively look at developing a central location for all Government offices, even if we have to build up to accomplish it, but the conditions that our employees now work under are nationally deplorable, and something has to be done about it. I intend to ask this administration, very soon, to look very seriously at developing a modern facility of that nature, that would house the majority of Government's operations, so as to improve the environment for our workers.

I thank you.

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

Mr. D.ST.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I too want to congratulate the workers of the Barbados Drug Service, because I believe it is only in Barbados that people will continue to work in a building of that condition for such a long time. I think that they should be congratulated. Sir, when one considers the Government's programme as it relates to derelict buildings, clearly, this building, based on that classification, would have been bulldozed already.

Sir, I believe that the Minister of Health also needs to look at certain drugs that need to be added to the system, because they are children in Barbados who have to pay for drugs that are very expensive. I find it hard to believe that these children have to pay for these drugs, when there are other drugs in the system that people can pay for, and other drugs in the system that people do not have to pay for.

Asides.

Mr. D.ST.E. KELLMAN: For example, autism. Sir, when you think about it, the majority of these drugs cannot be accessed in Barbados, they have to be imported at a very high cost. I have kept away from this discussion for a very long time, but I have recognised that this is not a minor issue any more. This is an issue that is affecting many families in Barbados, and I believe that the time is right for this particular matter to be dealt with. Sir, as I said previously, I look forward to the day when those wonderful workers, who have endured for a long time in Jemmotts

Lane, are removed from those conditions. To be honest, in any other country, those employees would not have been working in that location, they would be out marching every day.

I want an assurance from the Minister of Health, and I know that he will do something...

12.10 p.m.

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House 5B, Sequence 14, 12.10 p.m.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: ...

Sir, in any other country, those people would not have been working in that location. They would be out marching every day. I want an assurance from the Minister of Health. I know that he will do something about it, but I do not just want lip service, because I have been hearing it for too long. Sir, those of us who have to go there would understand exactly of what we speak. It is one thing to look, and another thing to be near. Sir, I sometimes wonder how we could store precious files under those conditions.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I am anxious as well to join also, in a generally supportive way, the discussion in respect of the reform of the Drug Service, because it is a valid discussion that needs to be engaged, but I would like to finish my presentation on issues, in respect of National Insurance.

I am reaching the age of retirement too. The Members on the Other Side have partially retired me in one capacity, and I am enjoying being citizen Owen, but I want to bring certain facts to the attention of the Minister. Sir, the Minister speaks in terms of not having the income of the National Insurance invested in debentures.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: That is what you said and that it should not finance Government's deficit.

Sir, the National Insurance in 2006 had more than \$260 million in surpluses to invest, and that is rising at about \$50 million a year, given the increases in the contribution rates. It is a practical matter. We have only a very limited equity market in Barbados and if the Minister

would read the most recent Actuarial Review, he would find that investments in equities by the National Insurance are only 8 per cent of their total portfolio. Sir, this is not because we do not like to invest in equities but because we have a very thin capital market and it is not likely to expand.

Sir, there was a time when the National Insurance used to have a large amount of investment in Treasury Bills, but we changed that because we do not want to have a mis-match, between its assets and its liabilities. The National Insurance will be mobilised in long term capital, and we want to have it invested in long-term securities that give it a better yield.

Therefore, it is not by chance that we had a situation where the National Insurance, which used to invest more than \$200 million in Treasury Bills, no longer holds Treasury Bills. We are moving more in the direction of debentures because the better yield is there. Sir, the National Insurance makes its best returns from holding Government debentures.

The argument that it is financing the Government deficit is a fact, and it is financing it as any other investment, on its part. Sir, it could invest by putting its money in the banks, or it can put the money abroad, and finance the development of other countries, and we would not quarrel. Sir, from the outset, the National Insurance has been investing in Government securities. The Government securities in Barbados are good investment, and a good yield. The question I am raising is that if now we are to be told that the National Insurance will no longer be holding Government debentures, then I have to ask the Hon. Member for St. Philip West to revisit the point.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, he indicated that the Estimates said that the Government is going to have \$483 million of the finances of the Government's fiscal deficit, by way of the issue of Debentures in the year to come. If the National Insurance will not hold any, and they are one of the largest holders of Government debentures, then you are saying that you expect that Government debentures are now going to be held...

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, on a point of elucidation. Sir, what I spoke to and what I would have to re-emphasise for the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter, is that it was the rapid rate of increase. It is the growth rate that is of concern. I said that in 1994, a little more than \$438 million were being held by the National Insurance as Government paper, and what ended up happening with respect to the debentures, is that it went up to \$1 312

million. It is the magnitude and rate of growth that is the concern. Mr. Chairman, it is not the actual investment itself and that is the point. The Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter is trying to give Barbadians the impression that we are saying that we will not be having National Insurance invest in Government paper.

Mr. Chairman, we have advisers as well, but we are not going to build up that type of investment at the rate that the former Minister of Finance did, Sir, and that is the point.

Thank you, Sir.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I am really glad he is speaking in these terms. This is the practical matter that is before the National Insurance Board this year. Sir, you have a surplus of more than \$300 million to invest. The local equity market is thin, and you do not want to have investment opportunities accruing at home that could be absorbed by way of equities. In any event, you would have to be circumspect in so doing.

The Treasury Bill rate is low, and does not give you the kind of investment that you would want from Treasury Bills for the purposes. The rates have come down because of declining rates of interest. Sir, to hold Treasury Bills is not a serious option.

Sir, foreign investments now constitute only 4 per cent of the total portfolio of the National Insurance. You have \$300 million to invest. You are not going to invest them in Treasury Bills because Treasury Bills are also financing the Government deficit. You are not investing them in Debentures because that is financing the Government deficit. Where are you going to invest them?

Sir, the Member speaks in terms of investing them in housing related securities. I am trying to bring to his attention, without having said so, that Barbados had a kind of sub prime market for housing securities as well.

Mr. Chairman, the lending rate of the National Housing Corporation for that class of person is 6 per cent. Therefore, an institution that has to be mobilising long term resources will have to be looking for a proper yield. Sir, if you are not going to get the good yield from Government Debentures, and you have three - and that is the practical matter - you cannot invest it abroad, and there are not many equities at home. How much of that are you proposing to put in a sub prime market in housing, and to what extent are you going to subsidise it on the Estimates?

Sir, as I said, the officers of the Ministry of Finance will look out for the National Housing Corporation. They will make sure that the rates of returns on any investment of the National Housing Corporation, would be such that

they could meet any actuarial review. Sir, I am begging the Honourable Member to be aware of what we are dealing with by reading the Actuarial Review that is before him.

Sir, the Twelfth Actuarial Review on page 18, says that the reserves are projected to continue growing under the present structure - do not mind the cash position - through to 2038, reaching \$12 billion and approaching 48 per cent of GDP at that time. At this point, total expenditure will exceed total income, that is, the contributions plus investment incomes, for the first time and unless the contribution rate is increased, assets will have to be sold each year to meet expenditure. Sir, this is what I wanted to bring to the Member's attention, and to tell him not to mind the cash position now. In looking at the Social Security System, they are people today who will become pensioners in 2038, and you have to do things today to make sure that what is going to happen does not occur. You have before you, an actuarial study that is telling you to be careful. Yes, you have a lot of cash now, but total expenditure will exceed total income by 2038.

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Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur: You have before you an actuarial study that is telling you to be careful, that yes, you have a lot of cash now, but that total expenditure will exceed total income by 2038, so you cannot now start doing things in 2008, 2009 and 2010 that would increase the expenditure even faster and reduce the income even more.

What I am saying, Sir, is that some of the decisions that the Honourable Member has already made will increase the expenditure of the national insurance ambit and will accelerate what must be a 20...

Sir, if you have now made a decision to increase the minimum benefit rate, which would not be a one-off, but for between now and 2038, in an actuary review, you would have to factor in what would be the implications of a 25 per cent increase in the expenditure of the Fund over a 30-year period.

Mr. Chairman, if you now want to change its investment portfolio to something else and stop it from getting the best yield on the best investment available, you are going to be at the same time changing the revenue stream. The situation that would face you in 2038 would be brought forward by the decisions that I hear being implied today. That is why I am saying that the notion that you would stop investing in debentures is something that the Government...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: He has said so. If he did not intend to say so, that is what I heard him saying.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, you are not investing in debentures, that you are financing the deficit. You finance the deficit by investing in Treasury Bills or by investing in debentures. The Honourable Member needs to tell us which of the two this year they are thinking in terms of dealing with, because he is saying that he is not saying that they should not invest in Government securities. That is what he is saying.

Mr. Chairman, as between the two, it is not by chance that there is now more securities in the portfolio of the national insurance that are in the nature of debentures because it is a better yield and it gives a better match between the assets and the liabilities of an institutional investor and it is mobilising long term funds. Sir, it is better that you invest long term funds in long term assets.

Mr. Chairman, I therefore want the Honourable Member, because he is now speaking on behalf of the Minister of Finance in his absence...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I have brought to the attention of the House the projected situation with no drastic change in policy. What we have would suffice to 2038, but at 2038 you could have a situation where even though you have a cash situation today, the National Insurance Fund can find itself in a position where it has to sell assets to pay benefits or raise in a substantial way the contribution rate.

Sir, this business about coming in here and just saying that you are financing Government deficits and so on, let me therefore just put the point to him... In an alternative way, when we hold our foreign exchange reserves in US treasuries, we are financing the deficits of the United States Government. Our foreign exchange reserves are in large measure held in US treasuries and has always been so because surpluses have to be invested in securities that give a return and have the basis of an assuredness of yield.

Mr. Chairman, he is saying at one and the same time that the reserves of the Government of Barbados... He has not criticised they being held in US treasuries and US securities because that is for purposes of sustainability. We would not be able to absorb \$2 billion in investment in foreign exchange reserves in Barbados, we do not have them anyhow, so they would have to be invested in the form of securities, and most of them are in the form of securities.

Mr. Chairman, it is not wrong for the Government of Barbados surpluses to be invested in financing the United States Government but it is wrong for the taxpayers' surpluses through the National Insurance Scheme to be invested in helping to build the country. What nonsense am I hearing, Mr. Chairman?

I am asking the Minister, as a citizen of the country now who would have to get a National Insurance pension sometime in the immediate future, to tell me how he is going to ensure that the over \$300 million in surpluses that the National Insurance will have this year to invest can be soundly invested in such a way as to ...

Asides.

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

Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur: I am afraid, and you must believe me, Sir, of having this Minister responsible for the assuredness of my pension because I intend to live long.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I intend to be here in 2038, that is the point I am making to him. Even if nothing more is done, the fund might be bust in 2038. If we allow him to do what he is doing, while I am still a relatively young man, Sir, the fund is going to bust. Therefore, Sir, you cannot leave this debate today... I am speaking to you now as citizen Owen, on behalf of all the citizens who have contributed to that National Insurance Scheme and are looking for it in our twilight days to give us the support.

The financial recklessness I am hearing, Sir, is that you do not want your best investment, but you do not know what is the alternative investment. I need the Government to be settled on this matter because it is a troubling thing. It troubles me in a fundamental way to hear these words uttered.

Sir, I am absolutely sure that the Minister of Finance might have a different perspective as to how our financial sector can absorb \$463 million of debentures this year without the National Insurance participating in them. Am I to understand that the banking system deposits would grow by that extent such that that can be absorbed by the banking system and the financial system without putting pressure on that system, Sir? Is that what is being said? If so, would the Minister therefore bring to me the information in respect of the liquidity situation in the country, the intended growth in private investments and the claim on the private investments on the financial system so that I can make a sensible judgement as a citizen of the country as to whether what is intended by way of his cavalier policy is in fact...

Sir, I would like to engage in the discussion on the Drug Service. I think it is a real issue, Sir. There is no other Drug Service, including Cuba's, that is as generous as that in Barbados. Cuba is a case of absolutely socialised medicines. I have tried to put a cap on the Drug Service expenditure with a view to inducing reform.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has one minute to wind up.

Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur: An aspect of reform of a drug service is not so much governmental reform, but reform in private behaviour in Barbados. I would like to be part of that discussion because I think it is fundamental. I think that we can have in Barbados a Drug Service that reaches those who a Drug Service was intended to reach, the young, the old and those with chronic diseases. Sir, if there are aspects to make it sustainable while having a fiscally responsible subvention to it, recognising again that there are a few countries in the world that have managed successfully...

Drug Services and National Insurance Schemes are the two most complex issues that face even the most advanced country. Sir, if there are proposals I would like to be engaged in them because I do feel and share the view that the reform of the Barbados Drug Service is a legitimate issue that has to be engaged in sensibly.

On the motion of Hon. R. D. JONES, seconded by Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress to His Honour the Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER and asked of leave to sit again and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

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Mr. CHAIRMAN has left the Chair, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER assumed the Chair.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chairman of Committees has reported progress and ask for leave to sit again.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House be now suspended until 1.35 p.m..

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 1.35 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.31 p.m.

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RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. When the Suspension was taken, this Honourable House was in Committee of Supply and to that it will now revert.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is now in Committee of Supply. The Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Hon. E.G. HUTSON: Mr. Chairman, I rise to make my contribution to the discussions in respect of this Head 53.

Mr. Chairman, it is appalling that in this morning session the House was treated to comments by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East in respect of the laying of the financial statements for the National Insurance Fund. Sir, I would want to say that we have, since coming into Government on January 15th, seen the financial reports of the Barbados Water Authority in disarray, the National Housing Corporation and this morning, we are hearing about the situation in the National Insurance Department.

H/5B/13:40

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Hon. E .G. HUTSON: ...the National Housing Corporation and National Insurance, we are hearing about the situation in the National Insurance. It just cannot be acceptable for Government to be running its financials in the various departments in that manner. It is shocking, Sir. It is unsatisfactory, and it speaks to the accountability, and Honourable Members on that side have a responsibility. It cannot be a situation where we are going to excuse. I believe, the Honourable Member made reference to the fact, that in respect of the bank's reconciliations, that the accounting firm of KPMG was asked to look at that situation, some 14 years ago, and the situation is still the same. There should have been some accounting, some interim report if they were having difficulty with that consultancy. There should be some report or something,

presented to this Honourable House in respect of that situation, if they were encountering difficulties. Sir, I speak here, very much as a Chartered Accountant myself. We cannot, in any enterprise, whether it is a private or a Government institution, have that sort of situation.

Sir, in respect to the National Insurance, we have, over the years, seen people in the paper, businesses, who have not paid National Insurance. Indeed, some years ago, probably five years ago, there was a corporation in the north where the principals left the country without settling the national insurance obligations.

Sir, if you are going to manage that financial institution in that loose way, there will be several other situations like this, and we have to be concerned. We have to be concerned because of the whole level of receivables within that institution. We do not know how much it is. That information should be shared and John Public needs to have that information. We need to know that the institutions of Government are properly managed financially.

There are, I expect, millions of dollars of National Insurance funds that have not been collected.

Asides.

Hon. E .G. HUTSON: We will deal with GEMS on another occasion.

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. I believe that the Honourable Member is misleading the House. This administration is responsible for amending the National Insurance and Social Security legislation, to require directors, in fact, to be liable for any failure on the part of a Corporation, to deduct, withhold and remit any of the National Insurance contributions. In fact, I am able to say that a significant amount of the court's time, has been engaged over the last decade, using specifically the Provisions of 43 (c) and (d) of the National Insurance Act, to ensure that even if the companies may, through cashflow issues, be unable to pay, the Directors are held to account and forced to pay under the court's direction. These are measures that this Barbados Labour Party has put in place.

Hon. E .G. HUTSON: Sir, I believe the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, yesterday, in his presentation, in respect of the Barbados Water Authority, noted that there were substantial amounts of funds owing to the National Insurance. I do not understand the comments of the Honourable Member on that side.

Sir, let me continue to say that in respect of those receivables, if those receivables can be collected, there will be additional funds for investment, that the Honourable Member for St. Peter referred to, in respect of the need for

us to ensure that the National Insurance funds are properly invested. Failure to collect the receivables, goes to the bottom line eventually. In respect to the reconciliation of the bank accounts, failure to do that opens up the institution to the possibility of misappropriation of its cashflows, and they will not be aware of it. It is not something just to be glossed over and to be made jokes about. We need to be conscious of this, and the general public needs to be aware that this is what was happening in their institutions, under the management of the other side, when they were in power. For 14 years they have neglected that situation, and the situation at the Barbados Water Authority as well would have developed over a number of years. If it existed prior to their taking office, that does not excuse them from taking action. It is the responsibility of this Democratic Labour Party to take action in respect of the accounting and financial responsibilities of the institutions of Government. We will address that.

Sir, the Minister of Health has to be lauded in this Parliament for taking action, for being aware of the problem and seeking to address that issue, Sir. It cannot be business as usual, under this Democratic Labour Party Government.

Sir, I would also make a comment in respect of the situation in my constituency, as far as the water is concerned. The whole mismanagement of that institution has led, as they said on both sides this morning, to the situation with the mains. In Sunset Crest, we have been experiencing, since the 2003 election when I was not successful, and over the past five years, no action has been taken in respect of the discoloration of the water in that community. The same thing can be said of residents in Redmans Village, who each year have to put up with outages. We are fast approaching the dry season, and no doubt, I will be faced with numerous phone calls in a matter of months, in respect of water outages at Redmans Village, a situation that has been going on for several years. The Honourable Representative for St. Thomas is aware of these situations, because at one stage it was her responsibility, which she neglected. She neglected it.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: On a point of order. Sir, I find the Honourable Member totally out of place. When the tremendous challenges from the Barbados Water Authority happened in Redmans Village, it would have been in 2003, when already that section of the community was transferred to St. James Central. I take the responsibilities that I have undertaken by the people of St. Thomas very seriously, and when I have my opportunity I will speak, because I have had challenges too with the Barbados Water Authority, but they have worked assiduously between 2004-2006 to replace mains that were giving a lot of trouble. Therefore, I will get my opportunity to speak, but I want the Honourable Member, please, do not involve me in anything

I know nothing about, because I do not know where he was hiding in 2003.

Hon. E .G. HUTSON: Sir, my point is, the situation in respect to the water in Redmans Village has been a situation in existence for several years, even prior to 2003. It is a situation that I went into Redmans Village in 2003, as the candidate for the Democratic Labour Party, and found. Nothing has happened to change that situation.

HB5 13:50 p:m

Sequence 18

Estimates - Thursday, March 20, 2008

House 5B, Sequence 19, 1.50 p.m.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: ...

It is a situation where I went into Redman Village in 2003 as the candidate for the Democratic Labour Party and found that nothing has happened to change that situation. Mr. Chairman, that is the point I am making.

Therefore, I have to be fully in support of my comrade, the Hon. Member for St. Philip West when he seeks to address these issues, because it speaks to the heart of the residents in my constituency. Mr. Chairman, it would be remiss of me, not to draw that to the attention of the Minister and to this Honourable House. Sir, the same applies to the situation in Sunset Crest and the surrounding areas.

Mr. Chairman, in respect of Sea View, almost every month there are burst pipes, and pressure fluctuations. One week the pressure is high and the next week the pressure is low. As soon as they push up the pressure, there are outages. Sir, based on my discussions with the workers of the Barbados Water Authority in that particular area, the mains are bad and that is the problem. Sir, we need to address the question of the mains and we need to have a proper Capital Works Programme in place to address that situation.

Mr. Chairman, the Barbados Water Authority has millions of dollars in outstanding debt that they have been unable to collect. These are situations that exist. The whole of Barbados is crying out and, no doubt, there are other areas with similar problems but we need to be able to address those situations.

Mr. Chairman, we also have a situation in respect of the West Coast Sewerage Project. I was particularly pleased when I perused these programmes for the Ministry of Health, as far as the West Coast Sewerage Project is concerned, to see that there is consideration in the study

towards addressing the issue of the road network along the west coast. Sir, I want to encourage the Minister responsible to seriously look at that situation.

We know the amount of traffic congestion on the West Coast, a situation contributed significantly in recent years by the development of high-rise buildings along the coast on the beach. Sir, permission has been granted to put up buildings very close to the Highway, without making proper allowance for the fact that we would have to address the width of the Highway, once this West Coast Sewerage Project comes on stream. Mr. Chairman, a road is going to be discussed, within this West coast Sewerage Project. We need to have a road to take traffic from Highway 1 into the Oxnard area, because if there is an accident at anytime between the Four Seasons Hotel and Holders Hill, there would be a big problem. There is no interconnection of the cull-de-sac roads along the coast, and no opportunity for traffic to move onto the hill.

Mr. Chairman, I am told that the area, where the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter was able to acquire, is one of the areas that several residents would have used to walk from the coast up to Oxnard. Sir, they would no longer be able to do that, because they would not be able to pass his property.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is making a representation to the House that is entirely without truth, that the parcel of land that I bought from the National Housing Corporation, abutting my property was a place where persons used to walk along, and it is not true. Sir, knowing it to be an untruth, it should not be entered into the records of Parliament.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Chairman, as a young man living in Prospect, at that time we used to walk from the coast and go up unto the hill. Sir, my memory of exactly where the Hon. Member's home is located, is in that general area, but do not let us miss the point.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I live in the area. There is a place where the people still traverse in that general area. It has not changed. Sir, the Honourable Member is indebted to his memory for his jokes. There is a way through the woods that the people have walked for years, where they continue to walk. Mr. Chairman, if he is getting old and senile, and his memory is dim, Sir, really, there has been no change.

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

The Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter is missing my point. I am saying that we need to have a roadway between Highway 1 and the Oxnard area to alleviate the traffic problems along the coast. The area of his residence is a possibility, but in that general area, and not specifically on his piece of real estate.

Mr. Chairman, the other area that we need to address is the Sea View Hometown Road, where the road is very narrow and there are some close corners. As a matter of fact, in the Reeds Hill area, which is at the top closer to the St. Thomas Parish Church, there is a S-bend where approaching vehicles cannot be seen, and there have been several accidents and near misses, in that general area.

Sir, this afternoon I bring this matter to the attention of the Minister for Transport, as well as the Minister of Health because I am not sure whether or not we would attach the cost for that road onto the West Coast Sewerage. Sir, the road has to be widened and proper sidewalks provided, because of the fact that once the West Coast Sewerage Project starts, there will be an urgent need, given the existing network, for traffic coming along Highway 1, to be able to access the main ABC Highway and traffic coming in the opposite direction.

Mr. Chairman, it is with those few remarks that I want to support the comments made by the Minister of Health in these Estimates.

Thank you very much, Sir.

Asides.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, it appears to me that some Members on the Government side do reasonably accept that governance is not now and has never been easy. Others, like the Honourable Member for St. James Central, seem to be attracting the most facile of approaches to what they fought so hard to achieve.

Sir, the business of Government is complex and it is continuous, but some Honourable Members on the Government side, seem to take the view that the problems that are in existence now, will be snuffed out through their effort, as if many of the challenges that we still now face, were not challenges that they left behind, when they last demitted office in 1994.

Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that there are issues in relation to the replacement of mains for the Barbados Water Authority. The first thing that they would have been briefed on, I imagine, was that some of those mains have been in the ground for more than a century.

House 5B, Sequence 19, 14:00:14

Thursday, March 20, 2008

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, I would really ask the Honourable Member for Christ Church South not to meddle with matters relating to water because his experience has not been salutary. The other immediately obvious matter is that the mains were in the ground for over 100 years at a time when the heaviest vehicles on the road would have been a fair size donkey cart.

Mr. Chairman, I have a constituency that is beset with water problems from in the days of the Democratic Labour Party Administration. Mr. Chairman, the other side clearly seems to feel that the \$150 million that it would take to undertake a mains replacement programme, which this Administration commenced, is money that they could easily come up with. I do not know how the Honourable Member for St. Philip West would find the money for it if he does not invest in Government debentures.

Mr. Chairman, the point I am making is that Barbados is a water-scarce country. We have significant challenges with water and the provision of water all across Barbados. Some of them would admit of easy technical and engineering solutions and others would not. At the end of the day, Mr. Chairman, if we replace every single main in Barbados but pay no attention to the procurment of the water, then we would be none the wiser. Sir, the point is that we have to recognise at the outset that there has to be a balancing act.

Mr. Chairman, there are some things that this Administration started that we expect they would continue. We started a mains replacement programme because we recognise it was critical. The constituency of St. James Central is a constituency that this Barbados Labour Party, when it was last in Government, spent a significant amount of time and effort trying to ameliorate the difficulties that the Honourable Member for St. James Central constituents now suffer. The reason the cries in Bagatelle have diminished, if not vanished all together, was through the hard work of his predecessor, I hope he could match it. Mr. Chairman, the water in Bagatelle was also discoloured.

Mr. Chairman, the then Honourable Member for St. James Central, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas and myself have what could be considered to be contiguous constituencies, and at one point in time the issues with water were so acute that we petitioned the Honourable Member for St. Peter to establish a Cabinet subcommittee so as to constantly monitor the provision of the water services to those three constituencies by the Barbados Water Authority and to deal with it.

Mr. Chairman, mains replacement was one of them. The installation of pumps was another and there were several other mechanisms that were put in place by the Barbados Water Authority. Mr. Chairman, the bald truth is that even now the solutions that have been implemented by the technical officers at the Barbados Water Authority have not been entirely satisfactory.

Mr. Chairman, some parts of the constituency of St. James Central have had resolutions to their problems, the Honourable Member cannot deny it. Some parts of St. Thomas and St. Joseph have had resolutions, but in every case there is an agenda that is not yet complete. Mr. Chairman, it falls to the members of the Government now to determine if they are going to complete it or if they are going to find alternative solutions for it but at the end of the day I would like to remind all Honourable Members on the Government side that it is not ministers or politicians who will determine what the engineering solutions for the Barbados Water Authority are.

Mr. Chairman, the same technical people, unless they know something that we do not know, that the Government now relies on are the same technical people that we relied on. Mr. Chairman, the same engineers that offered us advice and made recommendations to us and helped us to formulate our strategies and our programmes for dealing with the Barbados Water Authority are the same technical people that now advice the Government.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South would agree that if there is one thing about technical people, it is that the technical advice they offer is expected to be consistent unless other information comes to light. Sir, I believe that the technical people in the Barbados Water Authority will be offering to the Government the same advice that they offered us. We are going to be looking at the same problems. What we did was to deal with them incrementally taking into account the entire of Government's responsibility.

If the Honourable Member for St. James Central wants to suggest that the Government will now find \$150 million to replace all of the mains, that is fine. If the Honourable Member for St. James Central wants to say that the Government would now find money to put in an additional desalination plant on the East of Barbados where it is desperately needed, that is fine too.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that in the stark light of day, the Honourable Members on the Government benches now would recognise that governance is about balancing competing interests because the interest of the Ministry of Health will compete with the interest of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Mr. Chairman, in the same way that they want to have a

balanced budget, they would also want to balance those interests and the interest of all Barbados.

I am aware, Sir, of the tremendous amount of work that has already gone into planning for the West Coast Sewerage Project. I do not know if the Honourable Member for St. James Central all of a sudden realises that we need another road to bring us out of that stretch between Paynes Bay and Black Rock. This Administration benefited from planning work and studies which were done and papers were presented to Cabinet, which explored a large number of options. The Honourable Member for St. George North may wish to tell you about them. Sir, the technical advice that we were given as formulated between the Barbados Water Authority, though for the most part it was the Ministry of Public Works as it was then called, had to do with several options for bringing another road out of that area. I believe that a tunnel was one of the formulations they had presented to us, but there were other options.

Mr. Chairman, I wish that I was part of a Government where for my constituency I said I needed this, that and the next and the Honourable Member for St. Peter could have waved a magic wand and it would have appeared. I am sure that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas and all of us would have wished for the same thing. Mr. Chairman, prudence and careful planning are the hallmarks of a good Government and I hope that the Members on the Government benches recognise that.

Mr. Chairman, in relation to the National Insurance Scheme, when I came into Cabinet in 2003, one of the earliest matters that we had to contend with in that term was how to make the National Insurance Scheme sustainable. The Scheme was not started by this Administration.

Sir, there are some things that must transcend political divide. I believe that we all have been elected to serve the large interest of all Barbadians. The provision of pensions, social security or whatever element of that safety net is required, are things that do not admit of partisan politics. By definition, they must transcend time and space. Mr. Chairman, the one thing that must always be constant is the principles on which they are founded.

House 5B Sequence 20

2.10 p.m.

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Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, while we may change the method of investment, whatever the investments are, they must be prudent. Sir, I am alarmed that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West would

reflect negatively on the National Insurance Scheme investing in Government debentures. Certainly this Government did not, but perhaps it stems from the confidence that as a Government we had in Government Paper. It seems that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West has no confidence in Government Papers issued by the Democratic Labour Party. Then that is their problem. We certainly had confidence in it and were prepared to allow the National Insurance Scheme to have a diversified approach to investment.

Mr. Chairman, in fact, I believe this administration permitted the National Insurance Scheme to invest overseas, in amounts far higher than the amounts that were in place when the Democratic Labour Party was last in Government. Sir, we had a diversified approach to the investment of the funds of the National Insurance Scheme. We also had and still have confidence in the Barbadian economy and confidence in the ability of this Government, once it is well run, to honour its commitment given to citizens of this country, when Government Papers are issued. Sir, that commitment is not just given to the Royal Bank, the RBTT's and the National Insurance Scheme. It is also given to the old lady from St. Joseph, who has a few thousand dollars and wants to buy a few Government bonds.

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

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, the Government has the opportunity to do as they wish, but I would like them not to embark on any tinkering. Sir, the National Insurance Scheme is far too precious for all Barbadians. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West has said that they too have advisors. I do not know if they have changed those advisors. They may have changed representatives on the Board, but the advisors in the Actuarial Department... Sir, it is called actuarial science for a reason. The nature of it is that when the same inputs are given, you get the same answer.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West has said that he is a scientist and so I expect that when the actuaries apply their minds and their analyses to the same data, they would come up with the same answer. Sir, I urge the Honourable Member for St. Philip West to proceed with prudence because the National Insurance Scheme does not belong to him, nor to the Democratic Labour Party, but to the people of this country, some of whom have not yet been born.

Mr. Chairman, I am obliged to you.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, I suppose it is standard, immediately after an election, for a sense of triumph to prevail and because there was a victory,

everybody could feel that everything could be as easy as an election victory. Sir, if there is one area in which I would urge serious contemplation or measured approach, is in respect of our anticipation of water solutions in Barbados, and this is not an apology.

Mr. Chairman, Barbados is one of the world's water-scarce societies. We have the same water profile as Jordan and when the word Jordan is mentioned, we think of a country that is suffering from conditions of desertification. Barbados would have also been consuming at least 95 per cent of its annual average water supply, and the rainfall has been diminishing. It means that no matter what a Government may want to do, we start with an objective situation of being a water-scarce society.

Sir, water problems have not only been occurring in Bagatelle and Redmans Village, and the Barbados Water Authority would tell you, as Member of Parliament, I have had to spend a lot of time dealing with water issues in the upland parts of St. Peter. We have had to have a special programme for water augmentation in the north. We have reached the stage in this country where the Town Planning Department permissions for water-intensive projects require water self-sufficiency as a condition. Hence, for example, Sandy Lane was only allowed to have an investment of the nature it had, because it was stipulated that it had to install its own desalination plant.

Sir, the point I am making is that persons could come and speak about these matters in a facile way, in the immediate aftermath of an election victory, but the reality is that across Barbados there is a general problem with our water supply. We are a water-scarce society. Recently we started to lose 95 per cent of the annual average rainfall and the rainfall has been diminishing.

Mr. Chairman, it would explain why we took the decision to build a desalination plant. It may explain why a wise Government would now also begin to accelerate...

We had to augment the water supply but if the Democratic Labour Party wants to understand part of the reasons the Barbados Water Authority of today has problems, they must go back to 1986. Sir, a lot of folks in here do not understand the history of the country. The Barbados Water Authority had been accumulating surpluses, to be able to carry out a water main replacement programme.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, may I be heard?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Chair is hearing you. Order, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, the Barbados Water Authority had \$22 million in accumulated surpluses to replace the mains but as part of the effort to pay for the tax cuts of 1986, the then administration, on assuming office, decided to take away all of the surpluses of institutions like that of the Barbados Water Authority. They also decided to cut water rates without there being a study to justify it. Therefore, that institution found itself stripped of the monies to do its capital works programme and was forced into a situation where, because of a cut in water rates as a political decision, it did not have the revenue to meet all of its operating expenses. Those things are true.

Mr. Chairman, I believe we have put in place these things and if the Minister would be candid enough, he would say that for a few years now there has been a large capital works programme of the Barbados Water Authority. The BWA has been given the resources to replace the mains, a large part of the problem is that some of the mains go back to the time of Queen Victoria. Those mains do not have sensors in them like how the modern institutions would have them. The sad reality about water management in Barbados is that sometimes you only know where the mains are, when they burst. The problem, therefore, in mains replacement is not to be underestimated. We have a system of mains that has been laid over a century ago. There is no systematic record as to where all of the mains are, and the Barbados Water Authority is now trying their very best to put that situation right.

Mr. Chairman, I know we have left in place a mains replacement programme, of which the Honourable Member for St. James Central....That is what I found what the Honourable Member is saying to be uncharitable. The Honourable Member is saying that he lives in a constituency, that he now represents a constituency, where he has seen the benefits of that investment programme. In the Bagatelle area, there was a general complaint about the red water, and these mains have been replaced. Sir, the same thing happened at Welches Terrace, therefore, it is somewhat churlish to come to this Honourable House, to be in a constituency where you know there has been an active mains replacement programme...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I would love to tell you that we could have had the ability to do everything, all at once, but if you go to a constituency and there are two out of three areas where a major investment has been made to replace the mains, he wants to know why the others have not been done. Sir, we are trying our very best but the point I am making is that we recognised that all across the country there is a main replacement programme that will have to be undertaken and that it would not come as an easy programme, if only because as I said, there are no

complete records in Barbados as to where mains laid down or buried in the time of Queen Victoria.

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Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, I am making the point that we recognise that all across the country there is a mains replacement programme that has to be undertaken and it will not come as an easy programme only because there are no complete records in Barbados as to where mains laid down in the time of Queen Victoria. Sir, these are practical matters that have seriously to be addressed.

Mr. Chairman, as regards the issues raised in respect of the West Coast Sewerage Project, the Honourable Member for St. James Central would be happy to know that we ourselves, recognise that before you start the work on the West Coast Sewerage Project, that some link road between the west coast and the ridge has to be put in place. You cannot have the West Coast Sewerage Project unless that is part of the Project and there is going to be no divide on the matter.

Mr. Chairman, there is a specific issue that I would like to raise because it has to be addressed. Barbados daily, puts out to sea, nine million gallons of untreated water. There is a project in the Ministry under which the Barbados Water Authority falls to rethink our relationship to water being put out to sea. Sir, we have to see that as a potential resource. We have to take water that is being put out to sea and retreat it to tertiary level to augment the water supply. That water can be used largely for irrigation purposes.

Mr. Chairman, one of the reasons why there is no West Coast Sewerage Project as yet, is that we stopped the project because the question was: where would the marine outfall for the West Coast Sewerage Project be located? Sir, there is a marine outfall for the South Coast Sewerage Project and we said that rather than take the water and put it out to sea, that the building of the West Coast Sewerage Project will give us an opportunity to have an additional new approach to how we can begin to augment the water supply by taking what is now a nuisance and converting it into an asset. We said we were not going to have a marine outfall for the West Coast Sewerage Project but develop the plans so that we can take not only the waste water from the West Coast Sewerage Project but we should retrofit the West Coast Sewerage Project and carry the waste water to one location and treat it to a tertiary level so that we can use it for irrigation and for the augmentation of the aquifers. Sir, that work has not been completed but I will not support building a new sewerage system in Barbados, putting the water out to sea because I think it is a waste of a potential resource. Sir, that work was being brought to a completion and we will support the taking of waste water

in Barbados and retreating it for irrigation purposes and treat it to a tertiary level to help replenish the aquifers. Sir, this is not a constituency matter but a national matter because Barbados is a water scarce society. We may see the most visible manifestation of the water problem in the uplands part of the country where you have pumping problems at particular places; we see burst problems all over the country but we must give serious considerations to all feasible proposals to augment the supply if the problem is going to go away.

Sir, I will continue to support the carrying out of the problem for the main replacement because there is a programme in place. Sir, that you may say it should be accelerated might be realistic but there are increasing burdens being put on the Barbados Water Authority that also explains why the Barbados Water Authority sometimes finds itself in a position where it is wallowing.

Mr. Chairman, the Barbados Water Authority is run commercially. It sells potable water but it has always been asked by the Government of Barbados to assume responsibility for sewerage systems from which it makes no money and that is part of its problem. The original sewerage system and sewerage plants in Barbados were put under the responsibility of the Barbados Water Authority. They had to service the debt that was incurred by them and they made no money whatsoever from them. South Coast Sewerage Project now is also the responsibility of the Barbados Water Authority. The Government of Barbados borrows, builds sewerage systems and the Barbados Water Authority has to manage them but it makes no money from them.

Mr. Chairman, we now have in the Estimates resources for them to do so and I have told them that they should have a separate department for managing the potable water supply but also a dedicated department for managing the waste water because they carry that as a statutory responsibility.

Mr. Chairman, you have to understand, therefore, the challenges of managing water in a water-scarce society if you are going to understand all the problems you are going to have in every constituency in Barbados and I would like us to finish the plans.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say this for the benefit of the Barbados Workers Union. We should finish the plans for making sure that we fully utilise all the water that is available from the Spring Garden supply because there were a few million gallons per day of water supply that had to be transferred to the north. Some was intended to be lifted to the Belle's reservoir to be able to pump into upland Barbados, but you had a contractual arrangement at the Barbados Water Authority where all the work had to be done by the employees of the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, a lot of the Barbados Water Authority's work by its employees is done after hours adding significantly to the cost of the Barbados Water Authority. Sir, the friendliest persuasion to get an alternative arrangement introduced to get some work done quickly. Sometimes it is not often as persuasive as it could be. There is excess capacity at the desalination plant that we wanted to move to the north but the question is who will do the work to lay the mains to carry it to the north and it becomes an issue. To lift some water to carry to the Belle reservoir also became an issue because of the terms and conditions in respect of the way in which the Barbados Water Authority union arrangements have been put in place.

Mr. Chairman, I say all these things not to offer an excuse for not having done everything but you are dealing with a complex issue that has to do at its core with the available of a natural resource, namely water, and that what we may want to deal with is to systematically support measures to augment our water supply. I would have said earlier and I want to repeat that all of the major investments in Barbados in recent times that have had the potential of being water intensive have been constrained by the requirement that they have to be water self-sufficient.

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

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, I say this specifically, all of the investments in relation to the north, whether it is Apes Hill or the other retirement villages there was a requirement that the investors had to put up the money to help us to augment the water supply and that those investments are predicated on that being a condition for the investment taking place. I feel that those kinds of policies need to continue.

Mr. Chairman, I speak as a person who shares the problem of all other constituents. Sir, as a Prime Minister I had to deal with water supply problems in my constituency and it is not just because of bad management or lack of operational systems at the Barbados Water Authority. It starts with a basic condition, that the supply is a problem and that if we are going to deal with it rather than complain, to understand that part of the constructive solution is that we should augment it.

Mr. Chairman, having said that, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West is in a position to help us. The largest volume of sheet water in Barbados, not being properly utilised, is under the Three Houses plain. The Honourable Member would be aware that the Three Houses spring is such an important source of water that it is covered by an Act going back into the 18th Century but the largest proportion of sheet water is in the south eastern corridor of Barbados.

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Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: ...but the largest proportion of our sheet water is in the South Eastern corridor of Barbados. Having put in a desalination plant, if we retreat waste water to tertiary level to help deal with the aquifers, and if we also begin to tap some of the sheet water under the South Eastern St. Philip plain, I think we will increase any move towards dealing with the problem in a concerted way, with a major investment augmenting the water supply.

Sir, my advice to the Minister is, we will all quarrel about water in here, because we all share the same problem. We live in a country that has the same water profile as a nation called Jordan.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Sir, I rise to continue to lend my voice to this debate, particularly under the Head of Health. Before I go into detail, I am a little bit amazed and somewhat amused at the Honourable Member for St. Peter. I believe that he is somewhat practising his lecturing skills for his new found position at the University.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is my representative, and I hope that he does not treat the other constituents as he treats me. A person, when in Parliament, cannot work at the University of the West Indies on a full-time basis. So, if he has appointed me... Sir, I am not working at the University of the West Indies. The next time he comes to my house, I am going to set my dog on him.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: I would much rather your dog be set on me than yourself.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Sir, the reality is, there has been a change of Government, and while one appreciates the advice being proffered by the Honourable Member for St. Peter, the truth of the matter is, this Government, that was elected to office on January 15, 2008, is not void of ideas or experience. We offered the people of Barbados a team of 30 men and women, whose collective knowledge and experience could well manage the affairs of Barbados. I believe that what one has seen in Barbados, in the last

two-and-a-half months is testimony to that fact. We are busy and I am very happy to give support to the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, our new Minister of Health and National Insurance, for bringing such innovative ideas, to transform the health care sector in Barbados.

Sir, the debate so far today has been principally about the National Insurance and the Barbados Water Authority. I wish to go back to what Barbadians would be more traditionally concerned about, that is the state of health care in Barbados.

During December and the early part of January, all of us took to our constituencies and canvassed heavily, and the number of concerns, that I believe most of us would have heard about and dealt with, was the issue of health care. One of the major points put forward, was the fact that after 14 years in office, Barbadians had come to the realisation, that the then Barbados Labour Party Government, led by the Honourable Member for St. Peter, did not take the state of health care in Barbados seriously.

As a matter of fact, I go as far as to suggest that the Honourable Member for St. Peter, as he pointed out yesterday in Parliament, that all roads led to him and he took ultimate responsibility for whatever happened in his Government, in all ministries and departments. Therefore, I take that as an indication that he fully accepts the failings in health care, in Barbados during his 14 years as the leader of this country, and the lack of success attended thereto.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Sir, nearly every Barbadian that we encountered, continued to lament the state of health care. It was not just about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The heavy focus has been on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and there is no denying that the standards provided at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, were not at the level that Barbadians had been accustomed to, or would have wished it to be in this 21st century. Sir, as a matter of fact, in many respects there is a feeling that we had turned back the hands of time.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter, as Minister of Finance, certainly would have had tremendous influence over the budget of the health care sector and the hospital, and there is every reason to believe, that his heavy-handedness and his lack of foresight, exemplified by his capping the budget to the hospital, did untold damage to that institution, and the psyche of the individuals who worked there as well.

I am very happy to recognise... Here we go, another lecture.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. Perhaps, you need to be technically taught some manners.

Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has a capacity to borrow. The Government of Barbados, under my leadership, gave it a cap on the operation expenses, with the understanding that we would support borrowing for the rest of its resources. I want to make that abundantly clear. The cap itself did not reflect a cut in expenditure, the cap was upon the basis of an increase in the expenditure. If the Honourable Member wants to understand what is the source of the hospital's problem, it is when a foolish Democratic Labour Party Government tried to spend on two acute general hospitals when it could not manage one. The problems of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital go back to the expenditure on the St. Joseph Hospital. It is a fundamental part of the problem.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Can we have some order, please? Are you finished your point of order.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: I was about to finish.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Can you wind up your point of order.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, the hospital was given the latitude as provided for, under its Act, to have resources in excess of the amount of what it was getting from the Consolidated Fund, and that has to be stated for the records, because it is a matter of fact.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Sir, that is the typical stand of the former administration, not to accept some blame for some things. It is with note, they may have been a decision by the former Government to cut the budget or cap it at a certain level, and allow the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board to borrow. One could deliberate over how much they were actually allowed to borrow. Notwithstanding that, I am happy that he interjected and made the reference to the St. Joseph Hospital, because I too believe that the reduction of the level of health care in Barbados, very much had its genesis with the decision of the former Government to close the St. Joseph Hospital, which was done principally to spite one of the most outstanding Ministers of Health this country has ever produced. It was sheer politics and the people of St. Peter, and the northern parishes should not have been punished for that.

Sir, today we have that building which formally housed the St. Joseph Hospital now standing in a rather derelict manner.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The St. Joseph Hospital was a place where certain doctors found it convenient to carry on their private practice. It never served the people of the north. If the Honourable Member wants to be accurate, he should tell you how many people from St. Peter or St. Lucy ever got a free service from The St. Joseph Hospital. It will shock you. It was a place where certain doctors, well-known to the Democratic Labour Party, were put in a position to carry on their private practice. If you want a debate on it, I am ready for the debate.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: There goes another manifestation of the failings.

Sir, if the problem at The St. Joseph Hospital related to private doctors conducting private practice there, the solution should not have lied in closing the entire institution. It is clearly a dereliction of duty and a failure of management and style, on the part of the former Government.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Can we have some order in the Chamber, please?

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: You do not close an entire health care institution, because you cannot get along with the individuals who run it, or because you feel that some individuals are making money from it. Any responsible Government would have dealt with that matter.

Sir, I stand by my position that The St. Joseph Hospital and the way in which it was treated, we are up to now, almost 14 years, paying a heavy price for that.

Sir, we are talking now about going forward...

14.40 p.m.

Sequence 23

Estimates - Thursday, March 20, 2008

House 5B, Sequence 24, 2.40 p.m.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: ...

Sir, even within the QEH and we are talking now about going forward as well. It is really sad that after the former Democratic Labour Party administration worked with the Lions and established the Lions Eye Care Centre at the QEH that today we are still sending Barbadians to

Cuba for eye care. The Ophthalmology Department at the QEH has not been given the resources, financial, human and capital to deliver, in a manner in which it should be delivering. This is why I am extremely supportive of the position of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, the Minister of Health and our Government to give that financial, human and capital resource to the Ophthalmology Department. Sir, I am sure that the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter, the former Prime Minister will benefit tremendously from that move as well.

Sir, some of the other areas I really feel that a lot of attention has not been placed in this country in terms of health care, relate to that of psychiatry. I do not think that we have, as yet, moved to the point where we recognise the seriousness of that illness. Sir, interventions are needed by the Government to ensure that those who need psychiatric treatment could receive it both within institutions, and the wider community.

We still have this view in Barbados in the year 2008 that the only place you can send someone with these kinds of psychological challenges is to, what Barbadians still call, the Mental Hospital. There is a stigma still that once you go there, even if for a few hours, on the advice of a magistrate, that you are mad for the rest of your life. Sir, the Psychiatric Hospital and psychiatric care in Barbados on the whole, need to be given the level of prominence and support that they so rightly deserve.

Mr. Chairman, I am very happy to note and to support the position of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West that this Government will be giving support to those who will wish to establish that Halfway House in St. George for Psychiatric patients, or those who are moving from the Psychiatric Hospital into the wider community.

Sir, we need to spend the Government's resources in the areas that touch and affect the lives of each and every Barbadian in a tangible way. Gone must be the days of just building edifices. We have to get back to the things that matter to people most. Sir, that is why you will find in this administration, that we are heavily focused on things, such as care for the elderly.

I heard the Hon. Member for St. Michael South East speak yesterday and when he was finished, I actually offered him a seat on this side, albeit temporarily, because I believe that he gave us full support. Sir, we certainly have to ensure that we give that level of support to those who are physically challenged, and those who are mentally challenged within Barbados. Sir, I do not think that we pump enough resources into that because these are challenges that can affect any one of us, our children or grandchildren and we need to stop treating the disabled, physically and mentally, as second rate citizens in Barbados.

I am very happy to support the position of the Hon. Member for St. Philip West that this Government will certainly provide resources, both in terms of Government institutions, as well as those in the private sector to ensure that those who are disabled, enjoy the quality of life, education and health care that they so rightly deserve.

One of the other areas that we need to focus on as well, is the area of drug use and drug abuse and its attendant cost to our society, particularly in terms of health care. We still, as a society, like to bury our heads in the sand in respect of the high level of illegal drug use and abuse in Barbados. It is very worthy to note the efforts being made in the private sector. I still see that at Verdun House or the old Presentation College in St. John, the Drug Rehabilitation Centre. Teen Challenge as well, even though the one in St. John will retain young males, we certainly need one for females. There are growing numbers of females that are involved in drug use and drug abuse.

Sir, the Government is committed to reducing the high incidence of drug use and abuse, as I have noted, by educational practices, in terms of how we educate young people, as well as intervention at the level of giving rehabilitation support in Government institutions and in the private sector.

It is also noted that the Hon. Member for St. Philip West and Minister of Health has indicated the establishment of a NGO Health Desk in the Ministry of Health. There are many non-governmental organisations that do a lot of good work in the health care sector, and the Government intends to certainly bring them all on board and streamline them wherever possible, and ensure that we are all working in sync to alleviate a lot of the health care concerns in Barbados.

Sir, under the former Government, where health care in Barbados had reached a point where it was no longer considered to be free and affordable, and many Barbadian families had to put aside a sizeable portion of their income to provide for their own family's health care.

We saw the creation and development of private institutions such as FMH and Sandy Crest, doing things that the Accident and Emergency Department traditionally would have done. Sir, many Barbadians, who live from payday to payday, in times of emergency would find that last dollar, even if they did not send the child to school the next day, to go to the FMH or Sandy Crest because of a lack of faith and confidence in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, particularly in the Accident and Emergency Department.

This is no discredit to the staff who work there. I believe that most of them work hard. Most of them working are committed to the cause, but you had that lack

of leadership and environment, which was not conducive to people producing at an optimal level. The former Government must take responsibility for that as well. Sir, that is why this Government is very happy to reiterate the point that we intend to provide high-level affordable health care to all Barbadians, regardless of race, class, colour, creed or wealth, or lack thereof.

Then, there are the other areas in the health care sector that we have addressed well to my mind. We have the Barbados Water Authority and, yes, we know about the condition of the mains and the age of the mains, but I have heard so little on what the former Government did.

I heard the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter and former Prime Minister, speak to Town Planning rules or linking residential and commercial developments with water availability. Yet, there is good reason to believe that there are often times when the Chief Town Planner turned down applications for subdivisions, on the basis of water not being adequately available. Sir, and those decisions were overturned, when they reached the level of the Minister responsible for Town Planning in the former administration.

Mr. Chairman, there is one thing to come in here and speak and lecture now that the Government has changed, about the importance of water to physical development, but one needs to reflect on what was done when they occupied that office and was in a position to make decisions that would have benefitted the Barbados Water Authority and, indeed, the situation in terms of the supply of water in Barbados today.

Then, we have as well, the issue of the Sanitation Service Authority, and we all know the story of the Greenland landfill. As a matter of fact, I am sorry that Hon. Member for St. Andrew is not here today.

House 5B, Sequence 24, 14:50:14

Thursday, March 20, 2008

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: As a matter of fact, I am very sorry that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew is not here today because he labelled the Greenland Landfill as monumental madness. I believe that is why there was such a big rift on that side as well.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew did not say much in this Parliament for the last ten years, so I would wish to hear him and his protégé, the Honourable Member for St.

Joseph, speak to the issue of the Greenland Landfill and whether or not they still support it.

Mr. Chairman, this Government has made its position abundantly clear in respect of solid waste management and the Greenland Landfill. Mr. Chairman, let us not think that Barbadians memories are that short or believe that this Government is not one that is visionary. We had a situation back in the mid 80s when a former Honourable Member for St. Thomas took the former Democratic Labour Party Government to court on behalf of the residents of Arch Hall in respect to Mount Stinkeroo. Elections were called, the Democratic Labour Party lost the Government, the new Barbados Labour Party Government came into being and almost 20 years later, Mount Stinkeroo still remains there.

Mr. Chairman, that lawsuit was settled by the then Attorney-General. Mr. Chairman, you could figure the connection between that Office and the parliamentary representation in St. Thomas.

Mr. Chairman, in recent times, perhaps because of pressure being applied by high net worth individuals to get permission to subdivide lands abutting and abounding the area and to build villas, we saw a hasty move on the part of the former Government to shut down what people called Mount Stinkeroo and shift it down to what the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, supported by the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, called monumental madness.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. In addition to what he said, the reality is that the Government plans when taken to go to Greenland remains steadfast. It has nothing at all to do with any property development across the road from Mount Stinkeroo as he would choose to call it, otherwise known as Mangrove.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Chairman, my position...

Miss C. Y. FORDE: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, there are 49 house spots available at Arch Hall, and the ordinary folk in Arch Hall are the beneficiaries. Those spots have been allocated and this is an eight-year project. Unfortunately, the Honourable Member is misleading the House when he talks about villas. The Honourable Member for St. James Central could attest to the fact that the people of Arch Hall are the beneficiaries.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: That, Mr. Chairman, is a reflection of the way people on that side think. I said villas. I never said that poor people cannot own villas. Is it their belief that only rich people could own villas? I thank the Honourable Member very much for elucidating on that point.

Mr. Chairman, my point remains that in respect to solid waste management, the former Government failed and failed miserably. This Administration has clearly within two and a half months been advised by the same public servants that the Honourable Member for St. Joseph spoke about. I noted when he said that they are the ones who gave them advice and they are the same ones who may be giving us advice. However, I want to assure him that there is such a level of openness and sincerity because the pressure has been lifted from the shoulders and the heads of the public servants and they are now cooperating wonderfully in many respects. Of great importance as well, is the fact that this Government is more mindful to respect the opinions of the public servants and their experience and is prepared to work with them and not treat them like...

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. James South were ordered expunged from the records by Mr. Chairman.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Chairman, in wrapping up, I wish to reiterate the point that the new Democratic Labour Party Administration listened well to the people of Barbados during our campaign. Within two and a half months we have been able to identify, not just in our Manifesto, but now as a Government, the things we intend to do.

Mr. Chairman, I give my full support to the proposals to once again make health care in Barbados..., including sanitation, water and all the myriad things that make up the overall health care sector in Barbados, because I am satisfied that under the able leadership of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, this health care sector will redound to the benefit of all Barbadians.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to make a small intervention to touch on two areas in particular. I would wish to start with the whole aspect of HIVAIDS. I also want to commend the last Administration for the excellent efforts in establishing the HIVAIDS Commission, but before that ensuring that pregnant Barbadians would have been able to access the AZT drug, which helped to reduce the spread of HIVAIDS to newborn children. Mr. Chairman, I think that is a tremendous effort. I know of the excellent work that the Commission continues to offer and therefore I would want to highly commend them for their support.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot praise them though without looking at the non-governmental organisations in this country that have been working assiduously not only in the hospital and in other institutions at that level but indeed in the communities to ensure that service is offered to those persons who without what has been offered by the

Government and the Commission would perhaps have been long dead. Therefore, I think it is important that we recognise the contributions of the non-governmental organisations and encourage Government to continue offering the stipends and the funding that are necessary for these institutions to continue to work with those persons living with HIVAIDS.

I also want, Mr. Chairman, to commend the Government for the work of the Poverty Alleviation Bureau as it relates to HIVAIDS. Many Barbadians do not know that. I also recognise that many of the other Honourable Members on the other side seem to have convenient ears or for strict political reasons have been overlooking the extensive work that has been happening with the Poverty Alleviation Bureau and the Rural Development Commission, more particularly the Poverty Alleviation Bureau, in relation to housing for persons living with HIVAIDS. Of course, those persons are not identified by name and I think that is correct.

Mr. Chairman, you would appreciate that many of them have been stigmatised not only by their relatives but indeed by friends and others in the communities who point fingers at them and blame them for what has befallen them and things of that nature. Families put them out when they find out that they have been trapped with that disease. Therefore, the Poverty Alleviation Bureau must be highly commended for coming to the assistance of those people to give them a second lease on life.

Sir, I know individuals, some of them I have taught, that have already died. As a result of a very first sexual relationship, they have been caught in that trap. Therefore, we cannot just continue to dismiss people.

Mr. Chairman, I think that the HIVAIDS Commission has the right or correct approach in ensuring that the educational programmes are put in place to meet the needs of Barbadians and to sensitise them as to what could happen to you as an individual, how you could come down with that disease and indeed how to treat people.

Sir, it even extends beyond that. It goes even into the workplace. Many people in workplaces treat some of their colleagues very unfairly. If you are a janitor or a clerical officer and you have cancer and you are not able to produce in the day, sometimes the people are so unkind. Could you imagine, Mr. Chairman, the plight of those persons who are working in the Ministry of Public Works or the National Conservation Commission and have been riddled with cancer or have challenges with the HIVAIDS?

House 5B Sequence 25

3.00 p.m.

Thursday, March 20, 2008

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, persons in the workplace must be better educated. I know that measures have already been put in place so that there is that measure of understanding, that measure of empathy and appreciation, and to give those persons a sense of hope and an opportunity to be able to go to the next step.

Mr. Chairman, I had the privilege this morning to visit the Ladymeade Polyclinic where I witnessed many persons there. Sir, those persons have gone there because they know there is that measure of confidentiality, that people would not walk about and say they saw a particular individual there or that the individual would have gone in for an HIV/AIDS test.

Mr. Chairman, it is unreasonable and unless we further the educational programmes in this society, it will make others feel uncomfortable and make them go underground. As I say this, I must commend those community groups that have been working. I know a lot of clubs and churches have developed their own groups to be able to work with people at the community level.

There is no other group better than that of the churches. I know that the Youth Affairs Department in the Ministry of Education has an educator who goes from community to community, sometimes three times a day, trying to further educate Barbadians about the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Sir, today it might be you, tomorrow it might be me, the next week it could be somebody else. Sir, one never knows and if it is not any one of us who it impacts upon, it could be one of our children, our relatives or close friends. Therefore, I think the stigma needs to be removed and that every effort made by this new Government be put in place to make sure that this kind of training continues.

Mr. Chairman, the final point in that area relates to non-nationals. Sir, it would be foolhardy of any Government - and I believe this is the right time, there is a new Government and they could take the initiative and run with it - to have so many thousands of non-nationals here. Some of them will go underground because they do not have legal status and as soon as they hear about immigration, they will hide.

Sir, I think in the interim they too should be able to access whatever treatment there is to be offered because most of them are young and still very sexually active. Furthermore, in our society we accept having more than one partner and so they will keep moving and moving, having a number of relationships and spreading the disease. Sir, some of these non-nationals have children as well and therefore they too need to be able to get whatever cocktails available, to be able to help them to live a little longer, to

be able to work and add to the pool of reserves we have in this country.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to commend any effort that Government would make to have these persons accommodated. Sir, those persons who have legal status would be expected to pay for this service but those persons who do not have legal status or have not been issued work permits and are afraid to visit the Immigration Department, then we could understand how the whole HIV/AIDS pandemic would continue to spread in this country. There are certain measures we could put in place to help stymie that process.

Mr. Chairman, the other aspect I would want to look at under this Head relates to the demographic shifts in Barbados. The Honourable Member for St. James Central made mention of some areas of St. Thomas, and you would appreciate that parish has grown in large proportions.

Sir, I suffered in the 2003 election in some of what we call the Labour Party strongholds because the week leading into the elections, under a Barbados Labour Party administration, pipes were locked off in a number of communities. There was a newspaper interview where a lot of those persons, who I know would have given me their support, said they did not go to vote because they did not have water to bathe, et cetera. Sir, this would not be something the Barbados Labour Party would want to do to hurt anybody, neither do I think that the Barbados Water Authority would have wanted to do that to hurt any individual, but that is what I suffered in 2003.

Mr. Chairman, at the time, I made sure that I had made contact with the technocrats in the Barbados Water Authority and made arrangements with the then Honourable Members for St. James Central, St. Joseph, St. Andrew, a number of others and I. Sir, we were able to have town hall meetings for residents to express their concerns and to come up with solutions. Sir, a lot of people came up with ideas, some have not been followed through and I understand that it calls for finances to execute a lot of what the Barbados Water Authority would wish to do. However, I must commend the management and staff of the Barbados Water Authority, between 2003 and today, for the efforts made to have the pipe mains replaced, particularly in areas like Welchman Hall, which is a very big community, Allens View, Lions Castle and a number of other areas.

Mr. Chairman, last year there was a big problem in Dukes Tenantry, where almost on a daily basis there was no water. However, the Barbados Water Authority was able to redirect the source of water from elsewhere to accommodate that community. Sir, within the last few weeks, we are still having tremendous problems because at Arthur Seat, Edgill Terrace, Edgill Heights, Grand View,

Rock Hall, Hope Well and Melrose, those people are still experiencing water shortages, especially on weekends. Therefore, I know that more needs to be done but I understand there are financial constraints in the department and I would like for this new Government in particular, to work with the Barbados Water Authority, to help alleviate some of the problems being experienced. This would not only be for St. Thomas but across the length and breadth of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. James South spoke about large developments that have been turned down by the Chief Town Planner, with the Minister who had responsibility overturning the decision of the Chief Town Planner. Sir, I can speak to two large developments in the parish in which I live and have the honour of representing, where for the last five years those projects are on hold. Sir, they are massive projects with almost 100 houses on each of them. Therefore, if you are talking about Barbados being a water-scarce society... Sir, the environment impact assessment study has been done and it indicates that it would be difficult to get water in this area because of the elevation of the land. Therefore, unless those investors conform with the instructions of the Town Planning Department, it would create more problems. We are all using the same water.

Mr. Chairman, what I would like the Barbados Water Authority to do again would be to look at what happens to the water from Porey Spring. Where does it go? What happens to all that water that passes through Coves Cave and Harrison's Cave? What happens to all that water that runs through Carrington's Village, all the way through Springvale and St. Andrew? Sir, the same thing happens at Bath, St. John. Sir, what can be done by the Barbados Water Authority, with the technical experts, to tap that water so that we could have it pumped back into the system? I do not know, that is not my training but I would wish something would happen because every day the water runs in Porey Spring, even in the dry season.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, the other comment I would want to make mention of is that when I was a small child, and I am talking about 25, 30, 40 years ago, the Water Authority always used to issue tips, especially in the crop season, so that persons would know not to take a hose to water the garden or lawn, that you should use a bucket to wash the car, instead of using the hose. Sir, I believe that such public education needs to come back into the system.

Mr. Chairman, I know that some Barbadians are laws unto themselves and they would ignore the water tips because their taps continue to run water. Therefore, they

would not feel the pinch in the same way as others, especially those in traditional communities who feel it. Therefore, I believe we must get those water tips coming again.

Mr. Chairman, the other aspect of that kind of education is for the office of the Barbados Water Authority to ensure there is a proper customer-friendly service going 24 hours a day. Sir, if you were to ever experience calling the Barbados Water Authority any evening on Friday...Let us suppose today is Thursday and your tap is off, it is off all day tomorrow Friday and all day on Saturday, you then have to wait until Tuesday without water, you would know the kind of challenges this would pose.

Mr. Chairman, what I have witnessed over the last few years is that depending on where you are living, you learn there will be water outages more than 24 hours in advance. However, when you are living in those little communities, you never get to know. When you call, the person who answers the telephone is sometimes the watchman.

Sir, you could imagine when persons call and say that they have a five-day-old baby but for the last two days there has been no water. One lady called one morning and said that she had used the last block of ice from her refrigerator to boil, to make a cup of tea.

Sir, I got a cursing from a Dems supporter the week after election. The lady called to ask how is it that a week before the election and on election day there was water but now there was none. I said: "Well, clearly you would understand it would be the Democratic Labour Party who is causing you not to get water and not the Barbados Labour Party because we are no longer the Government."

3.10 p.m.

Thursday, March 20, 2008

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Sir, I do not have a problem. I am reachable, I am accessible and, therefore, people can call me but I want the Authority to put more user friendly systems in place so that there is somebody to answer the phone and there is somebody to say that Golden Ridge or Castle Grant has a problem. Sir, when there was a massive problem prior to the change of the point mains in the parish some aspect of a massive tank that ran all the way from Apes Hill to Castle Grant, that too alleviated some of the problems with the communities leading into those general areas. Mr. Chairman, I believe that if we can get the customer-friendly approach, and we can get the announcements in the media in advance, that would help a lot. Sir, finally why must persons see a pipe running, while driving a truck from the Barbados Water Authority water is pouring buckets a drop from the hole and then the driver

has to go back into the office to be told to go back to St. Thomas because there is a bad burst main up in St. Thomas. Sir, that is one of the challenges I could never understand. I have raised it with the authorities, I do not know if it is a union agreement or if somebody has to log in the information. Sir, I am not sure but for me it is stupid to be aware that a pipe has been running since one o'clock and at five o'clock it is still pouring in that way. Sir, I believe that this is something that needs to be attended to and when the pipe is finished, let them come back and reseal. Sir, sometimes there is poor signage, you cannot tell unless you get into that big deep hole or big hump to know that the pipe has been repaired and some times it takes months before the pipe is resealed again.

Sir, there should be continued coordination. Sir, that is a system we had in place but somehow things seemed to have fallen apart. Under this system, the authority had an arrangement with private contractors, then the authority had an arrangement with the Minister of Public Works where as soon as they were finished, they resealed it because of the inconvenience that had been caused to thousands of Barbadians.

Sir, I hope this new administration will continue with the proper training of staff and put the monetary arrangements in place so that all Barbadians, at the end of the day, can feel comfortable living in this society, knowing that they will get water and that when there is no water, they will get announcements so that they can then prepare to fill up their buckets to do what they have to do. It must be recognized that farmers are some of the ones who suffer more than anyone else.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank you for your indulgence and I look forward to speaking again.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Chairman, I rise to give support to the programmes and Subprogrammes of the Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security and to give support to the Estimates contained therein. I want first to start by saying that we are living in a changing world, in difficult times. When you see what is happening around us in the world today, we are seeing climate change happening at a rapid pace and, in a sense, one of the challenges of human existence today is to try to develop ways and means of dealing with the whole factor of climate change.

Mr. Chairman, even within Barbados itself, sometimes we tend to forget that whatever is happening in other parts of the world would also impact upon us. For those who would have watched CNN, you would have seen a picture where, in certain parts of the United States of

America are being flooded because of rapidly melting snow. Sir, what it brought home to me is that when we look at the figures in these Estimates, it says, here is an example of a programme in which you are trying to achieve different things that at the end of the day would benefit the citizens of this country. Sir, we are doing it in a manner where you are seeking to maintain a balance between the needs of our population and also the need to ensure that we engage in environmental practices that would not in itself compromise those fundamental needs that we perceive them to be.

Mr. Chairman, first of all I want to go to the area of the hospital. Sir, within St. Michael West Central, one of the things I have noticed is that there are constant complaints of St. Michael West Central concerning the kind of care that is being received at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I would, therefore, want to applaud the efforts of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West to bring about change in respect of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Chairman, unless we are able to address the ordinary needs of ordinary people who go there, we as a people would have failed in terms of our responsibility to this nation. Sir, one of the things we must admit and recognise is that in the development of Barbados that no one should be left behind. It is not enough for us to brag about the fact that there are some people who can go to certain private clinics in this country and obtain health care and there are some who because of the fact that they do not have the money to pay and to afford it, cannot do this. Therefore, Sir, it is inexcusable for us to continue to have a situation where you have persons going to the Accident and Emergency Department at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and cannot get the attention they need in the time frame that they need to get it and, I would want to laud the efforts of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West to bring about change in this regard. Mr. Chairman, I also want to move to another area in respect of St. Michael West Central where because of the fact that you had roads being constructed in St. Michael West Central, which are relatively narrow, in some cases, Sir, it has impacted upon the mode of garbage collection in those areas. We have a situation where there are some areas in St. Michael West Central that garbage trucks have difficulty in terms of accessing.

Mr. Chairman, to me it makes no sense that if you are going to send a garbage truck in an area, that you send a garbage truck that has difficulty accessing the area that it is supposed to reach. Sir, I would just want you to go to some areas within Wavell Avenue in St. Michael, where you have the side roads and you would see what I mean, where because of the fact that the trucks have difficulty in accessing, in some cases, what happens is that unless residents bring the garbage up to the top of the road, it does not get collected. Sir, even if you have a point of collection,

it then becomes the community garbage dump. Sir, not only the community garbage dump but we still have a situation where persons are inconsiderate to persons living in neighbourhoods and they come from afar in their Mercedes or BMWs and actually dump their garbage in communities and, Sir, we have to be mindful of that.

Mr. Chairman, I am hoping that under the Head for the Sanitation Services Authority that we are mindful that we bring garbage trucks in those areas that can actually access the areas they are supposed to service. Sir, again I go back to the question of the people in terms of understanding who we are supposed to involve in the process. I believe that the days when we just provide a service to persons without considering them at the same time, that we need to involve them in the service.

Mr. Chairman, I would also want to indicate that one of the things we should as a matter of record do is to seek to involve citizens living within districts in the whole process of garbage collection. Sometimes people do not appreciate the importance of people being involved in it.

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Mr. J.D. PAUL: A lot of the illegal dumping in parts of the country could be solved, if we have the active cooperation of persons living in the area. In many cases a lot of them are not aware of the dangers to their health, that comes about from that kind of dumping in the area. Sometimes the residents themselves are part of it, but I am saying that we need to involve people in the process, rather than leaving it at the level of the bureaucrats. In that regard, I would want to encourage you to include a line item for community involvement, when it comes to the whole question of the delivery of services in those areas. I believe that if we were to impress the importance on the residents of their cooperation in the process, we would see a lot of the problems that are being experienced in areas, such as Wavell Avenue, and St. Stephens Landing Scheme, being addressed in a timely manner.

Sir, I want to draw your attention to another point. Sir, because we have this rampant dumping of garbage around our country, in some cases, it is the problem of rats. I note that in the Estimates there is some provision for that. However, I want to emphasize that if the provision is not enough, I really think that we might need to consider increasing it.

Sir, during last year, alone, there were recorded cases of death from leptospirosis. I think that a country moving toward developed status, we need to give that particular issue more importance than we are giving it now. I want to encourage the Honourable Member for St. Philip

West to give active consideration because wherever you have huge pileups of garbage in this country, you also have vermin running around, and of course it increases the danger of persons contracting leptospirosis.

Sir, one of the things we also need to appreciate, generally, within this country, is the whole question of disabled persons. There are situations, in my constituency for instance, St. Michael West Central, where persons who are parents of disabled children, and in some cases parents are unwilling to go out to work, in favour of looking after their disabled children. Sir, I know there is a line item in your Estimates, as far as that is concerned, but I also think you need to look at the human cost involved, for those persons who have to raise disabled children, in today's world. I do not think, generally, that we understand the kind of bias we have in our community, first of all, the needs of the disabled themselves, but not only that, the parents who are involved in raising those disabled children. Sir, in many cases it is a labour of love, for those parents. In many cases it is as a result of an emotional necessity for those parents, that they have to stay at home.

Sir, the actual cost, does not only relate to the fact that those parents are staying home. The actual cost relates to the fact that in many cases you have a situation where an able-bodied individual, could be contributing in a very active way to the economy of this country, he is prevented because he does not have that emotional stability to feel comfortable when he is at work on a daily basis, not knowing whether his disabled child has been looked after. Sir, if there is one area of development we need, it is the way we look after our disabled community.

Mr. Chairman, in that respect I would want to encourage, again, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, our Minister of Health and National Insurance and Social Security, to see how we can expand that particular item to more adequately meet not only the needs of the disabled, but the persons who have the responsibility of taking care of those individuals.

Sir, in this debate, this cannot be a question of who takes responsibility for what. Unless we as Barbadians recognise that it is our individual responsibility to, at least, take ownership of these things, we cannot succeed. In that respect I would want to be one of those to give kudos, to the health personnel in our country for the effort they have been making with limited resources, over the last 14 years. I think we need to do that.

Sir, when you review the challenges over the last 14 years, it is notable that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas mentioned that during the last 14 years we have had immigration in this country which allowed an increasing number of migrants.

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

Mr. J.D. PAUL: We fail to recognise when this happens, the great strain posed on our social services. A lot of people forget that. Instead, of expanding the budget during that period to deal with the problem, we saw a situation where, in many cases, those persons involved in the dispensation had to do with bare bones. Again, in that respect, I think we need to applaud the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, because at least, in this budget, he is giving priorities to these areas in our Government that would further development. Sir, development has to be about the people. Sir, if there is one thing that has propelled Barbados forward to its present status of a country, is the fact that we have always looked after our people, and health happens to be a crucial aspect, in terms of moving us forward.

Sir, you leave me with limited time because...

Asides.

Sir, I want to say I am very satisfied, that we have a genuine effort at this point in time, to tackle the health concerns of Barbadians in a very disciplined and serious way. I want to assure Honourable Members of the Opposition, that we will take onboard the positive suggestions, and certainly as a Government move forward in terms of tackling the health issues that Barbadians face in a very effective manner.

Than you very much, Sir.

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

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: Sir, I want to continue my presentation on this Head, and to spend sometime speaking with respect to HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Sir, Barbados has done well over the years in tackling this particular social scourge. This pandemic has caused tremendous suffering worldwide, and has had serious impact on national economies. It has devastated several areas of the world, most notably areas of Sub Saharan, Africa, to the extent where you would have had the productive age group, the age cohort between 21-60 decimated. In some countries the older population were actually the ones marshalling the work force. I want to commend the job that we have done and to commend our team and NGOs as they continue their work.

15.30 p.m.

Sequence 28

Estimates - Thursday, March 20, 2008

House 5B, Sequence 29, 3:30, p.m.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: ...

The HIV/AIDS Programme has had a strategic period between 2001 and 2006, which has been very successful, albeit that they were, and still are many challenges. We intend, in the new strategic period that starts this financial year and runs to 2013, to re-emphasise and attempt to secure those gains that we would have made. Sir, we also intend to address the challenges that were unearthed during that first period.

Mr. Chairman, the focus within the new period would be on prevention, treatment, care, management and training. In doing this, Sir, we continue to solicit support from international agencies, like the World Bank. We have re-entered a loan arrangement with the World Bank to help us to co-finance the National Strategic Programme. Sir, this financial year, that programme will focus on the five areas, as indicated.

Sir, since the start of the epidemic in this country in 1984, we had 3 295 persons who have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. The total number of people who have died as a result of HIV/AIDS was 1 297 or represented 39 per cent of the total diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Sir, at the end of 2006, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine people or 61 per cent of all those ever diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, were known to be alive. However, we still must have that put in context, in that the majority of persons in Barbados, who may be HIV/AIDS infected, are unaware that they are infected.

Therefore, as a result of that, the programme for 2008-2009 will concentrate very heavily on preventative efforts. We will look very carefully at anti stigma activities, to attitude and behavioural changes, and to enhance and access HIV/AIDS care services. Sir, we will also look at treatment, with respect to sexually transmitted diseases in general.

Sir, the plan for 2008-2009 would be to undertake the development of an action plan to facilitate the decentralisation of treatment services to the Polyclinics. We want to train additional staff. We are looking to train four additional physicians in the area of clinical management. We want to undertake a rationalisation, with respect to our procurement of medications, where we get the cheapest drugs that are still quite efficacious. We want to establish a Pharmacology Vigilance Programme within the system. We want to enhance our technical capabilities, with respect to laboratory equipment to do testing, for example, with micro bacterium equipment for the diagnosis of TB, as well as equipment for a molecular suit.

Sir, what we also want to do for this financial year, in providing support for those particular areas that we are concentrating on, will be to complete the HIV/AIDS Food Bank and the Personal Department Centre at the Lady Meade Gardens, and to relocate the Elroy Phillips Centre from the Lazaretto to Coverley, Christ Church. This relocation is in collaboration with the University of the West Indies, which has provided the professional services for renovation of the facility at Coverley that will house 11 persons. Sir, negotiations with the university are ongoing, with respect to the actual renovations of the facility.

Sir, I would like to mention briefly about the CHART Programme, which is really a sub programme that provides training for the health professionals in all disciplines: doctors, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory technologists and social workers. In this financial year, we want to conduct a number of workshops, with respect to the training of persons working with the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Chairman, the entire focus of the Ministry is ultimately to achieve an enhancement of the awareness of Barbadians, with regard to the serious nature of this HIV/AIDS epidemic, as it threatens Barbadians, if it is not contained. Sir, we have to make a conscious decision to address it at all social levels, meaning, in the workplace, school systems, hospital systems, Church, and all the other groups. It is such a devastating disease process that, if left without a serious national and multifaceted approach to it, where all the social partners and stakeholders get involved in this, and especially to get the private sector to assist us, we could very well be facing a bleak future.

Therefore, the Ministry, in particular its HIV/AIDS programme, and the personnel there, have to put together a programme to ensure that we can contain to a large extent, the rate of growth of new persons infected in Barbados.

Sir, I would want to say that what I have seen done to other countries in the world, does not paint a very nice picture, if we all do not put our hands to the plough and get this particular disease process under containment. I want to give my assurance that this administration will provide the necessary financial and human resource support, to make sure that we bring this particular condition under better control.

Mr. Chairman, I think that we want to bring this Head to a close, very soon.

...

House 5B, Sequence 29, 15:40:14

Thursday, March 20, 2008

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, we would want to bring this Head to a close very soon, but in the next few minutes, I want to deal with some of the fundamental problems that are now plaguing the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Chairman, it becomes important that I say up front that it is a problem that the unions in Barbados have to come on board to assist with because it is the only premier health institution that we have and when their members are sick, they have to go there, so it does not make any sense for us to get into a confrontational reality on the hospital matter.

Mr. Chairman, the problems at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital have to be sorted out and we are going to try to sort them out without affecting the lives of the workers there. Mr. Chairman, people like to resist change for whatever reason and even though things are not going good and things are bad and want to tend to worse, there are people who still want to resist change.

Mr. Chairman, we have said that to deal with the hospital issue, we need to move the primary care services out of the hospital. When we get that done, that would free up space in the hospital to allow us to expand the NICU and the Surgical Intensive Care Unit.

Mr. Chairman, we are looking at addressing the environs of the Accident and Emergency Department. We want to expand into the adjacent space on the same floor. We want to build a general practice or a see and treat unit and allow for a holding bay. What we want to do while we are doing that is to provide the Accident and Emergency Department with the equipment it needs to carry out diagnostic testing on site. More important, we want at the same time to give the St. John Polyclinic diagnostic capability. Apart from the Sir Winston Scott Polyclinic, we want to look at having a polyclinic in the east and one in the north to give them diagnostic capabilities as well.

Mr. Chairman, when we couple that with an education programme that we will marshal through the Health Promotion Unit of the hospital to educate Barbadians as to why and what we are doing and the necessity for it, I am convinced Barbadians would work with us.

Sir, there is a problem when the ambulance service needs to get a patient to the hospital within what is called the golden hour. Sir, how are we going to get a man with a potential myocardial infarction from St. Lucy to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in an hour or less with the traffic that we have on the road? Mr. Chairman, it is alright for some to talk about whether you should have acute care facilities. It might very well be to consider the size of the facility. You

may not have to build a completely new Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Given the development that has occurred on the West Coast and in the north of the island and the fact that it is an unrealistic situation to attempt to talk about acute care when you could hardly get persons transported from point A to point B on mornings and evenings, it would be wiser to consider the development of a facility that has some acute care capability. That makes sense to us and we are going to seriously look at addressing it.

Mr. Chairman, this whole nonsense about doctors and getting involved in private practice and so on... The reality is that the system was put in place because you could not pay a doctor in Barbados what he is really worth. Many of my colleagues who were trained with me would be working in the United States of America now for US\$300 000 a year. What are they going to come home for? There is no technology in the system to operate at the level at which they operate.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: The reality is that in addressing the problem we have to understand that was a system to allow doctors... When you put the 20-hour per week period, that was the reasoning behind it. There is nothing wrong in Barbados with the Government itself separating public from private and expanding its care in the private aspect and having a revenue generating component. In fact, that may be something that is saleable to the region as well as to tourists.

Mr. Chairman, it was alright for the same former Prime Minister and others on that side to encourage the building of a brand new hospital to service foreigners and the money be leaked out of Barbados when Government could maintain the monies here if we execute the programme for ourselves. What nonsense am I hearing? Sir, that is not going to be our position. We would analyse what we have to do. I am sure that I would get the support of my Cabinet colleagues and we would look for the solutions and implement the solutions.

Mr. Chairman, there are one or two others persons who would want to speak before the Head is wound up, but I want to assure Barbadians, to ignore a lot of the long talk and chatter, that we have their interest at heart. That is what we were elected to maintain and secure. We are going to utilise our advisors to the fullest. We are not always going to agree but there are times when decisions have to be taken even though you are in disagreement, that is part of life. Sir, we are going to find the best inputs whenever we can get those inputs and do the best we can in the interest of the people of this country.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, I rise again to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, the Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security and his team for seeking to address some of the problems which have plagued the Bridgetown Wastewater Sewerage Treatment Plant. The air has been filled with a lot of stench due to the lack of management of that sewerage treatment plant by the last Government.

Mr. Chairman, due to public outcry as that stench situation worsened in the lead up to the Cricket World Cup 2007, the last Government hurriedly rushed to set up a temporary septage handling facility, but this has been found to be inadequate. Sir, I therefore congratulate the new Minister and his team for pledging within the next financial year to upgrade this temporary facility to the extent that it would become more effective where screens would be placed to filter grits, and other extraneous residue that would reduce odour significantly. We in Bridgetown certainly look forward to that improvement.

House 5B Sequence 30 3.50 p.m.

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, I stood here today and heard the Honourable Member for St. Peter taking responsibility for the last Government's lack of action in executing the West Coast Sewerage Treatment Project, which had been talked about, even before we left office in 1994.

Mr. Chairman, we in the City of Bridgetown look forward to this West Coast Sewerage Treatment Project being constructed because as you know, the plans are to have the Sewerage Treatment Plant at Lakes Folly, and as I understand it, in the original plans, the residents in the surrounding areas of New Orleans, Chapman Lane, Kensington New Road and Emmerton Lane, would be connected to this system.

Sir, the public may be surprised to know that the Bridgetown Sewerage System does not service those residents, so we endure the stench and we do not even benefit from the convenience of the system. Sir, we look forward to the speedy construction of this West Coast Sewerage Treatment Project.

Mr. Chairman, it is a crying shame that the last Government was unable to bring this to fruition, especially when you look at the fact that it was supposed to service the entire west coast, to reduce the likelihood of E.coli and other contaminants filtering into the water supply and into the ocean that is so important for our tourism. Sir, I congratulate the Ministry of Health for ensuring that this

project will be executed in the very near future, certainly within this very term of office.

Mr. Chairman, in looking at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, as I said before during the heat of the last election campaign, my mother was hospitalised there and on a daily basis, residents, friends and I had to be there to feed her. As I said, I noticed there is a need for assistance to be given to the nursing staff on the public wards, to assist patients who are unable to feed themselves. Sir, those of us who visit patients in the hospital during visiting hours, would see that the hospital is understaffed and that the nurses are dealing with urgent matters, in relation to medication and the handling of patients with acute illnesses. Therefore, what often occurs is that the attendants would place the food trays by the bed. If the patients are unable to feed themselves and there is no relative or friend there to assist them, after a certain time the attendants would come and remove the food, which the patients would not have gotten the chance to eat. Sir, clearly the health of those patients is clearly at risk. Therefore, it is a question of life and death for many of these patients.

Sir, I look forward to this issue being addressed. If we need to involve volunteers, the various service groups or people with the necessary skills to assist, in an organised way, in the feeding of patients to ensure that their health would not deteriorate in any way in the hospital environment. This explains why many people are afraid to go into the hospital because they are not sure if they would come out. Therefore, these basic issues could be addressed if we put our minds to them.

Mr. Chairman, there is also the situation with regards to laundry, we had some flare-ups with the union in recent months, in relation to this issue. It seems that the laundry is not being opened seven days a week. On weekends it may be closed and we may have a resultant build-up of dirty linen in the various departments of the hospital. This is unacceptable because clearly the health of patients and the entire population at the hospital would be at risk because as you know, within the hospital we have to control the level of bacteria, viruses and other microbes that might be in the environment. Therefore, cleanliness is important in this regard.

There is also the issue of the kitchen. We need to have properly-functioning equipment so that the quality of food for the patients would be consistently maintained at a high level. There is also the issue of reagents that are needed to execute the various blood tests, because we have seen under the last regime where many out-patients and others have been waiting to be treated by doctors. In some cases they were unable to get timely treatment because the various blood tests could not be conducted in a timely manner, due to the lack of reagents.

Mr. Chairman, in going further to look at HIV/AIDS programme, as the Honourable Member for St. Philip West mentioned, this Government is looking seriously at the holistic solution to the control of the spread of HIV/AIDS in our community, and I congratulate the Government for taking that initiative. Sir, I would just like to add my concerns in terms of the approach of the last Government. There were a lot of catchy advertisements with attractive young women, and one could get the subliminal impression that it was okay to condomise. That you could just wear a condom, that you could be as promiscuous as ever and you would not be at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

Sir, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Philip West mentioned that we are going to involve the churches, and I congratulate him for this. Sir, we cannot forget our sense of morality, promiscuity is not the answer. Condoms can have holes and sometimes they could burst. Therefore, we must promote responsible sexual behaviour. I, therefore, encourage greater co-operation with the churches to promote abstinence, in the case of unmarried individuals, and monogamous relationships in the case of married couples. This would be a more far-reaching approach to the problem of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Chairman, we heard this talk about just throwing condoms to prisoners and that would solve the problem. However, if you would read the label on a packet of condoms there is a disclaimer on almost every packet saying that condoms are not designed for anal sexual intercourse, because obviously there is the likelihood of ruptures in the condom during anal sex. Therefore, to fool people that you would just give prisoners condoms and let them do as they like, would be totally irresponsible. Let us look at the issue of reducing over-crowding within the prison. Sir, the Democratic Labour Party is looking at the holistic approach to these serious issues.

Mr. Chairman, looking at the issue of the National Insurance Scheme, I heard the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter today taking full responsibility for the last Government's initiative in which effectively, as far as the public is concerned, the government made it very difficult for persons to get non-contributory old age pensions. Sir, many of my constituents come to me, on a daily basis, saying they have been turned around for years in their attempt to get non-contributory old age pensions. I am saying this is a crying shame and I look forward to the Democratic Labour Party addressing this concern.

Mr. Chairman, these are senior citizens. As the Honourable Member for St. Lucy mentioned, these are people such as fisher folk and hawkers. These are people who are at the lowest level of our socioeconomic ladder, who would have made their contributions. Sir, now that they are senior citizens, some of them may have health issues and do not have many relatives who could look out

for them, or they may get confused in the bureaucracy of Government and may not be able to access their non-contributory pensions. I am saying Government must look at greater compliance in terms of people who are working at a younger age and so be more considerate to those senior citizens who, in their own humble way, have contributed to the national development of our country.

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

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, let me just quickly turn to the issue of the cleanliness of the City. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central has supported my call for the cleanup of Barbados, to reduce the rodent population. Sir, I go further, I congratulate the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, who sits in the Other Place, where he has publicly announced that Government would be embarking on a war, as it were, against the giant African snail.

4.00 p.m.

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Hon. M.T. TODD: Therefore, I see that the Ministry plans to continue its baiting programme but we need to call upon the private sector to get on board to provide some of the bait, to deploy the rat traps and other bait stations and generally, call the environmental health officers to be very vigilant and to enforce the law in ensuring that householders and property owners keep their premises clean. By so doing, you would not get a build-up of litter and debris that would be breeding grounds for rodents and other pests within our community. Indeed, talking about environmental health officers, I think they can also assist in keeping public conveniences clean. I have travelled to countries around the world where public conveniences are as clean as this Honourable Chamber and there are attendants who give you the toilet paper and ensure that the place is kept clean. Sir, the Ministry of Health is responsible for the upkeep of these public conveniences and in this new millennium, with tourism being our major foreign exchange earner, we have to pull out all the stops to ensure that we eradicate the situation where there are a lot of smelly, dirty, public conveniences. Sir, it does not say much for our national psyche.

Mr. Chairman, even in terms of vector control, the breeding of the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito. I remember as a child we would see the public health inspector in black and white with their spray cans who would report you if you had containers breeding mosquitoes. They would come into your house and examine your plant pot and the environmental health officers, by law, have that mandate and I encourage them to know that we in the Government

would support their aggressive execution of their duties to rid Barbados of the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquitoes.

Mr. Chairman, with those few words, I support and congratulate the Minister of Health, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West and his Ministry team for their far-reaching proposal for this new financial year. I thank you.

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

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak on this Head and to also congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip West for his astute new ministerial management along with his excellent team of managers and professionals in the Minister of Health. I want to first start by saying that I am especially pleased that the good folk in St. John are, at last, getting the polyclinic that came to an abrupt halt during the austerity period back in 1992. They have suffered long but I am pleased to see in this year's Estimates that they are at last bringing some relief to that situation in St. John with the St. John people getting their polyclinic at last. Of course, there have been some problems at the existing polyclinic in Gall Hill, St. John with flooding and other environmental problems and I am sure that the good folk over there are pleased to hear that we are at last addressing that problem.

Mr. Chairman, regarding the several problems that are occurring across the health system in Barbados, we have been in office since January 15th and I am especially happy that as I observe the Ministry of Health we are addressing in a very direct and frontal way some of the problems that we found on assuming office on January 15th. Sir, especially when it comes to the situation of the dire shortage of nurses at the polyclinics across the length and breadth of Barbados. This is especially so when we take cognisance of the fact that in the nursing system, there are nurses presently languishing at home because they are victimised for one reason or another for not signing up with the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board. I am especially happy to hear, off the record, of course, that they will be reintegrated into the nursing system in Barbados, making good use of their professionalism.

Mr. Chairman, when it comes to the question of community health nurses, I have a very direct knowledge of this because there are community health nurses who are not allowed through a system that is presently in place to go out into the communities to attend to matters that they are especially trained and recruited for.

Mr. Chairman, these nurses have to spend long hours within the four walls of the confines of the polyclinic system attending to matters that health aides and lesser trained nurses could attend to. I am hoping that the

community nurses would again be given the opportunity to attend to matters that they were trained and recruited for especially in the communities where they visit individual households and look after the matters they were assigned to.

Mr. Chairman, when it comes to the question of the placement at the Port, especially the several ports of entry, there was a hasty placement of nurses there during the World Cup. Sir, some of these nurses, especially the ones at the seaport are exposed to several environmental situations at those ports of entry where there is no adequate housing for them. They are exposed to the passengers as they embark from the several ships that are berthed at the Bridgetown Port. This is a situation that has gone on since World Cup 2007 and certainly, it is about time that this matter is addressed in a direct way and remove these nurses from having to face whatever environmental hazards they are exposed to as the passengers disembark from the several ships that berth here at the Bridgetown Port. They are exposed to these dangers and I believe that, as a good Government, we should move hastily to address these matters that the last Government did not attend to, in any way or form.

Mr. Chairman, I have been looking through the brief of the Minister of Health and I see that at the Geriatric Hospital, the laundry has been without hot water for the last 10 years. Sir, this could not be so; this could not be possible in a Barbados of 2008, ten years with hot water in a laundry. Sir, you know in your domestic situation that if you have several pieces of laundry that they have to be laundered with hot water and I cannot see how in a large hospital situation that we could have laundry going without hot water for 10 whole years.

Mr. Chairman, there was no licence for the kitchen at the Geriatric Hospital for 13 years. Sir, private restaurants and other food establishments are almost hounded down to have a licence in place but we have a Government institution going for 13 years without having a licence to verify if the kitchen is a place suitable for providing meals for the patients within the four walls of that particular institution. Mr. Chairman, I am glad to see that the sum of \$5.3 million has been allocated over a two-year period to bring some remedy to that situation that exists at the Geriatric Hospital.

Mr. Chairman, at the St. Lucy District Hospital, the female ward has been out of use since 2003 when a hurricane visited Barbados. Sir, for four years the female ward has been out of order and I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would have something to say about this because right in his constituency we have a situation like this existing.

H/5B/16:10

*Sequence 32**Thursday, March 20, 2008*

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: I am also happy that the expanded bed capacity, especially for private homes and the care of our elderly, some 80 beds are being established. I know, of course, from talking to several people, that the care of the elderly, especially outside of the capacity of the Government institutions that fall directly under the geriatric care of those patients, we have to extend, of course, and embrace several private homes. I am glad to see that we have included in this year's budget, some 80 additional beds to supplement what we presently have in the Government geriatric care hospitals.

The relocation of the Elroy Phillips Center from Black Rock to Coverley, I think that is a good move. Black Rock where it is now located, has become a bustling area, and, of course, the rehabilitation and the convalescence, if you can put it that way, of the patients who are at the Elroy Phillips Center, the new ambience at the Coverley location will add to their comfort, as they ride out the disease that afflicts them. Sir, in that same complex, the Environmental Sanitation Unit, they are moving to Vaucluse, St. Thomas, but what is most noticeable, there are still allocations for 550 pits and 1 300 slabs. Sir, I am hoping that within the shortest possible time we in Barbados could move from 550 pits to almost no pits, because I believe that is an ennobling way to take Barbados towards what we want to establish for our people. A pit toilet should be a thing of the past. I believe that our Government and the Ministry of Health, under the astute leadership of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, will move with some alacrity, post haste, to have the situation remedied.

I want to publicly commend the workers of the Sanitation Services Authority, they are unsung heroes in Barbados. I see that they are now servicing over 80 000 households.

Asides.

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: I believe that they are among the unsung heroes in Barbados, and they should be paid kudos and given some bouquets regarding the excellent work that they do in Barbados, to keep Barbados, the place that it is, not only for our locals, but, of course, visitors to this island.

Sir, I want to especially address an area in my constituency. There was mention of the Belle area, in one of the other St. Michael constituencies. I want to make a very special appeal, especially for the people at Belleview in my constituency. They have been visited by what I call political terrorism, by the last Administration. Almost every other week they experienced an almost frightening

situation, constantly on watch for bulldozers or other pieces of equipment, terrifying them, because of the situation at Belleview. I am hoping that the Ministry of Health, in the shortest possible time, can bring some alleviation to this problem, especially with the installation of a sewerage system or other means to remedy the situation at Anthem Gap or Belleview. There is no water supply in the area. Of course there are squatters in that particular area, but I believe as a caring Government we must bring some remedy to the situation there for the Belleview people. I am hoping that somewhere in the coming financial year, we will allocate some monies to bring some relief to the people of Belleview and the Belle in St. Michael East.

Sir I am especially happy, because I can see there is a new turning point, in the delivery of health care in Barbados, a paradigm shift, if you will. I believe that with the assistance of the professionals within the Ministry of Health, that the Honourable Minister will deliver the goods for the people of Barbados on behalf of this new Government. I have every confidence that this will be achieved, not only in the coming financial year, but in years to come.

Thank you very much, Sir.

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

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, without detaining much longer on this question of health, and allowing us to proceed to other areas, I must come in at this time to comment on a number of things we heard throughout this debate, and I particularly take note of the contribution of the Honourable Member for St. Peter, in what must be termed as a late coming to light, on a number of critical issues, relating to the supply of health services and, indeed, water services to this country. Sir, all the things which he was at pains to speak about, were the same items that he spoke about, at the beginning of his 1994 term as Prime Minister, and Minister of Finance in the country. The conclusion that we can come to is that he was unable, in fact, to achieve any of the solutions and the facts support this position. Even as he spoke about the scarcity of water and the need to look into tertiary treatment of water, and recycling. These are items of course which the Honourable Minister has addressed very clearly in his presentation, as he spoke about the need to make certain physical changes to roadways, to accommodate the proposed West Coast Sewerage Project. In actual fact we are faced in Christ Church with the reality of an incomplete South Coast Sewerage Project. That is the reality.

Sir, for all the years that he has been at the helm of governance in this country, the truth is, the South Coast Sewerage Project is still in an extended state of

incompletion. I am reading from the programme budget for the Financial Year 2008-2009, and a report at Page 261.

Asides.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: You can make it a document of anywhere you want. I can get a copy for you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please make the document a document of the House.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: If it is not, then you can simply do that and move on.

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: Sir, on a point of order. I do not see how his programme budget for the current year could be a document of the House.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, it is so done.

Sir, we speak to completion, for instance, of property connections.

“In 2006, this was determined to comprise a total of 552 of which 143 are considered partially connected and the remaining 409 were completely unconnected.”

Sir, can you believe that? Out of 552 connections, 409 still remain incomplete. This is the Honourable Members on that side who want to lecture this Government about how to proceed in water recovery, how to proceed in the provision of health services. Sir, it gets worse. Remember the tragedy of it is, the ...

H5B 4:20 p:m

Sequence 33

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House 5B, Sequence 34, 4.20 p.m.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: ... Sir, it gets worse and remember, the tragedy of it is that the former Hon. Member for Christ Church South had the responsibility of completing this project. It is very bad. Sir, let us talk about the repairs of manholes. These especially affect residents in Maxwell Main Road. A recent survey of manholes in the Maxwell Coast area, showed that the concrete in several (11) manholes, was crumbling in pieces. This may be due to the batch of concrete used in the construction, or due to discharges into the sewer line that have the capacity to damage the concrete.

Sir, the point I want to make is that here we are faced with a situation, where the former Prime Minister seeks to lecture this new administration on what is to be and what is not to be, and his record in these areas of the handling, preservation and recycling of water in Barbados, is abysmal. How can we take seriously any suggesting coming from That Side on this matter? We cannot do it Sir.

Therefore, I am comfortable in the leadership of the Ministry of Finance, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health on these matters, the allocation of funds, and the execution of projects, in that order. This is what we are taking about.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Of course, we will hear you, but we do not require the almost childish repetition and lecturing, as if this is a new discovery, because the facts do not support them. They had an opportunity to right all these issues.

The Hon. Member for St. Philip West and myself, even as long ago as two weeks, discussed the whole question of where we are going with the West Coast Sewerage project. Everybody recognises that it would be impossible to carry out a project of that magnitude at this time, given the situation of Highway 1. Sir, there are other options, which are presently being investigated by the Hon. Member for St. Philip West.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. It would be wonderful if the Hon. Member for Christ Church South would tell the public of Barbados that he was an integral part of the works at the South Coast.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: What is your point of order? Is he misleading the Chamber?

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Yes. He is misleading the Chamber because some of the works that he has just got up and condemned are parts of the contract he pursued during that period.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please continue.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, it is a true adage that empty vessels make the most noise.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please address the Chair, and forget asides, please.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, the point must be made. The Honourable Members on That Side, as we go forward in the management of this economy and the leadership of

Barbados, must recognise that they accept responsibility for the failures, but they must behave as if they do, and not behave like they have done everything right and are now about to watch on, Sir, to be onlookers, when destruction is brought on Barbados. Sir, no such thing is contemplated, and no such event will occur.

Mr. Chairman, the management of this economy, and the execution of these projects will be sensibly dealt with, and they will be measured. Sir, we will make sure that at the end of the process, they redound to the benefit and development of Barbados, and that is the commitment of this team.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Hon. Member for St. Philip West, will you please wind up.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank all of the Honourable Members, who have participated in this debate on Head 53. I want to also thank the Honourable Members on the Other Side for their participation in this debate.

Mr. Chairman, the Head had an amendment to the total allocation given. Sir, I therefore move that Head 53 stand part, as amended.

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

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

HEAD 57

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, WORKS AND

INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT - \$77 877 504

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, in speaking to this Head 57, the funding for the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport for the year 2008-2009, I want to start by indicating in broad terms, the kind of policy which we would like to see, going forward.

Of course, if you do things the same way you have been doing them all the while, you would get the same result. Therefore, if we expect to bring about improvements in delivery of any department or any section of Government, we need to be prepared to make those changes that are necessary from time to time.

Indeed, Sir, in executing that change, there is a very important input and sometimes, we lose sight of that very important input and that is our human resource. It is pointless going around chopping and changing because at the end of that exercise, we have a certain finite amount of talent from which to draw, in all sectors, from the top to bottom.

Therefore, we need to engage in so developing our human capital and training our human resources into modern technologies, the effective and efficient delivery of services and being accountable.

House 5B, Sequence 34, 16:30:14

Thursday, March 20, 2008

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, what we need to do is to develop our human capital and train our human resources into the use of modern technologies, into effective and efficient delivery of services and into being accountable for their duties. Sir, we need to do this especially in the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport, which is not so much a regulating ministry as it is an actual operational ministry. It is a ministry that has to do things. It has to build and repair roads and build and repair buildings, so it has to be able to account for the ongoing activities on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis like we do here now.

Mr. Chairman, one of the hallmarks of this year will be an attempt, in conjunction with the Ministry of the Civil Service, to carry out even more intensive supervisory training at the level of the management of the facility. It is impossible, given the organisational structure, to carry out the kind of coverage of an island the size of Barbados. Sir, although in world terms we are small, in our term, it is a large coverage.

Mr. Chairman, it is impossible for a Minister, a Permanent Secretary or a Chief Technical Officer to be able to effectively carry out this kind of supervision, management, reporting and accounting unless there is at the level of the supervisors and depot technicians, a clear understanding of their responsibilities.

Mr. Chairman, we cannot bury our heads in the sand. We know of the kinds of comments we get from residents who say that the technicians of the Ministry of Transport and Works are working very slowly, are not delivering the work and only work for half of the day. Mr. Chairman, it is about building the human pride so that we actually get effective and meaningful results. Our citizens also need to get on board because this is the opportunity to create even more cooperation to bring about that level of satisfaction.

Mr. Chairman, the continued human resource development must be a hallmark of the year going forward. Provisions would be made in the monies provided for that training to take place.

Sir, the Mission Statement of the Ministry is one which clearly recognises responsibility to provide efficient, effective, safe and reliable transport and infrastructure for...

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is reading from a document, and I am asking that it be made a document of the House.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: My understanding is that the relevant ministers would have briefs from time to time and would refer to them not necessarily in terms of reading from them. Unless the Honourable Member is reading, and I am not aware he is reading...

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: On a point of order. If the Honourable Member refers to it, he is quoting from it, and he must make it available to us. If he makes separate notes, that is a different matter.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I do not believe that he needs to make the brief a document of the House not in relation to the practice of Parliament. I would ask the Honourable Member to continue.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for rescuing me from what I have become accustomed to, the puerile interventions by the Honourable Member...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Just continue, I do not want to introduce puerile...

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: As I said, the Mission Statement is what guides any organisation, and this Ministry is no different. We need to provide efficient, effective, safe, and reliable transport and infrastructure for the social economic development of the nation.

Mr. Chairman, when we provide this, we have to provide it equitably because we have to satisfy not only the 20 Honourable Members of Parliament on this side, but also the other 10 parliamentarians. Mr. Chairman, this Minister will make sure that Barbados as a whole benefits from our work so that we do not necessarily be accused of concentrating our energies in one area only. However, there are definitely areas which have urgent needs. Mr. Chairman, as I speak to this Head from time to time I would deal with these areas.

Mr. Chairman, I want to deal first with the question of our buildings. Yesterday, I refer to what I called functional dilapidation. That was the best way to describe

it. We heard it again being repeated today. Mr. Chairman, we would be concentrating a lot of our building energies on the rehabilitation of a number of existing public buildings, some of which are still in use. We heard this morning about the condition of the building that houses the Drug Service. These buildings that are physically sound, need to be brought into shape. Verona House is a case in point.

Sir, these are good buildings. They have character. We cannot throw them away. Even the National Insurance building in Bridgetown, which was built in 1974, a Democratic Labour Party project, has reasonable architecture. It is not my kind of architecture, but it needs some colour. It needs to be made to look good. We cannot keep on building new buildings all the time and throwing millions and millions of dollars away like the other side did at Warrens. The country cannot afford it.

One of the things I remember is that the Honourable Member for St. Peter made the point that we just cannot afford these things. Therefore, we have to treasure those things which we own. We have to repair them. We are starting at the Ministry of Public Works itself. Again, this is a building with tremendous character.

Mr. Chairman, instead of lauding the attempts of the staff of the ministry to improve the ambience, that side is engaging in mockery and what I call silly comments about attempts to reach consensus on colour schemes, et cetera. These are important human elements.

Mr. Chairman, as I move around Barbados, I cringe when I see buildings that have been allowed to decay. I spoke about the Oistins Polyclinic. I do not need to go back there. We are talking about a Government which rode into power in 1994 on the quest of a wave and collected all kinds of monies over the period. Money was no problem. That was one of the famous statements from that Administration. These are the things they said. They got a windfall from the VAT but there is nothing to show for it. There is complete and total dilapidation of public buildings all around this country.

Mr. Chairman, we have provided sums of money for the repair of buildings and we will make sure that those repairs are carried out. We appreciate that it cannot be done in the first year. Some of it will roll over into the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth year and beyond of this Administration. That is the way we are going to handle it.

Mr. Chairman, if we tackle the question of the renovation of buildings seriously, we could significantly reduce the need for capital investment in new buildings in Barbados, an activity which has been wrought not only with high cost but high wastage and untimely deliveries. Sir, we are going to deal with the buildings.

House 5B Sequence 35 4.40 p.m.

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Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, we are going to examine the question of drainage, and we have heard Honourable Members speak to the need to address many of these situations all over the island. Sir, as I speak, now is the time to do these examinations, now is the time to do this reporting and that is where the training and development of the human capital will allow us to have a clear idea of what our expectations can be in the event of normal flooding.

We know that every year, in my experience, there are two or three days when we have floods. That is what we are talking about. We are not talking about the one that is way and beyond. Today we need to note that the cruise liners or cargo ships were unable to dock because of the roughness of the seas. These are acts of nature which we can do nothing about, only to note.

Mr. Chairman, it moves me into the whole question of training to utilise technology. I want to see the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport develop a much greater skill and aptitude in the use of technology for reporting. We have email systems which are largely unused within the Ministry which I am sorry to say, applies to a lot of areas in the public service.

Mr. Chairman, we need to get on board with these things but not at the expense of getting rid of proper records in our files but certainly to deal with the preliminary discussions and evaluation, one needs to make better use of the technology, which already exists in large part in a number of our ministries. Therefore, as the Minister in this area, this is one of the areas we want to see pushed.

Mr. Chairman, we need to develop an Information Technology programme and I think the last study was done some time in the late 1980s and needs to be reviewed. We need to locate our wells and make sure that they are in working order. We want to look at the use of GPS technology which is available in some departments in the Barbados Government system, but may have tremendous applications, not only in the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport, in roadways and wells location but in Ministry of Health, in the very water programme. Sir, we need to look at making our technologies available to all the Ministries, wherever appropriate and where they can effect efficiencies and bring about positive developments. We believe this technology can be utilised to help us in building up our reservoir, our treasury of information about wells, gullies and drainage.

Mr. Chairman, I believe too that the technology could be used in relation to our roads. We have a massive road programme, as we have indicated, we will continue the Road Rehabilitation Programme. There are two contracts with Rayside Concrete Works and C.O.W. Williams Construction Ltd., and Cabinet has agreed to proceed with these programmes. There may be some shifting in priority in terms of the road selection, which is there. The Honourable Member for St. George North will support me that the arrangement is there, the ability to shift around roads depending on priority.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, towards the end of their term, they were doing all the roads in the St. George North, St. Philip South, and to some extent, the Baylands. But it did not work.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, as I inferred just now, if we have the technology, the manpower and the training, to identify our roads, say in a one-to-ten table, I think we already use that scale but we need to apply it, so that even at meetings of Cabinet and there are discussions about the highway or a road, there would be a report which reflects how this road rates in terms of condition, such as whether it has good drainage, whether it has sidewalks, et cetera.

Sir, we need to spend time building up this information, in order that we could make better informed decisions. Therefore, this would not be time just wasted and if we need to seek outside help to achieve this objective, to my mind in the interest of the development of Barbados, it is worth it.

Mr. Chairman, roads will continue to be a major issue in Barbados and we have stated our position on the ABC Highway. The position of the Government of Barbados is now clear to all, but what I want to impress on my Ministry personnel who are supervising this project, who are somewhere designing and helping to implement the project, is that we are at the stage on that highway where we have to seriously examine the signage and control of traffic or else there would be too many tragedies for this small country to bear. We will spend the next number of weeks making sure that adequate signage is put in place. We would come to agreements as to how the dual carriageway will be used.

Mr. Chairman, there are two schools of thought, one is that drivers should be able to slip from the left lane onto the right and continue on the highway. The other school of thought is that drivers should stay in the left lane, unless overtaking. Sir, I would not prejudice the outcome by

stating my views, but when the time comes I certainly will make my input.

Mr. Chairman, in the construction at St. Barnabas and at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic areas, where there is high pedestrian traffic, along with high vehicular traffic, we need to make sure that adequate signage is in place, so that pedestrians take the right section of the carriageway because there are some slip curbs, for instance, which are very wide. These slip curbs are not sidewalks but are part of the roadway. They are drainage ends and vehicles moving at reasonable speeds, can cause untold damage.

Mr. Chairman, the wrap up of this is that the Ministry will ensure that adequate and effective signage is put in place, even if temporarily, to ensure that Barbadians could use this highway, as we progress to completion, safely.

We need to make effective use of our investment in our seaport and airport. I note that the previous administration, in incorporating these entities, has set up the framework into which this can be done. As we have indicated before, it is now at a stage where we need to seek private sector partnerships in going forward.

Mr. Chairman, the seaport needs to be developed and a separate docking area provided for cruise liners. We spoke about this already. The existing conditions with the cruise passengers having to battle their way through cargo, is unsatisfactory. Therefore, over the next few years, we will be trying to address new port development which will bring this situation into better order.

4.50 p.m.

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Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: I believe Barbados has got the potential and we have to do it because, if we do not do it, we will be outdone by countries like St. Lucia, which are already ahead in this regard. Sir, we have to now catch up and get past these islands quickly if we are to sustain our tourism numbers.

Mr. Chairman, the airport. Sir, again the opportunity for private partnership is there. Do I need to repeat the comments on the condition of the airport? I think I do, Sir, that administration has spent millions of dollars in developing an airport and simple things have now got to be addressed. In their dying days....

Asides.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, an air bridge is not a stag. I would like the Honourable Member to know that the

absence of air bridges at the airport is not a stag list. It is a fundamental and monumental disgrace because, Sir, when you are borrowing up front to carry out projects, it is much easier to get good prices. If you come, at the end of the day and expect a man to retrofit an air bridge into that airport, it is going to cost a lot more.

Mr. Chairman, those are the kinds of things we have to correct. Sir, at times there are as many as seven wide-bodied jets at the airport when they are executing transfers between the airport and the seaport and in a downpour of rain, it cannot work. No matter how many buses you have, it just cannot work. Sir, it is an indictment on that side, that coming out of 14 years of supposedly grand leadership and management we are in a situation where we now have to look to facilitate air bridges at the airport. Sir, it is nonsense.

Mr. Chairman, a simple thing like the overhang has to be now erected between the old building and the newer section.

Asides.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, it is a monumental mistake. It is no stag but we now have to do it this year. We have to do it because the incidence of the public falling on that terrazzo floor is high when it rains and the exposure and the liability of the Government of Barbados is large. Sir, that again is a monumental indictment on the one who would like to preach now to the Democratic Labour Party how and what is to be done and how and which priorities are to be addressed.

Mr. Chairman, we are not dismissing intelligent suggestions. We were not brought up that way, Sir. We are going to listen to them but when they come with their silly comments and self-righteousness, it will not be tolerated. The Honourable Member for St. Peter talked about manners and who should speak in turn and out of turn. Sir, this Honourable Member used to sharpen his tongue on two sides when he was ready for Barbadians and he used to tell you when he was doing it. He used to tell you that he is going to sharpen his tongue on both sides and go after Barbadians all over this place and now, today, tells me and other Honourable Members out here what we should say, when and how.

Asides.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, we have a lot of things to put right over here. We have the capacity, we have made the provisions in most cases and where we have not, we shall seek the arrangements and the cooperation to make it happen.

Mr. Chairman, we go quickly to the question of LIAT air transport, which is very critical. Sir, successive administrations have put large sums of money into LIAT. Sir, LIAT has real problems; scheduling is a challenge and location is a challenge in terms of whether LIAT is better suited to be located in Barbados, Antigua or Trinidad. The politics of the region and the interest of the participating countries have got to be served.

Mr. Chairman, I made the point at a recent encounter that LIAT must understand that although the word LIAT means Leeward Island Air Transport, in actual fact, as far as I am concerned, LIAT is an acronym and stands for the mode of air transport in the region. Sir, LIAT has to protect itself and it has to devise ways and overcome its human resource challenges. Sir, these are management issues and it has got to overcome them so that it can better provide the kind of service that would benefit the Caribbean.

Mr. Chairman, It is an essential service and that has guided previous administration and has, indeed, guided our position to this day. However, we are also actively pursuing the question of fast ferries in the Caribbean. We are aware, like any other administration taking tough decisions on the challenges of utilizing the fast ferries. The challenges arise not only in the financing but the actual ability to travel these waters.

Asides.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, I do not mean boatmen that go up and down the west coast like the Honourable Member for St. Joseph. I mean boatmen that go to St. Lucia and sail over the seas. Sir, we are talking about travelling between Barbados and a place like St. Lucia and St. Vincent. Sir, when you hit those high seas and cross currents, you have to have the kind of equipment that can get you through the swells.

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

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, we have investors who are interested in working with the Government of Barbados to make sure that these are the kinds of possibilities. Sir, not only can we load on 900 000 passengers but we can carry cargo. We can move food and people from Dominica to Barbados, to St. Lucia and, Sir, this is in extreme luxury; this is not a banana boat. Sir, as I am being reminded, this is a real classy transport.

Mr. Chairman, this is going to offer a choice. It will take a while, three, four or five hours but in relative comfort and almost luxury so you may be prepared, depending on the time of the day, to choose it as an option, so it is an investment. Sir, the important thing is that we want the investors to roll out these projects. We will

provide the enabling environment so that the options will be there for them. We will work with our CARICOM partners. Sir, that is the difference. We will work with them to make sure that these kinds of projects are made easy.

H/5B/17:00

Sequence 37

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Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: I believe the people of Barbados are about to see an exciting period in our history, a period when we will work as a team in our Cabinet, to make decisions that will redound to the absolute benefit and development of this island. I believe that with the cooperation of the competent staff at the Ministry of Public Works and International Transport, we shall achieve in large measure.

I am obliged to you, Sir, and when I come back later, I will probably speak closer to transport itself. That is, local road transport.

Thank you, Sir.

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

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I listened very carefully to the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, and must admit that he was more measured today than he was yesterday. I think when he tempers himself, it seems to me, you can understand him much better. He did make a few points and admit after my intervention, in the second speech, that he is batting on a good wicket. He recognises this now. In his first speech he was saying that things were so bad, that everything in the Ministry was in a poor state, but today he is more measured, so we could debate today.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, I really cannot allow the retired Minister of Public Works to give anyone...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Minister, he is the Honourable Member.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sorry, Sir, the Honourable Member. I cannot allow the Honourable Member for St. George North to mislead anyone, least of all the staff of the Ministries, for which I have responsibility. Sir, first of all, I said that the Barbados Labour Party was batting on a good wicket in 1994. Did you not hear the points this morning, the 20-minute points that were made? I then talked about the physical dilapidation, the functional dilapidation of the Ministry building, it is not people. The people in the Ministry are effective, intelligent, and well-taken care of,

but the buildings which he was responsible for maintaining are... Sir, I believe we should move this Sitting to the Ministry of Public Works, in the workshop yard, to demonstrate what I mean, because that is the only way the Honourable Member is going to understand. That is the only way he is going to understand. Sir, I want this Sitting moved, if it can be done, to the Ministry of Public Works.

Asides.

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

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I think we need to be more measured. I think the Honourable Member for Christ Church South speaks well, when he is very measured. I am not begging. He wants it to be moved to the Ministry of Transport Work Shop, but I will ask that it be moved to the Minister's office. We have just renovated a new office. The ambience seemed to be befitting the Minister, and there is nothing to prevent a minister from making himself comfortable.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Can I have some order, please?

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Sir, I am hearing the Honourable Member say, that he has now placed a bed in the Ministry of Transport and Works.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, the Chair does not hear asides. Honourable Member could you continue?

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: I believe that the staff at the Ministry has done an excellent job over the last 14 years, more particularly, I must say and all Barbadians would agree, that the last 5 years were, indeed, the golden age of the Ministry of Transport and Works. We have done more work in the last term, than ever before. Sir, if the Minister wants to come in here and rub shoulders with me, he has to perform better than I did at Ministry of Transport and Works.

Sir, we completed, in my term, the Bridgetown Safety Improvement Project, which runs from Black Rock to Highway 7 and from Baxters Road through to Roebuck Street. We completed a number of projects across Barbados. We completed the World Bank projects and we started a new public sector partnership. We completed all the roads in Bridgetown. We were maintaining all the highways. He has inherited a BOLT arrangement, where we maintained over 150 subsidiary and tenantry roads, over a two-year programme. This is what he is batting on. He

inherited another BOLT arrangement project, with C.O. William Construction, to repair a number of highways, about 20 of them. Sir, he is now saying that he may very well reallocate and treat some of the roads as a priority.

Sir, I want to make the point that - I know that the Honourable Minister of Public Works is an eminent engineer, who sometimes takes his own advice, and this is a bad habit. I am going to warn him that one of the hallmarks of a good leader is, to listen to advice. I know that he has good engineers at the Ministry of Transport and Works, and will find that they are more experienced and qualified than the Honourable Member for Christ Church South. He will find that they are very competent.

Sir, the point is, the programme that you now see in the Ministry, whether it is C.O. Williams, Rayside Construction or the Ministry of Transport and Works, we in the Ministry decided that there was a need to fix the roads.

Sir, one of the first things I was confronted with at the Ministry, is a brief from the then CTO who pointed out, to me, that Barbados has a network of 1 600 kilometers of road. In the brief he pointed out, and I can share the brief with the Minister. I am not sure he received this brief, because the person who sent it is no longer at the Ministry, Mr. Archer, a good engineer. He pointed out, to me, that there were primary roads, secondary roads, local roads, residential roads, and unmade roads, and he outlined money kilometers. All of this information has been outlined at the Ministry. The Honourable Member will find that there are many studies done by the Ministry of Public Works.

Sir, the Officers outlined the programme for the Ministry, we took it to Cabinet and Cabinet approved it, and this is where we are. The programme started in 2006. The Rayside Construction programme, and by chance the Honourable Prime Minister made the point...

Asides.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: I am going to deal with those today.

Sir, the Prime Minister said at the time he wanted to start with St. Philip, because St. Philip had the worst roads, and that is where we started. It had nothing to do with elections. It is a two-year programme which runs beyond elections.

Sir, I believe I got roads long after election. I knew that the Other Side could not beat me in St. George.

Asides.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: I do not worry about that.

Sir, the point is, we were active in the Ministry. The Honourable Minister has found three programmes.

Sir, unlike this Government, when we came to office in 1994, we found a lot of roads, from the Venezuelan programme, left incomplete by the Ministry. In 1994, roads were left undone all across Barbados. This is the record he needs to speak to. We found in 1994 a Ministry without a programme. There was nothing going on, staff had been depleted. There was a situation where the workshop had no capital programme. There was no money to purchase machinery. All of this was happening in 1994.

Sir, over the last 14 years, the...

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House 5B, Sequence 39, 5.10 p.m.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: ...

We had a situation where the workshop did not have a capital programme. We could not get money to buy machinery. All of this was happening in 1994. Sir, over the last 14 years, the Barbados Labour Party Government did many roads across Barbados. Today, we can be proud as a nation that we have a better network of roads in Barbados. We are the envy of the Caribbean. Sir, we will have this debate throughout this session.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say that we can be proud of the fact that we have better road infrastructure, and super structure in Barbados. We spent a lot of money in this island on road rehabilitation, and repairs. Sir, we do not specify any particular constituency because we did work throughout Barbados, including St. John and St. Lucy. As the Minister pointed out and I must that in his measured speech, there is still a lot of work to be done. I would be one of the first persons to admit that we have a lot of work still to be done across Barbados, in terms of road development. Sir, we have work in the City, in the tenancies, in the other urban areas and in the towns across Barbados.

In our Manifesto we made the point that we would like to see all tenantry roads repaired by the year 2012. I hope that this is the desire of the House because we cannot look at this as a partisan issue. We must understand that we have roads to be prepared. One of the things that I have found out in the Ministry, is that you may repair a road today and by the next 10 years, it needs repairing again. Sir, this is the nature of the Ministry of Works.

Sir, the Minister mentioned the buildings of Government. I want to make the point that we found a situation where many buildings in the public service were in a state of deterioration. We tried but there is still a lot of work to be done. Mr. Chairman, as I said before, we took decision in 1995. If you look at the records, you will see that between 1994 and 1995 very little work was done because we had to put a plan in place. Sir, all Ministers are free to look back and see the documents.

Sir, in 1994, we had to put a programme in place for the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Public works and other Ministries. The programme really started in 1995, and between 1995-1996 we had active programmes to develop this country.

Sir, I must say that between 1992-1993, the then Government was told that they had to widen the ABC Highway, not only we were told that, Sir. The ABC Highway started in 1985. It was completed under the Democratic Labour Party in 1987 but they were told that the capacity of the ABC Highway was outdated, and this was said as a result of many studies.

Sir, you could look back at the reports to see that vehicular traffic in Barbados moved rapidly. When we came to office, there were less than 60 000 vehicles on our roads. Today, there are more than 121 000 vehicles on our roads, up to the end of last year. Therefore, we have to be able to increase capacity on the ABC Highway and across Barbados.

Sir, we have been busy in the Ministry trying to provide a situation, where we separate the carriage way from where the pedestrians have to walk. The policy was that we have to increase capacity across Barbados. Therefore, Cabinet approved, not only the ABC Highway, but we also agreed that we would have to improve Highway 3 especially, from Hothersal to Combermere and we had to put four lanes there.

Sir, the reason for this is that it was Government land and we found that coming out of the country, especially St. Joseph and St. John there were long lines on mornings. On all the roundabouts we agreed that there must be a solution. The new Minister will also find that there must be a solution, and whether or not you have overpasses or underpasses, you must find a solution. Sir, the solutions are there.

I want to make the point over and over again that I listened and took advice. When I went to the Ministry at a meeting in 2004, the then DCTO of Design Services, introduced me to the SSS, Company, and they presented a programme to improve traffic management in this country. Sir, out of the design and the system of tendering, they were believed to have to best solution.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Read the files. I do not understand why people would make this a political issue, when it is not.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Thank you, Sir.

I want to make the point that we have done a lot of work in drainage as well. In fact, in 1995, the situation was so bad in Barbados that we decided as a Government to set up a separate unit called The Drainage Unit in Barbados, and by 1997 it was functioning.

Sir, every year, we have put more money in Ministry for drainage. I must admit today that I have looked at the Estimates and have seen that the present Government has not cut the Estimates of Expenditure for the Ministry, but it increased.

For example, the focus of the Minister on buildings, I see that Head has decreased slightly. I think that if he wants to concentrate on buildings, and I agree that there must be every effort to improve the Ministries across Barbados, and increase and improve conditions for civil servants. We have started but you have to take it a stage future, but work had begun.

Sir, when I went to the Ministry one of the first things that confronted me was the environment. One day I told the staff that they had to come to work in their short pants and get rid of all the files in the corridors, and we started to clean up. Where you sit now, if you look over the balcony, you see a beautiful Ministry. The reason is because we took the decision to do that, and I will advise the Minister, who is in charge of buildings, to continue the process, where you can improve the lot of the civil servants and public workers across Barbados.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to move that you report progress to His Honour the DEPUTY SPEAKER, and ask for leave to speak again.

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

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

Mr. CHAIRMAN left the Chair and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER RESUMED the Chair.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 5.40 p.m. today.

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

The question that the House be now suspended until 5.40 p.m., was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

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RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken the House was in Committee of Supply, to that it will now revert.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (RESUMED)

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

HEAD 53 (RESUMED)

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I would just want to make a few comments on this particular Head, but before I get into the meat of my comments I want to commend the Honourable Member for Christ Church South for his presentations in this debate thus far, not only his presentation a few minutes ago but his presentation yesterday and the day before.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that this gentleman has the kind of intellect and the kind of personality which would cause that ministry that he has responsibility for to really accelerate its level of production relative to the work it does. I am not saying that there was not production before but every system needs to be improved from time to time.

Sir, I believe that because of the leadership style which he would bring to that Ministry that one would see greater productivity within that Ministry not only at the level of the technical and administrative staff but also at the level of the workers who are out in the field every day working on behalf of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, sometimes we forget that all of us who are paid from the national purse really work on behalf of the people of Barbados. Therefore, one would want to

urge a redoubling of the efforts of the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport because they have a physical presence more so than some other ministries, which are service type ministries.

Mr. Chairman, when one speaks of the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport, one speaks of roads. These are things that we use every day to travel on to move to work, to play, for leisure and for recreation. If they are in a state of disrepair and if the debris which is taken from the gutter and the hedgerows or the side of the roads are left there for some prolonged time, then one could actually see and feel that.

Mr. Chairman, I want to encourage the Minister and all of the members of his team to try as hard as possible to ensure that our roads are kept in good repair and to ensure that those roads which have decayed over time quite substantially are significantly rehabilitated so that the people of Barbados could really feel the presence of that Ministry.

Mr. Chairman, when I was a little boy, we did not have the kinds of technologies as we have now. The technology which was used to remove the debris which was hoed and cut from the side of the road was the mule and cart which carried the debris and dumped it in some particular area. This used to be done in real time. I remember those days.

Today, Mr. Chairman, we have truck or lorries and all of these magnificent technological equipment, things that move very quickly, yet one finds beside our roads all of this debris just heaped there which sometimes stays there for too long a period of time. I do not know if there is some strategy to that. It might be to allow it to decay, I do not know. I am not a scientist, so I do not know if that is some particular strategy, which might be utilised. However, when the rain comes and other vehicles roll over it, it becomes beaten down onto the surface of the road and it becomes slippery and unsightly.

Mr. Chairman, this Government came in on the notion of change, therefore I want to implore my colleague to find a way where the debris as it is cut or hoed or weeded as we say to be removed relatively quickly. It would actually show that people have done some work. When this can be seen by Barbadians and visitors alike, this would redound to the benefit of all the persons within the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport. Mr. Chairman, in this country, because of the nature of our politics, sometimes those constituencies that are represented by Opposition politicians do not feel the benefit of anything. I remember, when in Opposition, journeying with the Minister at that time to parts of Christ Church and pointing out several areas that flood and roads that needed to be rehabilitated.

Mr. Chairman, I want to commend the persons in the Ministry who actually followed through on some of those areas. It is the Minister's job to ensure that the work is done because monies are voted for that purpose, so I am not going to praise the former Minister. Mr. Chairman, I want to commend the lowly civil servants of this country for looking across political divides and ensuring that every constituency in Barbados, including the constituency of Christ Church East Central, had some work done in them.

Mr. Chairman, in perusing the brief of the current Minister, I recognise that they did put in some of the roads, not all. I do not know why they made that mistake. Maybe they thought that they did not want to show how many were done in that constituency. Mr. Chairman, there are so many more to be done. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy has been speaking for some time to the number of roads which have to be done in the parish of St. Lucy. I am told that some work has commenced there over time.

Mr. Chairman, in Christ Church East Central, there are a lot of built up areas. Some hot mix was thrown on the road at Elizabeth Park, and it looks spot marked. I expect, Mr. Minister, because I am also the constituency representative, that the road will be completely rehabilitated. I have to serve the Honourable Member for St. Michael North because I think you need to repay people for their support. His support over the last two elections for myself is well known. Therefore, where he lives, where there has been some potholes over time, we would expect them to be fixed, but that is the nature of politics in Barbados. When one recognises the better individual, one should, in the instance as the Honourable Member for St. Michael North did, vote for the better individual, so I want to express thanks to him again.

Mr. Chairman, the area of natural gas does not fall under the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, but we are addressing those issues. Sir, I want to implore the Minister to assiduously work toward what is deserving for all Barbadians, getting those roads done.

House 5B Sequence 42

5.50 p.m.

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Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I know the Rural Development Commission has some responsibility for many of the untouched areas but there must be some correlation between the work of the Rural Development Commission and that of the Ministry of Transport and Works, to ensure these roads are done, so that these people could be brought into the 21st Century. There are still people in Barbados who, on looking out their windows, look upon a dirt track and not a road, they still have to wear

two pairs of shoes to get to church or to town because of the conditions of those roads.

Mr. Chairman, we keep saying this country is a \$7 billion economy and therefore we have to remove those vestiges of decay. Sometimes these vestiges are almost like decadence within our society, so that all of our people could feel a sense of liberation, a sense of purpose, a sense that they have contributed to what they see around them.

Sir, I do not normally expressed confidence in man who is born of a woman but in this incident, I am going to express confidence in the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works and his team that they would work, that they would bring in projects before time and under budget. Sir, I like to hear those words because it tells me that people are working hard, that they are producing, that they are conscious, that Barbados is still an emerging economy and therefore we do not have the surplus of resources that we would like, so we have to maximise that which we have. Sir, if we could get an extra 30 metres of roads out of a particular monitory provision, then let us get that, let us utilise the workers of the Ministry of Transport and Works, those who have the responsibility.

Mr. Chairman, I have seen roads that have been done by the Ministry of Transport and Works that are of superb quality. I must complain that sometimes when I pass, I can also see a lot of equipment lying idle. I do not know if the lack of a bolt, screw or washer would have caused that but the previous Minister could tell me if that is the case. This is major equipment which could be used on our roadways. Sir, obviously the current Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport will do an audit of the equipment, as to why it is lying idle, if it could be repaired, et cetera, to get some of them up and going and to deploy whatever equipment the Ministry has to the service of the roads in this country.

Mr. Chairman, in a short period of time, we should be saying to the people of Barbados that all of our roads would be fixed. We should then be able to go back to those roads done 15 years ago and work on them, so that there is that regular and routine maintenance of roads in Barbados. We need to have the kind of surfaces which would protect the investment of the 112 000 vehicles in this country, the investment of Barbadians.

Mr. Chairman, I want to implore that it has the fullest support of all Honourable Members on this side, as the Minister and his Ministry carry out the work on the behalf of the people. I want to commend the Minister and say to him that anytime the Honourable Member needs any assistance in strategising that he has all of his colleagues to lend him that assistance. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak on this Head and to say from the outset that for many years, I have called on this Parliament at this time to ensure that when we are discussing certain Heads, that instead of coming and discussing these Heads, based on bloc votes, that we as a Parliament must recognise there are 30 constituencies and that these Heads must be split among those 30 constituencies, so that I would know when the vote is taken on Tuesday afternoon, how much of that money would be spent in my constituency. Mr. Chairman, now there are Constituency Councils, it would be in the best interest that not only those Heads be split but in relation to road works, this is one Head that could be allocated to the Councils.

Sir, it would be in the best interest of the Prime Minister, so that he could control Ministers - not that the Prime Minister could control this particular Minister - but it now allows a Prime Minister and other Members of Parliament to have a better understanding of the allocation to their constituencies, so that they could have a better relationship with their constituents.

Mr. Chairman, it is regrettable that every year during these Estimates, I have to speak about 115 roads to be done in my constituency. Sir, people might ask, as the Honourable Member for St. George North has stated, how is it that the depot in St. Lucy has been able to come up with a master plan in solving the particular problems in St. Lucy, and I must congratulate the officials of the Ministry for not interfering with a very creative idea that has been developed by the depot. Sir, instead of waiting on the Ministry to do asphalt roads, they were prepared to be creative and did some roads in-house, so that they could put the officials of the Ministry in a better light.

Mr. Chairman, it is clear to me that what some constituencies need, would be to have an excavator for themselves. I have already asked the Minister of Transport and Works to ensure that an excavator is included in the vote. I have already spoken to the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance about that also. Sir, there is no doubt that there are two constituencies that have been neglected in a big way and we need to have the excavators so that we could go through those constituencies, level the roads, marl them, tar and grit them, then roll them, until there is an opportunity for the Ministry to use the asphalt machine to do the necessary work.

Mr. Chairman, we are not asking for a lot, all we are seeking to do is to ensure that we save the Ministry money, and ensuring that the small vote would go further than where it would normally go, had we gone the modern way of doing roads. We do not mind going back to the old ways of doing roads, because we understand that with the demand we have, we cannot expect to get the number of

roads done under the modern way, that is why we do not mind having the old approach to building roads.

Mr. Chairman, it is also impossible to have a task done that is required of the depot in St. Lucy and to have the number of workers presently working in that depot. I think that the Minister of Public Works and his officials should seriously do an analysis of the work to be done and the workers allocated to depots. The Minister would then recognise that for some strange reason that the constituency of St. Lucy, with the demographics that it has, has been short-staffed in a big way. It has been so short-staffed that in order to make the constituency appear to be environmentally-friendly, sometimes we have to borrow a bobcat to clean the highway so that it could look good. We do not have the required number of masons or weeders. Sir, if that is true for St. Lucy, it is obvious that it might be true for St. John and should therefore be corrected.

Mr. Chairman, I am also saying, based on what was said previously by the Honourable Member who used to sit somewhere in this location...Sir, I could easily make an argument for the Honourable Member for St. George South and not for the Honourable Member for St. George North because based on all the information I have been given, it is clear there is no more need for any more work to be done in St. George North.

6.00 p.m.

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, based on all the information I have given, it is clear that there is no need to do anymore work in St. George North. Sir, it is a funny thing, I would advise the present Minister of Public Works not to follow the path left by those Honourable men, who served in that Ministry previously. Sir, it is clear to me that most of them go and complete all the roads that should not be done and then find themselves outside of this House. Sir, it is only by God's mercy that the Honourable Member was able to save himself but it is clear, when you look at the history of those Ministers after completing nearly all the roads in their constituencies, it does not work for them.

Sir, that is why I have requested some kind of fairness and I honestly believe that the approach I have given is the best approach.

Mr. Chairman, on the Sherman Road, every year I have entered this Chamber I have been asking for some remedial work to be done because I have a very serious coastal problem. I honestly do not believe that we can continue ignoring that aspect of it anymore and I am asking the Minister of Public Works to recognise that he should not allow anybody in the department to interfere with how he functions in his Ministry. He must take charge of the

problem down Sherman and ensure that the road has been paved, that we do not have a situation where it is undermined, especially in these last two days with the problems as it relates to rough seas. Sir, that should have been corrected long ago. It is a very difficult area, people have to walk there and it is obvious that work should have been corrected.

Mr. Chairman, for the last few years, the officers in the coastal department have been putting it in the Budget and it has been taken out every time and, Sir, that has to be corrected. Sir, I am also saying that when one considers the problems we now have with transportation in Barbados and I am also calling on the Minister of Public Works, wearing his other hat of international business to recognise that he has to allocate and give permission so that we in the north could start using the facility of a jetty. Sir, we had about two and now we do not have any and I am saying that he should give consideration so that people could use boats to get to the north and they do not have to create congestion on our roads by using other types of vehicles.

Mr. Chairman, I understand that the Minister of Public Works was a former sailor and I know he would understand quite well the importance of having a jetty not only for the fishermen in the area but the importance of a jetty for people who have pleasure boats. He would know, Sir, that area is well known for pleasure boats, especially in Sherman and Half Moon Fort area. I am requesting of him that permission be granted or there be some joint arrangement where a jetty can easily be had in the north of the island.

Mr. Chairman, when we speak about the north in here, some people tend to believe that you are only speaking about St. Peter. We do not have a judge gap anymore, it is now Kellman's Road and that point must be appreciated so we can now go beyond. Sir, the Minister need not worry about being stopped at Judge Gap anymore. It is now Kellman's territory and he is entitled to come beyond Judge Gap.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

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

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a few interjections and I too look forward to getting the necessary assistance in the constituency of St. Thomas. I want to first laud the efforts of the staff of the Ministry of Public Works and, of course, the former Minister, whom I consider to have done an excellent job during his tenure. Indeed, all those Ministers, who carry that portfolio in the time of the Barbados Labour Party must be highly commended because we have seen the transformation of a network of roads in Barbados that has made life so much

easier for the people of this country and those visitors, who are with us.

Mr. Chairman, I want at the outset to congratulate the Honourable Leader of Government Business, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central because, when he came to this Honourable Chamber, he came with some challenges on his shoulder. He spoke in very disparaging ways about the civil servants and I am glad that because of the little advice I gave him, he has come around now to praise the civil servants for their excellent work. Sir, he does not have to kick down any door or tell people to ask for a transfer anymore. He has now understood what it is like to be on the other side and to have to be served by these honourable ladies and gentlemen, who work in the Government sector.

Asides.

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Sir, all of them are not bad, the majority of them do excellent work as long as they have the resources, particularly the monetary resources to meet the needs of the people.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the House the impression that she knows civil servants that are bad.

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Sir, if the Honourable Member for St. Lucy were one in my time, I would be able to make that determination and say it loud and clear but he is a decent member and, therefore, I will move on. He just wants to throw me off-track but I will stick to the note I have made.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say that many people in Barbados are not clear on the fact that depots can make the difference. They do not always have to rely on works to be done by the central Minister of Public Works in Bridgetown. Sir, I have had the distinct honour of working with a team at Bagatelle Depot over the last six years and I must tell you, Sir, they have performed exceptionally well in the parish. I have not asked your permission to call a name but Mr. Marshall and his team must be highly commended for doing excellent work once the resources have been made available.

Mr. Chairman, I support the comments from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy who spoke about the decentralization and providing the depots with adequate equipment and materials. Sir, there is absolutely no point in those members having to fix a simple sidewalk, to get the marl today but nothing else to work with. Sir, all the men and women are on the job but they can do nothing. The next day a little cement may come but not the tools and all kinds of strange things happen. I believe if there is a

measure of constituency autonomy and a whole concerted effort of ensuring that the materials and equipment are available that they will do exceptionally well. I have seen them performed and they are extremely accommodating.

Mr. Chairman, I too want to commend the Chief Technical Officer and his team, who are always ready to serve. I will not tell you that all the depots will perform like the one in St. Thomas because they were persons operating depots last years who said they were not working with the Member of Parliament and, therefore, that Member of Parliament suffered. Sir, the public of Barbados would not have known that but the Member of Parliament suffered to get roads, simple sidewalks and wells cleared because the person said they were not working with them. Sir, that is the kind of negative person I refer to when I say that 99 per cent of them are excellent workers.

Mr. Chairman, rocks to be cut. We know that traffic has increased by more than 50 per cent in this country. We recognise that the types of equipment and vehicles that have been brought on the island particularly in the area of trucks and excavators are very large. There are some tiny roads in the parish where I live that clearly must have more rock cut in order to give space for these vehicles to travel. Sir, take for example, Fortress Hill. Fortress Hill is a side road but it is a popular road and if you are talking about accommodating locals and visitors, who will use Fortress Road if they come through Rock Hall from St. James to get to Welchman Hall Gully...

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Miss C.Y. FORDE: ...come through Rock Hall to St. James, to reach to Welchman Hall Gully, Harrison Cave or even the Highland Outdoors location, it is easier to travel on Fortress Hill. Unfortunately, the road is collapsing, has been for a while, but because of limited resources that road has not been fixed. Therefore, if the rock cutting takes place, I believe that will ease the situation. The folks at the Depot, once given the material will do the rest.

Sir, the same holds good for Stony Gully, the home of the Statue, but because of the way the road is built it cannot accommodate a big bus. The small bus is working. It is filled to capacity and, of course, it begs the need for a change of that size bus. It is such a popular route, but the rock that needs to cut inhibits the big bus from taking passengers to and fro.

Sir, having recognized that vehicles have increased by such large numbers, a lot of motorists are still driving recklessly. We see it every day. A section of the highway

has been opened, and we see people crisscrossing with cars as though they are on a race track. The same holds for the parish I represent, and I have the distinct honour of living there for my entire life. Sir, when you look at roads such as Dunscombe and Porey Spring, in particular, the road is not too wide, but good enough to accommodate two vehicles going in either direction. There are no sidewalks, and the descent from the road is very deep. Therefore, we applied for the programme to correct the problem and are awaiting patiently, because a sidewalk is necessary. Sir, few people who live in that area own vehicles, and walk to and fro to the bus stop, to church and so on. I am asking for a road similar to that at Porey Spring.

Sir, the Jackson main road, where the volume is so tremendous, is used by people through Carmichael and Charles Row Bridge, on mornings, to get to St. James and St. Peter, because they use the Canewood Road onto Jackson. The little children who are going to school, whether to Sharon Primary or Lester Vaughan School. Lester Vaughan School has about 1 200 children, so you can imagine the large numbers of individuals who are walking, while other persons are waiting for buses to take them to work. A tremendous number of people, but there are no sidewalks. Sir, I am making an extra request for sidewalks to be placed in these areas.

Sir, I know that they cannot all be done at the same time, but the Depot at Bagatelle would undertake working to build the sidewalk to help us save lives. Sir, when people lose their lives, are maimed, or injured on the road, the Government is liable. Therefore, to reduce the liability, give us the \$100 000 to repair the roads, rather than spending \$1.8 million or \$2 million, when somebody gets killed. Sir, I would like that to take place.

Sir, the other concern I have, and I hope that some measure of assistance would be offered. I am not complaining that a few of the roads have been resurfaced, and correctly so, but there are roads such as Warrens Terrace, where people have been living for 30 years and an effort was made to pave a part of the road, which has been completed. However, another section has not been touched. Sir, thirty years is a long time and there are pot holes and so on. They are constantly being fixed but it looked mosaic now, because of the different colours and humps.

Sir, Cane Garden Development, where you will find the Funeral Home, is another road which has been there for more than 30 years, and really begs for that kind of maintenance. Similarly, Vaucuse, from Highland, near where the aircraft crashed, coming from Carringtons Village, that is another popular road, but because of the deterioration over the years, although the holes have been filled, it really needs to be properly done, also Jack in the Box Gully and Canefield Road.

Sir, again, the reckless drivers have now caused persons, who have moved into new communities, and those who have been living in old communities before, once the road is paved, to call, write and literally beg for humps or silent policemen to be placed in the roads. I believe that if we are progressing as a people, any individual behind the wheel of a vehicle or the handles of a motorcycle, must understand that people in communities should be safe where they live. However, people do the 'wheele', driving through making the most noise, at high speeds and people are afraid.

Sir, a simple road like Fire Hill, Rock Hall, that has been a road nestled in the village, people are now crying out for humps, because of the dangers of what takes place in those communities. There are requests, visits have been made, and I would like for some kind of assistance to be offered to those people to make life easier for them. Sir, when you have children and grandchildren playing in what would have been a traditionally quiet village, all of a sudden there is so much traffic, your children become inhibited, especially when there are no playing areas for recreation.

Sir, this would be the third consecutive year that Endeavour Bridge has been put in the Estimates for maintenance. I know that there are challenges. Sometimes the money is voted, then there are projects that have to be completed, and I am not quibbling over that, but Endeavour is a community that links Lion Castle with Hopewell and Deans Village. This is now almost five years that the road has become impassable, because of the bridge. I believe it is time for that bridge to be fixed. Sir, there was an accident last year, and residents could not get out because that road is one-way in, and the same way out. Therefore, maintenance at that bridge would make a difference.

Sir, I have grownup and recognised that property owners, particularly plantation owners, would clear the wells on their properties annually, and if it rains in St. Thomas it streams into St. Andrew, St. James or St. Michael, in particular, and it is unfortunate that wells are not cleaned by property owners the way they should be. There is legislation to that effect, therefore every effort must be made by property owners to clear their wells, to avoid the flooding that impacts on many people in this country. I do not think that homeowners should be bothered when the rain falls, as they do now, because people are delinquent in carrying out their duties.

Sir, the same holds good for the Drainage Unit. There are times when wells should be cleared, and I believe they should be cleared before the hurricane season. The Drainage Unit was established for that purpose. Sir, as a result of not clearing these wells annually, a lot of unnecessary flooding takes place. I would like to encourage the Honourable Minister, to make sure that wells across the

length and breadth of Barbados are properly cleared, and where necessary, sunk, as is the case of Vaocluse, near the race track, where sometimes three feet of water settle on that road, which once had a sloping surface. There is a reconfiguration of the land, as a result of development, so you can imagine tourists traveling up Shop Hill, and onto Vaocluse to reach Welchman Hall, for sightseeing, if they are trapped on that lonesome road. Can you imagine the challenges? Sir, if locals are trapped, the experience would be similar to visitors, hence it is absolutely necessary to continue the sinking of wells in areas where necessary, in an effort to make life easier for all of us.

Finally, illegal building on those water courses. I know it is the responsibility of the Town and Country Planning Department to police such construction, but we observe this practice every day, across the length and breadth of Barbados. When the water course is blocked, water will find a way to get out.

Sir, you are aware that we have lots of gullies across the island, however, when people build in those water courses, the impact might not affect them personally, but, indeed, it affects many others downstream, or in other communities where that water will now find a new route, or a channel, as a result of that development in the area. I believe there must be policing if we are to save this environment, we all say we love so much. If you block the water courses and gullies, you can expect repercussions at some time.

Sir, I will support the funds voted for the Ministry of Public Works to continue the maintenance programme. I am asking the Honourable Minister and this Government to divert some of the funds to the Depots in the various parishes, not only St. Thomas, to purchase necessary materials and equipment to carry out their duties. I know of roads maintained by the Depot in St. Thomas that remain sturdy and will last for a long time. Sir, give them the material and the opportunity, and I believe they will carry out the work to the best of their ability, because at the end of day, they are serving Barbados. I have all confidence in the Bagatelle Depot workers, under the Mr. Marshall's guidance, that they will do an exceptional good job.

6.20 p.m.

Sequence 45

Estimates - Thursday, March 20, 2008

House 5B, Sequence 46, 6.20 p.m.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: ...I believe that they will carry out the work to the best of their abilities, because at the end of the day, they are serving Barbados and I have all the confidence in the Bagatelle Depot workers, under Mr.

Marshall's guidance that they will do an exceptionally good job.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member is very gracious in speaking in the Estimates, but she wants to use all the money allocated for her constituency.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member will determine where money will go. If he so dearly loves me or somebody in St. Thomas, and he wants every road to be a nylon road for his new jeep, I have no problem. I am not selfish because you will note that I clearly said not only the depot in St. Thomas, but depots across the island, and once they can get the materials and equipment. They already have the workers. I know that they can do a job that will ease the tension that will be placed on Central Ministry of Works.

I wish to thank you for the moment, Sir.

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

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, like most others on this side, from listening to the Member for Christ Church South, I am captured by his enthusiasm and sincerity. I feel very confident that he will exceed expectations and he will excel as the Minister. Sir, I look forward to his productivity over the next couple of years.

Mr. Chairman, I consider myself to be a fair man. In fact, I was going to begin this short intervention by saying that the previous Minister of Transport and Public Works did not do a bad job, given his limitations, but after listening to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, and how badly her parish was neglected, the numbers of roads that have not been done...

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I never said that my roads were badly done or that there are a large numbers of roads. I just want the programme to continue. I outlined clearly that I had some roads done. Sir, when you are talking about Padmore Village, Content Road and Rock Hall Road, the Ministry of Public Works did excellent work.

There are many other roads but I will not go into that now, but I did not say that all of my roads have been neglected. I will not lie to this Chamber, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Sir, I never said that. I was merely saying that given the number of roads and other issues in her constituency, that were enunciated that, in fact, I changed my mind. I figured that given the closeness, and the fact that they were working on the same side and the same team, and if in St. Thomas so many roads were neglected, then that explains why, for example, in St. Philip West that little or nothing was done.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I just do not want the Honourable Member to say, neglected. I never said that they were neglected, because I would not have expected to have all the roads done at one time. They are in need of upgrades.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Philip South, please move on.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. George North did say that St. Philip was targeted as one of the areas that lots of roads were... Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, because I never said that St. Philip was neglected. In fact, I must say that St. Philip had most of the road works in the last five years.

Sir, when we came to office the roads in St. Philip were bad, but from Six Roads to the St. Philip Parish Church was done. For example, in his constituency, I would say that the Rayside Programme spent almost \$8 million in that area.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, I was going on to say that what the Honourable Member did say, which is that it was recognised that there were lots of work to be done in St. Philip, and St. Philip had lots of work as a result.

Mr. Chairman, the point I really wanted to make, was the issue of fairness. I urge the Members on this side to ensure that in the distribution of the resources that there is a measure of fairness. We must ensure that our resources are not used for political purposes, if I use St. Philip as an example.

Sir, I am grateful. I am probably the beneficiary of that initiative by the Honourable Member for St. George North. St. Philip West was ignored and St. Philip North was ignored but I cannot complain. I think that St. Philip South did indeed receive the majority of the infrastructural development, and I am grateful. Sir, there is still work going on in St. Philip South.

Sir, over the last couple of weeks, we have managed to address the issues in Cave Land. We have finished Kirtons, numbers 1, 2 and 3. I am sure the residents there

are happy. I am happy to let you know that they started after January 15, 2008. Sir, you are welcome to visit St. Philip and see.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. We all know, it is like giving birth to the child, Sir, it takes months before the child is actually born.

Sir, I remember his predecessor in that constituency fighting and begging. All the planning and design works were done under this Barbados Labour Party Administration. All that has happened now is that the child has been born. Sir, the Honourable Member is taking credit for roads that he knows nothing about.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Philip South, please continue.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, I am sure that the technocrats in the Ministry of Works, would attest to the fact that I went into the Minister and I urged them to assist us in the various areas, because they were neglected for very long.

Sir, as I said, I am a fair man and I would like us all to be fair. If it is one indictment that I have against the previous Minister, and I hope that we do not fall into his rut, is the issue of transparency. I am sure that we will spend lots of time on the ABC Highway and the transparency issue. Therefore, I will not delay us tonight discussing the ABC Highway, because that can take us into many hours of discussion.

Mr. Chairman, I noticed that there are some issues with the Drainage Unit. I read in the Brief that in the majority of cases, the work done was unsatisfactory. I hope the Minister would ensure that this work is done, because it is important for us to have our wells cleaned, to ensure that the water travels along the courses that they should.

In that regard, there are a few areas in my constituency in the Crane, for example, where we have had an issue for a while because of the drainage. When there is heaving rain, there is a bit of flooding. Sir, I look forward to having that problem alleviated.

Mr. Chairman, for once, I am going to agree with the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. I want to recognise the hard work done by the depot in Six Roads. They are hardworking individuals who have worked hard, regardless of which area they were assigned. However, I want to urge the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, because I live in Marchfield Village Road and that is probably the worse road in St. Philip at the time. Sir, no doubt, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West will address that issue.

Mr. Chairman, I notice the matter of plastic licences is being addressed. I wondered why it took us so long. It took us months to have that completed. Again, we are guilty of trying to reinvent the wheel. For example, we have plastic ID Cards and I could not imagine why it took us so many months, almost years, to reach an obvious conclusion. In fact, where we should be going is in the direction of having plastic drivers licences.

Sir, if it is not too late, I still have my British Virgin Islands driver's licence and at the back of it, Sir, it has my blood type. Although initially I resisted that, it is not a bad idea, in terms of, if you have an accident that the information is shown on your drivers licence.

House 5B, Sequence 46, 18:30:11

Thursday, March 20, 2008

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because provision for the plastic licences were put in last year's Estimates. All the technical work has been completed. The building, the cameras, everything for the plastic licence have been completed. The only thing as I understand it last December that we were waiting on was the staff.

Sir, there are no issues. I have seen it and I have approved it. The legislation has to be brought here because there have to be changes from the five-year to the three-year proposal where you could keep your licence for three years. That is the only amendment that is to be brought to Parliament. Sir, I am hoping that the new Minister would bring the legislation to Parliament very soon.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: My only point there is that it took too long because we tried to reinvent the wheel. All I was saying is that we already had a model that we could have used.

Sir, I hope that the Minister would ensure that given the fact that the Six Roads Roundabout is probably the only roundabout that does not have a name, that we can put our heads together and recognise the contribution of several worthy individuals from St. Philip. Certainly not the previous Honourable Member for St. Philip North, but the names, Reynold Weekes and the late Harold Blackman come to mind as examples. Sir, so that it be obvious that I am not partisan, D. D. Garner, who is from Marchfield, also comes to mind.

What I am saying, Sir, is that we should consider having the Six Roads Roundabout renamed. We can find six worthy names to ensure that is carried. Sir, I am quite willing to give the Minister my six names and I am sure the Honourable Member for St. Philip West may have a few ideas. Sir, it is not difficult to find six stalwarts from St.

Philip who contributed significantly to our development, so I would indeed like to see that done as soon as possible.

Sir, on the transport side, I note the issues with respect to the Transport Board. We recognise that the Transport Board would never be self-sufficient. We recognise their efforts to improve the efficiency, so in this area we look forward to seeing improvements.

Mr. Chairman, I note that there are plans to have a bus scheduling software. That would be wonderful because I often wonder why we leave here and go to North America and other places, and we could tell that the bus is coming at 9.23 a.m. and it turns up. Mr. Chairman, given the talent we have in Barbados, there is no reason why we cannot move to a higher level of efficiency.

Mr. Chairman, I lament the fact that we sometimes accept mediocrity in Barbados by saying that we are better than other parts of the Caribbean. That is no excuse for us not reaching our fullest potential. Therefore, I think that we could do much better in the area of transportation and I look forward to seeing increase efficiency in that regard.

Mr. Chairman, I note in the Estimates that there are plans to have the Mangrove Depot refurbished. I look forward to that. I also look forward to having a shelter by the Mangrove Depot, which is actually in St. Philip West. I am sure the Honourable Member for St. Philip West would agree with me there because many passengers go to the depot to meet the bus and sometimes you see them there standing in the sun or in the rain. It would be nice if we could have that done.

Sir, I believe that where possible we should look for opportunities in every ministry to contribute to the Government's coffers. In this regard, I believe that we should look at air transport. I happened to have been involved recently in the registration of an aircraft in Barbados. That is an area we should look at to see whether or not there is any potential for us to develop that market as well as the area of the registration of yachts and other vessels. Sir, you know that I have an interest in the development of international business and many of our clients like toys that include aircraft and yachts. Therefore, as far as possible, we should make Barbados a one-stop shop. We should look to exploit any opportunities there are in terms of any linkages.

Sir, I look forward therefore to speaking again on this Head, but in closing I pledge my support to the Minister and I look forward to contributing further.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Chairman, I would speak to a few other matters of public works besides the roads. I think that was the bulwark so far. I must say that my constituency is one that does not have a litany of

complaints about roads, not because of the former Administration but because of the whole design and build up of the area. However, there are some other areas in that Ministry that sometimes we greatly overlooked and do not recognise the importance of them, and I want to touch on a few of them. The first is the Drainage Unit.

Mr. Chairman, I wholeheartedly agree with some proposals I see emanating from my colleague, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, about the importance of that Unit to alleviating flooding throughout Barbados. I know that is a major concern particularly in the rainy season. I know that this Administration will not wait until the rains come to start cleaning the wells and ensuring that drainage is a priority in this country.

Mr. Chairman, the constituency of St. James South continued to complain bitterly, under the former Government, about the failure to clean the watercourses. Oftentimes they become not only eyesores and havens, but havens for criminals, dumping grounds for those who wish to discard their garbage in a manner that they should not. It is just just overall environmental madness.

Sir, I certainly look forward to this Administration, particularly the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport, ensuring that there is a structured programme to ensure that the watercourses are kept in a manner that benefits the wider community. We also spoke well to the issue of ensuring that approvals to be granted by the Town Planning Department certainly consider the opinion of the Drainage Unit in particular the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport to ensure that private developers... We have seen too many instances in the past where the work of private developers negatively affects those in surrounding areas particularly in respect of drainage problems and the general overflow of water.

Mr. Chairman, I am satisfied that this Administration will once again ensure that such oversight by the Drainage Unit is placed as a priority upon the work of private developers.

One of the other areas that concerns us as a new Administration is the number of Government-owned vehicles and the maintenance programme attendant thereto. We would have seen in Barbados in recent years a whole set of Government-owned vehicles. Oftentimes, I do not know who drive them. I see youngsters driving them. I see some of everybody driving them. I have seen them parked all over the place. As a responsible Government, we will ensure that the acquisition and use of Government-owned vehicles are done in such a way that they truly benefit the ministries and departments to which they are assigned.

Mr. Chairman, with respect to the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport, the issue of

maintenance and servicing has been placed as a priority because wherever possible we need to ensure that the costs attendant thereto are kept under control. The days of largesse are over.

One of the other areas that relates to this Ministry that we oftentimes do not hear much about unless there is some major controversy, is the Government Electrical Engineering Department. Every individual who constructs a building or a private resident knows the importance of that department and oftentimes the hassles that are encountered there.

House 5B Sequence 47

6.40 p.m.

Thursday, March 20, 2008

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Chairman, I have done my own checks and I am satisfied that it is not because of bad attitudes of employees in that department but when you have a situation where the Government's principal electrical advisors and employees have to work under such dilapidated conditions, then I cannot expect much to come out of there. Sir, I must confess they have been doing well, despite the circumstances.

Sir, I am happy to hear that my colleague, the Honourable representative for Christ Church South, has recognised, as we all have, and has placed as a priority to providing decent standards of accommodation for all public servants, but I could not help but recognise the state of the Government Electrical Engineering Department. Sir, with respect to that department, I believe it has to be more customer-friendly than it is currently. We have situations in Barbados where electricians will make applications to the Electrical Engineering Department to have a house inspected, whether it is for a temporary or a final supply and oftentimes the electrician would have to sit and wait for an entire day for that electrical inspector to turn up, and you might not know whether or not he is coming. Furthermore, if that electrical inspector cannot make it for whatever reason, you might have to wait another two weeks. That is why I am sure consideration must be given to ensuring that, for example, the officers have cellular phones. This is the modern era and Government departments need to recognise that they too must provide good customer service. Sir, I believe that basic facilities like those ought to be in place. Sir, I am satisfied that this administration, recognising the importance of good customer service, will ensure that such officers are in a position to communicate with those clients they have to service.

Mr. Chairman, one of the other areas in this Ministry is that of the Transport Board, which we have heard quite a

bit about over the years and which we will continue hearing about it over the years. I believe that one must have a clear philosophy in respect of public transportation that is owned by Government. I hold the view that the Transport Board perhaps would never make a profit. I also do not hold the view that it has to make a profit. I believe the service provided by the Transport Board is of such great importance to the economy of Barbados that as a responsible Government, we have to give it the financial, technical and human resources support that it deserves.

Mr. Chairman, those of us who drive and never have to catch public transportation, sometimes do not recognise the importance of it but those of us who have been employers can understand the day our employees get to work late because of the Transport Board bus. We know only too well the business cost attached thereto, that is why it is my view that the Transport Board must continue to be supported and subsidised by the Government of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, having said that, it does not mean we must encourage wastage, duplication and bad management principles. I note the proposals by this new administration of which I am part, to ensure that the Transport Board improves upon its service. I want to say that it is not just the rural areas that we need to look at expanding the routes, but also in constituencies like mine, because there seems to have been some thought that middle-class neighbourhoods do not need public transportation.

Mr. Chairman, that truth of the matter is that I have experienced, certainly within areas such as West Terrace, Crystal Heights, Wanstead and Oxnard, there are certain individuals who reside in these districts, who either are renting or for whatever reason do not have their own private transportation and have to depend on public transportation. Sir, oftentimes these persons have to walk long distances to get the bus, for example, persons living in Crystal Heights oftentimes have to walk down to Queens College to get public transportation. Sir, that needs to be revisited.

Mr. Chairman, we also need to recognise that the privately-owned public transportation system is an integral part of the national transportation system. We need to stop treating minibuses operators as though they are the vagabonds, the unemployable or outside children. The kind I have heard described as individuals who were awarded contracts by the Urban Development Commission.

Mr. Chairman, we need to analyse why they operate in such a manner. There have been situations where these privately-owned minibuses have been heavily taxed, the cost of spare parts, cost of oil or fuel have been such a rate that oftentimes they may have to hustle to make a dollar. Sir, I am not one that would stand here and condone any bad behaviour, there are some who are quite indisciplined,

but overall we need to recognise that the privately-owned public transportation operators provide a valuable service to this economy. Without them, many workers would not get to work daily.

Mr. Chairman, even with all the talk from the former Government about providing a dedicated bus service for school children, there are still many school children who would not get to school on time or who might not even reach home early, if they had to depend entirely on the Transport Board buses. Sir, I want to see us to stop treating the ZRs and ZMs operators as vagabonds and criminals. We need to work with them to ensure that the level of service and professionalism within that sector is raised, so that we could all benefit at the end of the day.

Mr. Chairman, one of the other issues we need to touch on briefly is in respect of the Grantley Adams International Airport Inc., and the Barbados Port Authority Inc., which come under this Ministry. I do not intend to dwell too much on this particular Head but suffice it to say that I am not yet convinced that the actions of the former Government, with respect to the Grantley Adams International Airport Inc., has all been above board and that it has redounded to the benefit of those who, in many cases, for example, the concessionaires there. Sir, all of us as Members of Parliament, would have heard about the way individuals who were placed there to run that facility, would have treated some of those concessionaires and some of the workers. Sir, let us not bury our heads in the sand.

Mr. Chairman, I would impress upon the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, very early in this administration, to pay special and close attention to the operations of Grantley Adams International Airport Inc. There are many friends, cronies and such like, whose wealth is in the bosom of the former Government, who have benefited tremendously from the works and the continued operations that are there. Sir, I am not saying that Barbadians should not get anything but there are a lot of ordinary Barbadians who have also been displaced.

Mr. Chairman, in respect to the Barbados Port Authority Inc., there is great need for the improvement of services there and certainly looking to contain cost as well. The Barbados Port Authority Inc., is one where we can all believe it is not perhaps the most efficient port. I hold the view that it really needs to work towards a 24-hour operation. I know that there are serious challenges and issues that we would encounter with the unions, but let us be fair, it is not entirely the fault of the former administration, but if we are going to move Barbados well into the 21st Century, we have to look at reducing the cost of the importation of goods into Barbados.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Chairman, if we are going to become such an international centre, the Barbados Port Authority needs to move towards being a 24-hour operation, one that allows for those import items to get out quickly because time is money.

Mr. Chairman, I will certainly come back to this Head, as we progress on it, hopefully next Tuesday. I am obliged to you.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I just want to ask a few questions so that the Minister would check over the weekend or when he comes on Tuesday, if he cannot do it today.

6.50 p.m.

Thursday, March 20, 2008

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, members have been asking about a number of things that fall under the Road Traffic Act. Sir, that Act was amended in the last Session in this House and there are still a number of things that need to be brought to Parliament in order to complete the process. I am sure that by now the Minister should have come into contact or his advisors should have told him that there is a need to bring three regulations to Parliament in order to complete the process. Sir, I am speaking mainly of the Road Traffic Fixed Penalty Order, 2006, which has a special Committee of both sections of Parliament. We have looked at the demerit point system and also a ticketing system. I have heard the police complained some time ago about these two important regulations that need to be brought to Parliament.

Mr. Chairman, I am also of the view that out of that Act we have the situation where the manufacturing of number plates was dealt with and those manufacturers should have registered with the Licensing Authority and the Licensing Authority should be given funds at this time in order to carry out the provisions of the Act. Sir, I know there has been a problem as far as the police is concerned because they have been asking about it. I know that the regulations are there, that the Act has been passed. Sir, these regulations are to be laid by the Minister and are subject to negative resolution so that there is no problem with bringing them to Parliament and having them laid.

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Members also talked about the plastic licence but there is also a provision that has to come back to Parliament and I am asking that the Minister and the Government consider looking at these matters.

Mr. Chairman, I also believe, in terms of legislation that the Building Act was also drafted and needs to be looked at. I know that is a big problem as far as interest groups in Barbados have been asking about the provisions. There are number of areas, which may come into conflict with others Acts, which need to be looked at very carefully as far as the Town & Country Planning regulations and the Act is concerned. Mr. Chairman, I think that as far as legislation is concerned they are ready but they need some adjustments and that Government should look carefully at those.

Mr. Chairman, the Transport Authority as well. I am not sure if that need regulations but I think that was almost completed but there were some amendments to be done with the Transport Authority.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to make the point and other Honourable Members have made the point, especially the Honourable Member for St. Philip South and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, that the depots have worked hard over the years and we have proven that when an entity decentralises its operations and you have given that entity funds and machinery, a lot of work can be done. Certainly, you would find that the Christ Church Depot would be able to do all the work that you want it to do. Sir, there is still a lot of work to be done in your area and once the Christ Church depot is given funds, machinery and is properly staffed that they could do the work.

Mr. Chairman, it is my experience that most depots work assiduously in order to carry out the work of the Ministry once they are given the necessary funds. I also want to find out from the Minister when he returns to the Chamber what is the position with the foam bitumen that is being used by the C.O. Williams Group. I know this has been an experiment used after the last two or three years and persons have approached me in the last week to ask if it is really standing up to scrutiny. I know that traditionally we have used limestone from Barbados but the foam bitumen is a new process. I got a call recently to ask why is that roundabouts, which were done a few years ago, were not standing up. They were dropping in holes because they were supposed to stand up for five years. I guess the officers could look at the foam bitumen and the importation of stone that we had started to look at.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to find out from the Government if they would continue the sidewalk programme that was started and mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. The programme is consistent with the needs of the disabled in our society. Sir, as I have said before we have started the sidewalk programme and we need to continue with that programme, so that persons using wheelchairs and those persons who use prams for children can use them properly.

Mr. Chairman, I was talking about the signage and I think Honourable Members would agree that the National Signage Programme with the Barbados Hotel Association has worked well. It is a new programme that was introduced a few years ago but I believe more has to be done in terms of the directional signage across the country. Sir, the new, blue, reflective signage was done by the Barbados Hotel Association in conjunction with the Minister of Public Works. They have worked well and especially the returning nationals have complimented the Government of Barbados for the signage but I think that more has to be done in terms of providing signage across the country.

Mr. Chairman, we all agree that the Minister and the Ministry of Public Works have done good work and I hope the process could be continued in this new term and in this new administration. Sir, I thank you.

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

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

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House be suspended until Tuesday, March 25, 2008 at 10 o'clock in the morning.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, speaking on the Suspension, I would just want to wish you a very happy and blessed Easter and all Honourable Members. I would also like to extend it to all the workers at Parliament and to the members of the security forces, the Press and all the people who enabled us to do our job here without having to worry about the arrangements that are put in place for us.

H/5B/19:00

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Thursday, March 20, 2008

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: ...all the people who enable us to do our job here, without having to worry about the arrangements that are put in place for us.

Sir, this is an unusual occurrence, for we would not normally come in the middle of the Estimates debate, but I take the point that persons this weekend, will want to be reflective and would want to spend time doing those things, which we do best as people at Easter. Going to church,

being reflective, and spending time with their families. I would imagine that in this particular crowd, their constituents.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Sir, on behalf of the all the Honourable Members on this side I want to wish all the staff, police, persons from the ministries, who have been here over the period of time, and all the members of the various constituencies across Barbados, particularly my good friend, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, who is to be recognised, the best for this period. I also want to encourage those who have a church, to go and serve the Lord, those who are without a church, I do not mind inviting them to my own. I would welcome them there. I want to, basically, thank all Honourable Members, the Clerks, and those who have been working very well with us, a new Government guiding us and leading us through the way. I want to wish you Mr. Deputy Speaker, and hope that you would convey to the substantive Speaker as well, the best for this period.

SUSPENSION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair would want to wish everyone the best for the Easter season, and thank you very much for the cooperation during the past week.

The question that this House be now suspended until Tuesday, March 25, 2008, at 10.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

7.02 p.m.

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TODD, Hon. M.T.
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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. Chamber. The source file is filed with the Senate debates, but the text is a sitting of the House of Assembly (Mr. Speaker presiding), so it is printed as the House. Please confirm.

Q2. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q3. Opening. The source opens without the convening sentence (Pursuant to the adjournment ... met at ...). The date is taken from the heading of the source.

Q4. Committee of Supply, Head 13. The Minister gives the sum owed to the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation first as '\$8 093 736' and later as '\$8 300 736'. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Committee of Supply, Head 37. The supplementary allocation under Head 37 is given as '\$686 147 000', which is far more than the whole Resolution of \$25 528 804; the road rehabilitation component is given as '\$2, 965 539. 48'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Committee of Supply, Head 53, about 12.30 p.m.. The time warning 'The Honourable Member has one minute to wind up.' is labelled 'Mr. SPEAKER' although the House was in Committee, and two following paragraphs of the Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur's speech (beginning 'Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur: An aspect of reform of a drug service...', about 170 words) are run in under that label. Please confirm.

Q7. Committee of Supply, Head 53. One speech by the Member for St. Michael South Central is labelled 'Hon. H.L. SEALY'; elsewhere he is 'Hon. R. L. SEALY'. Several speeches at changes of take open with '...' only (e.g. Miss M. A. Mottley, Mr. D. St.E. Kellman, Hon. E. G. Hutson). Printed as in the source.

Q8. Heading after the 5.40 p.m. resumption. The heading reads 'HEAD 53 (RESUMED)', but Head 53 had already been passed and the evening debate continues on Head 57, the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport. Printed as in the source.

Q9. Final suspension. The motion is to suspend until Tuesday, March 25, 2008 'at 10 o'clock in the morning',

but the procedural sentence reads '10.00 p.m.'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on Thursday, 20th March, 2008 to continue on the Estimates, with Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair and Mr. S. A. Lashley, Chairman of Committees, presiding in Committee of Supply. On the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones, the Appropriation Bill was set aside so that the House could take the Resolution to grant \$25 528 804 under Supplementary Estimates No. 15, 2007/2008.

Under Head 13, Office of the Prime Minister, Mr. Jones sought about \$8 million owed to the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, and the Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur, Member for St. Peter, doubted that his Government had owed so much for one year. Under Head 27, Hon. R. L. Sealy sought \$10 794 055 to complete Kensington Oval; Mr. Arthur recalled that as Minister of Finance he had opposed further resources for the Oval, and Mr. D. St.E. Kellman said the problem could have been solved had the Government accepted advice on the lands at North Stars. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce presented Head 37 for road rehabilitation, promising Miss M. A. Mottley details of the roads after several points of order, and Dr. the Hon. E. R. Byer-Suckoo sought \$50 550 under Head 43. The Resolution passed. Mr. Deputy Speaker then welcomed visiting Members of the Parliament of Canada.

The Committee resumed on Head 53. Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, Member for St. Philip West and Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security, spoke on the use of National Insurance funds. Mr. Arthur warned that in an ageing society it would take the income of four workers to pay one pension, that the fund might be bust by 2038, and that the Government planned \$483 million in debentures of which the Scheme was a major holder; Miss Mottley said the Scheme had at times held as much as \$175 million overnight. Their exchanges with the Minister over the Auditor-General's report for 2007 produced repeated points of order.

After lunch, Hon. E. G. Hutson raised water supply at Redman's Village, Mr. D. D. Marshall urged prudence in investments and Mr. Arthur said the Barbados Water Authority had had \$22 million in surpluses for mains replacement. Hon. D. O'N. Inniss, Member for St. James South, criticised the closing of the St. Joseph Hospital and the sending of Barbadians to Cuba for eye care; certain of his remarks were ordered expunged. Miss C. Y. Forde, Mr.

J. D. Paul, Hon. P. M. T. Todd, Hon. S. D. Blackett and Mr. Boyce also spoke, and the Minister replied on HIV/AIDS and the drug service. Head 53 was passed.

On Head 57, Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport (\$77 877 504), Mr. Boyce set out policy on drainage, roads and air bridges; Mr. R. St.C. Toppin asked that a brief he read from be laid, and the

Chairman ruled it need not be. Mr. G. A. Clarke defended the Ministry's staff over the last 14 years. After an evening resumption Hon. R. D. Jones, Mr. Kellman, Miss Forde, Mr. A. D. Brathwaite, Mr. Inniss and Mr. Clarke continued on roads, the Port Authority and the Road Traffic Act. Progress was reported, Easter greetings were exchanged by Miss Mottley, Mr. Jones and the Deputy Speaker, and the House was suspended until Tuesday, 25th March, 2008.