
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

the May 27, 2008, pursuant to the adjournment.

PRESENT

HIS HONOUR M. A. CARRINGTON, B.A., LL.B.,
(Speaker)

HIS HONOUR K. St.C. BEST, LL.B.(Hons), L.E.C.
(Deputy Speaker)

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A. (Hons.) Dip. Ed.,
LL.B (Hons.)(Lond.), LL.M (Leic.)

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

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON, FCCA, CA, (Minister of
Trade Industry and Commerce)

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

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, Dip. Theology, B.A.,
M.Ed., Ed.D. (Minister of Social Care, Constituency
Empowerment and Urban Development)

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE, LL.B(Hons.)

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, B.Sc., LL.B.(Hons.), L.E.C.,
(Chairman of Committees)

Hon. P.M.T. TODD, B.Sc. (Minister of State,
Ministry of Social Care, Constituency and Urban
Development)

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

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

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

*Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan
Harewood.*

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, May
13, 2008, 2005.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that
the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for
its meeting of Tuesday, May 13, 2008, which Minutes have
been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

PAPERS

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

1. Reports of the Social Investment Fund for the quarters ended June 20, 2007; September 30, 2007 and December 31, 2007.
2. Excise Tax (Rate of Tax)(Order) 2008.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Housing and Lands I am commanded to lay the following:

1. The Iowa Report of the National Housing Corporation for the final year 2003 to 2004.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. R.D. JONES: I beg to move the First Reading of:

1. Immigration (Amendment) and Valuation Bill, 2008.
2. Civil Aviation (Amendment) Bill, 2008.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the following Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5) 43 and 44 be suspended for the balance of today's sitting.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

ORDER NO. 3 – RESOLUTION TO TAKE NOTE OF AND APPROVE – THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN FOR HIV/AIDS – PREVENTION AND CONTROL 2008 TO 2013.

H/A10/10:20

Sequence 2

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

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

Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Sir, I rise to move the passing of the Resolution which takes note of and approve the National Strategic Plan for HIV Prevention and

Control 2008-2013. There is an additional Resolution to take note of and approve, the Barbados National HIV Policy -A Framework for Action. I ask permission to debate these two Bills as one, since the matters are closely related.

Mr. SPEAKER: If that is the wish of the House and there are no objections, permission is so granted.

Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Speaker, today is a significant day in Barbados. The challenge of HIV/AIDS is one that this country has battled with for many years, more than two decades. It has received the attention of Government, but never has it received this level of attention in the House of Parliament. So, we are very excited at the Ministry of Family, Youth, Sports and the Environment and the National HIV/AIDS Commission, to move these Resolutions in this august Chamber. Sir, this is particularly significant to the Democratic Labour Party Government.

Sir, 14 years ago, Barbados hosted the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Out of that emerged the Barbados Plan of Action, which formalised international acceptance that the Small Island Developing States are among the most vulnerable communities in the world. The then Prime Minister, now Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, outlined Barbados' vision at that time for sustainable development. In his speech he made it very clear that the focus of Barbados' development was to be on its people. That has always been the thrust of this Democratic Labour Party and will always be the focus of this Government. It is with that in mind we bring this Resolution to the House.

Sir, HIV/AIDS has the potential to cripple our population. I travelled to the Sub-Sahara Africa and have seen what AIDS has done to that population. I have been to Malawi, for example, and at the time I visited, the life expectancy there was in the range of 30 years, young men and women cut down in their prime because of HIV/AIDS. Sir, you can imagine if that were to happen here, our country could not develop. We could not achieve the level of development we have so far enjoyed. We could not make plans for the future, as we are currently making as a new administration. Sir, it is important that as we go ahead, we check anything that could hamper our development, and HIV/AIDS is one such scourge.

Sir, since assuming the portfolio of Minister of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment, and taking the responsibility of HIV/AIDS Response, I have received much criticism. Some said that in the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto, for example, we have only given one sentence to our response to HIV/AIDS. Indeed, it said that we will intensify the fight against AIDS. Some said that moving the National HIV/AIDS Commission from the

Prime Minister's Office to the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment was a backward move, and reflected that this Government was not as keenly interested in this challenge, that all our people face.

Sir, I would like to declare today that action speaks louder than words. While we may only have one line in our Manifesto, certainly bringing these Resolutions to this House today and outlining to the nation what we intend to do in this fight, confirms our commitment to this challenge.

Also the move of the National HIV/AIDS Commission from the Prime Minister's Office, in the former Administration, to the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment, is not a backward move, but it is indeed a progressive one. Our response to HIV has to be one of adapting to the demands. We have to be in a position to assess what the challenges are and to adapt our response to that challenge.

Sir, the members of the National HIV/AIDS Commission would tell you that the thrust of that fight has to be aimed at the youth. It has to be aimed at children, which are also the responsibility of the Ministry of Family. It has to embrace family values once again. We have to look at supporting parents in this fight, as we ask parents to take an active role in helping their children and teenagers to deal with their sexuality. We have to support parents in that role. That is the role of the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment. Therefore, we are in a position to work with the National HIV/AIDS Commission. Sir, this move is one that will benefit, and one that has already improved the work of the National HIV/AIDS Commission.

Sir, what we are doing here today is significant to all Barbadian., Not only does it signal our intentions and what we began as a Government, but it brings to the fore some of the discussions we want people to have in their communities. It allows for debate within communities, societies, schools, churches and on the street, as a result of what is said here today. That is a great leap in this challenge that we have.

We need people to discuss these matters openly. We need them to hear the fact. We need them to hear our concerns; to know what we want them to do in their best interest, and we want discussion to move this fight along a few yards.

Sir, the mandate of the National HIV/AIDS Commission, for those who are not aware, speaks exactly to what I am talking about and what we have to do. The mandate of the National HIV/AIDS Commission is to coordinate effectively the national expanded response to reduce the incidents and the spread of the epidemic in Barbados. Sir, for those who do not know, the incidents are

the new cases. We want to reduce the number of new cases, the number of people who are now going to be infected with HIV. That is where our focus is now, to reduce the number of new cases.

Sir, the vision of the National HIV/AIDS Commission is to strive to ensure that all Barbadians are empowered to respond effectively to the threat posed by HIV/AIDS, and to the sustainable development of our nation.

Sir, the Mission of the National HIV/AIDS Commission is to advise the Government on plans and policies, and to build strategic partnerships to effectively manage, control and reduce the spread of HIV in Barbados. We will also endeavour to mobilise widespread community participation and support in their involvement in programmes of this nature.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party Government is committed to working with the National HIV/AIDS Commission. We are indeed committed to be guided by their expertise. We have taken information from them, up to this point, and we have been led by them. This is why we are here today.

Sir, within their vision, they want to mobilise community participation. It is my hope that today=s discussions will accomplish that. It would mobilise community participation, community involvement, community interest and concern in this fight, because this is a fight of all Barbadians. We are in a fight for our lives here.

Sir, today HIV/AIDS is an expensive disease. In 2004, the last figure that I saw, the cost of HIV/AIDS, was \$10 323 170.

10.30 a.m.

Sequence 3

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

House A10, Sequence 04, 10.30 a.m.

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Sir, that was 0.83 per cent of GDP, and per capita expenditure of \$37.10. Sir, that is an expensive disease, and that was in 2004. Sir, the problem in Barbados right now is that we need to reduce the incidence of new cases. Sir, with the treatment that has been offered so far, persons living with HIV/AIDS are living for longer periods. Sir, that means we have to be able to provide the medication to be able to treat them for longer periods.

We also have to be able to deal with their other concerns. For example, their social concerns, their housing needs, their employment needs. Sir, we have to be able to deal with all those concerns, and the concerns of their families, for a longer period of time.

Mr. Speaker, this is a disease that will capture the attention of all Barbadians. It is an expensive disease and it is one that can rape our Treasury, if we are not careful. Therefore, we certainly need to stem the tide of HIV/AIDS. The challenge is in preventing new cases. Sir, that has been the challenge of the HIV/AIDS Commission and it is where we have to continue to put our efforts in prevention.

We have to deal with people's beliefs. There are people out there who believe that they are invincible; that they can do anything; that they can behave anyhow; that they can take all kinds of behaviours especially their sexual practices, and that this disease will not affect them. Alas! Many of them find out too late that they have contacted the dreaded HIV/AIDS. Therefore, we have to begin there in our fight.

Mr. President, we have to begin with people's mind sets; begin with educating people; begin with their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about the disease. We have to let them know that if they continue with certain behaviours, the disease is very likely to affect them and that is the challenge we face which is to be able to get into all sectors of society and be able to tell young and old alike.

Do not fool yourselves. Old people are being affected by the disease now, because more and more old people are getting involved in activities that may have been relegated to younger people. More and more old people are jumping off cliffs and zipping across gullies and doing things like that and taking risky behaviours as well, in their sex lives, and so, more and more people are opening themselves up to the risk of HIV/AIDS.

Then, there is peer pressure that is encouraging early sexual behaviour. Sir, when you watch the soap operas, the movies on television, when you see the ads, when you even read the glossy magazines and all the ads, this is encouraging risky sexual behavior, again, not just among the young people, but among the old people as well.

Mr. Speaker, our soap operas are showing that not just the young people are involved in these kinds of behaviours but it is showing older people getting involved in those behaviours and we are adopting that as part of our lifestyles. And so, this disease is not a disease of young people anymore. It is not a disease of homosexuals anymore either, because it is the heterosexual behaviour in which we are seeing this, because of the risky behaviour,

because of the promiscuity. Therefore, the fight continues for abstinence and monogamy.

I spoke of the cost in dollars and cents of this disease. There is a cost of treatment. The medications with which we treat HIV/AIDS are very expensive. We use one round of medications in treating the disease and those medications now are not as expensive as some of the other medications. Sir, what we find happens is that a while, those persons with HIV/AIDS no longer respond as well as they were responding initially to those medications, and so we have to step up to other medications.

Sir, it is that second round of medication for the treatment of HIV/AIDS, the anti-retroviral therapy which is extremely expensive. It is not just the cost of antiretroviral therapy. It is the cost to the family. It is the burden of care. It is helping to house these people. It is helping to reintegrate them back into society.

Sir, as they are living longer and they are living better, we do not want to encourage them just to sit around at home, but they can continue to be productive. This is one of the things we have to focus on. We have to encourage them to be reintegrated into society. We have to encourage them to continue to be productive. We have to create an atmosphere in which they can be productive.

We need to create an atmosphere in the workplace, for example, where they can continue to work; where they will not experience discrimination; where their employers will not have to know their HIV/AIDS status in order for them to be employed; and where they can continue to function and to give back to this country.

We need to help to remove the stigma in communities; so that they can continue to live in their communities. They can continue to play their sport. They can continue to go to church and know that fewer and fewer people are looking at them funny. Sir, that was the situation we had decades ago for cancer.

Decades ago people scorned you if you had cancer because they did not understand how it was you got cancer. Now, that is the same fight that we have to take to our communities in dealing with HIV/AIDS. We have to deal with the stigma. We have to de-stigmatise it. We have to start with our leaders as well. It starts here with Parliamentarians, politicians, leaders of Government. It starts with us.

Mr. Speaker, we have to appreciate that the stigma is what is going to create even more challenges for those persons living with HIV/AIDS. We estimate that about 1.7 per cent of our population right now live with HIV/AIDS. We have to help to remove the stigma. It begins here. It begins with leaders in our community. It begins with leaders in our Churches.

Mr. Speaker, our Churches have been stepping up to the plate for this one. Our Churches have been working to help to remove the stigma. We have to work in schools. We have to work with employers. We have to do a lot of work to make sure that the stigma is removed, not only for those persons who are currently living with HIV/AIDS.

The reason we have to help to remove that stigma as well is so that people would not be afraid to come for testing because that is where we need to get them. We need individuals in our society to appreciate that they may have put themselves at risk. They need to understand what is the risk. They need to appreciate the situations in which they may have exposed themselves. Then, they need to be able to seek medical attention, so that they can come and get tested early, so that they can come and be counselled.

We are not mandating that it is compulsory that everybody be tested. That is not the aim of this Government. That is not the intention of this Government. It continues to be voluntary. But we need to create an atmosphere, an environment that will be conducive for people to come forward and say: "I may have taken a chance. I may have done something silly. I need to get tested. I need to find out more about this disease. Did what I do, put me at risk? If not, what will put me at risk?" These are the kinds of questions that people need to be able to come forward and ask, without any fear of discrimination.

Sir, as I said before, not just heterosexuals, but homosexuals, and it is not the intention of this Government to look at the legal aspects of homosexuality. Sir, we need to create an atmosphere for the purpose of reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS. We need to create an atmosphere in which all persons, whatever their sexual practices may have been to come forward and say: "What I am doing or what I did, put me at risk? If so, How can I reduce that risk? I need to be tested. How can I not put somebody else at risk?"

These are the questions. The HIV/AIDS Commission has the answers to these questions. They are constantly going out there and training people in this kind of voluntary counselling and testing (VCT). They are training people in schools and Churches across our society. They are training people to be able to answer those questions. We now have to be able to set the atmosphere so that more people could come forward.

House A10, Sequence 04, 10:40:14

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Hon. Dr. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Speaker, old people feel embarrassed to go to the doctor and ask these questions because we have a way of looking at them funny. We have a way of saying to them: "What are you doing having sex at your age?" Sir, our society believes that after a certain age persons should not be participating in this activity anymore.

Sir, more and more old people are breaking those barriers and are involved in sexual activity, but they do not tell anybody. Those are the ones who need to be tested. They are the ones who do not know about HIV/AIDS because they did not grow up hearing about it. They probably do not know much about condoms, and they need to be able to come and ask questions about condoms. Birth control is not an issue for them at their age, but they need to be able to come forward and ask questions about HIV/AIDS prevention.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be able to encourage them. We should not turn up our noses when granny walks in to the doctor's office wanting to know how to use a condom. It might sound funny, but when granny walks in and wants to know how to use a condom, you have to keep your face straight and put yourself in her position. As long as we have health and strength, nobody can tell us when we have to hang up our boots.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. Dr. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: I know it would get a lot endorsement on This Side for sure.

Mr. Speaker, we need to enable healthy practices at any age where it is legal.

Sir, that brings me to another point. Unfortunately, HIV is seen in folks as young as 15 years old. It is sad, but it is true. In the 15-29 age group, we are seeing HIV/AIDS. As you think about how a society operates, you could understand the 20-29 age group. Sir, 15, 16, and 17 year-old men and women are contracting HIV/AIDS. That should not be so shocking when you think about the number of teenaged pregnancies. Right now, 16 per cent of all live births are to mothers under 20 years old. Sir, by the very means that they are getting pregnant, they are exposing themselves to sexually transmitted diseases, to the risk of cervical cancer and to HIV.

Sir, we need to create a culture in our country that would allow us to dialogue with young people about their sexuality and how they could cope with their sexuality. The Ministry of Family is taking on the fight to enable parents

to be able to talk to their teenagers from early about their sexuality, about how to cope with dating and how to stay away from sex until planning their family. Mr. Speaker, we do not need to talk to them when they fear or seem convinced that they are already into sexual activity. We need for parents to be able to have these kinds of discussions. It happens in some homes, not in all. Some young people have their parents they could talk to. Some young people have the Church and they could go and talk to their Pastor or other mentors at the Church. Some may have the coaches in the sporting organisations or social organisations that they could go to and get advice.

Mr. Speaker, I still believe that it is best for parents to give that advice. As a parent, I would want to know what advice my children are getting. Yes, they may still go and talk to their coach, their teacher, their pastor and so on, but I want to know what advice they are getting. I want to be able to lead that fight for myself when it comes to helping my children to be able to make those choices.

Unfortunately, Sir, I have seen too many young people who do not have anyone to help them to be able to make those choices. Sir, by the time they reach a doctor, they have already contracted HIV, are pregnant or have some other complication from their risky behaviour.

Sir, it is to that end that we believe that it is time to lower the age of medical consent from 18 to 16. This is not to take away a parent's right to go to the doctor with a child at age 16 or 17. My children are 17 and 19 and I intend to be going to the doctor with them wherever possible. It is not to tell a parent to step back, we do not need you anymore. It is for those thousands of young men and women out there who do not have a parent or a guardian they could talk to.

When I say they do not have a parent or guardian, I mean that they do not have the kind of relationship with a parent that they could say that they are thinking about doing something, that they have done something, and they need to go to the doctor, they need to get advice or to get tested. If they do not have that rapport with a parent, we should not cut off the medical system from them. They are the ones that need to get medical attention, counselling and testing. We should not cut them off from those services because they are 16, and because they do not have a parent who could come with them.

Sir, in lowering the age of medical consent from 18 to 16, we are saying that these young people have another source to which they could come for information, for advice, for counselling and, yes, for testing.

Mr. Speaker, when those same girls get pregnant at 16, they are mandated to go to the doctor to take care of their antenatal needs. Other than that, we are saying to

these young people that they cannot come to the doctor without a parent.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the problem of HIV, the time has come for us to be able to empower our young people to get information. It is not about promoting promiscuity. It not about saying to young people to go and do whatever you want because you could go to the doctor any time. This is not about giving them that leeway. It is about allowing them to be able to access information, hopefully, before they get involved.

Mr. Speaker, the National HIVAIDS Commission will continue to provide training to nurses, doctors, coaches, pastors and members of sporting organisations to enable them to give the right advice to those young people when they come forward for help.

Mr. Speaker, a lot has been done so far, but Government now needs to be able to put the legislation in place and set the culture so that we can move forward. Right now, we are not moving forward as fast as we should. It is time to help us to move forward. That is what this Government is about. That is what we are discussing today.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about the cost of HIVAIDS in dollars and cents. Sir, there are other social implications. We, as a Government, are concerned about HIVAIDS. I talked about the burden of care that often rests on mothers, wives and girlfriends. Mr. Speaker, when somebody is ill, it is often the women in the family who take on that care-giving role. This is another burden to them. They would take it stoically. They may not complain, but it is a burden to them.

Mr. Speaker, HIVAIDS has the potential to create a large population of orphans in this country. When I was in Africa, I was introduced to children in homes who told me their story. As they put it, they were orphaned four and five times. Mr. Speaker, in my ignorance I asked them how could they be orphaned four and five times.

House A10 Sequence 5

10.50 a.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Speaker, because of HIV/AIDS, I have seen young children who have lost both parents, having to move in with grandparents, both of whom later died from HIV/AIDS. They moved in with an uncle who later died from HIV/AIDS; they further moved in with an aunt who later died from HIV/AIDS. Sir, with nowhere else to go, these children then end up at the orphanage.

Sir, while I am on the subject of the orphanage, I am looking at the care-givers there. Sir, it was very clear to me that the care-givers there had HIV/AIDS as well. Sir, that is where this disease can take us, if we do not become serious and step up and put all of our efforts into fighting this disease. It calls for a massive response from Government. It calls for a national response. It calls for a response from every sector in Government and in society.

Sir, I am leading the fight in the eradication of HIV/AIDS, through the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment, but every Minister here is responsible for some area, or people under his or her charge, and therefore, all have to be part of this. We all have to take hold of this. We all have to beat this problem.

Mr. Speaker, there is a loss of earning capacity to those folk who are living with HIV/AIDS, some of them, because of the disease itself, some because of discrimination, where nobody wants them to work, not even as a gardener. We have to educate people that having a gardener or someone who washes their car, who suffers from HIV/AIDS is not going to affect them, nor is it going to put them at risk of contracting the disease. We have to remove that thinking from people so that persons living with HIV/AIDS could maintain an earning capacity and a quality of life, and that their families too could maintain a quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados National HIV Policy, AA Framework for Action, speaks to how we can approach this fight. It speaks to what can be done across society. It is a benchmark within Government Ministries, civil society and the private sector. It speaks to the topics such as legislative framework, culture and faith-based organisations. It speaks to the responses from education, health, labour, the workplace, men, youth, women, housing, tourism, national security and social services. Sir, this Barbados National HIV Policy is a comprehensive document.

Mr. Speaker, because the disease is one that is evolving, our response and our policy will also evolve. It will adapt. That is why it will be reviewed periodically. That is why our Strategic Plan for Prevention and Control is only for the years 2008-2013, because it will have to be reviewed. We know this is a dynamic situation with which we are dealing, and that it is subject to change. Sir, even the cultural forces that cause the spread of the disease change, and therefore, our response to that will have to change.

Mr. Speaker, at the National HIV/AIDS Commission, they are monitoring the situation and are keeping abreast of what is going on, and we have to help them to be able to formulate the appropriate response, once they determine what is going on.

Mr. Speaker, the emphasis on this Barbados National HIV Policy is on communication and advocacy for behavioral change. Sir, up to this point we have dealt a lot with information and education. We have been talking to people about the disease, about their behavior, the risk, about contracting the disease and about safety. Sir, I would hazard a guess that almost everybody in Barbados might have some information about HIV/AIDS because we have been doing that level of information and education. You would have seen posters, banners and advertisements, with many of them being controversial, but controversy is what has got people's attention. Sir, you would have seen these things, all in an attempt to inform and to educate the public.

Mr. Speaker, we have to take it a step further. We have to look at behavioral change. Sir, not only do we have to tell people about their behavior, we have to be able to influence changing their behavior. Sir, I am a parent and I know there are things I could talk about from now until I am blue in the face, I know my children would not change some of their behavior. Sir, it takes more than just talking. It might take some other applications but there are other ways you have to find to be able to influence people's behavior to change.

Sir, influencing people's behavior to change is not as easy as talking to them. It is very easy to talk, to give a public lecture, to get young people to sit and talk to them but, at the end of the day, what are they taking away? They still go out there feeling that they could conquer the world, and that nothing would affect them. Therefore, they still take risks.

Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as a doctor, I still see too many people who tell me they are still having sex most times using condoms. There are others who tell me that perhaps occasionally, they did not use condoms because on that occasion, they felt they were invincible to contracting the disease. Sir, just that one time they felt that nothing could happen to them, that they had something to prove but that once might be all it took for them to become infected.

Sir, for young girls, we see too often that one time was all it took for them to become pregnant. We see it time and time again, and maybe just that once is what it would take for them to contract HIV.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be able to change behavior and that is what the focus of the National HIV/AIDS Commission is concerned with in this particular period. It is concerned with influencing behavior change. If we do not do that, we would not have accomplished anything. We need to change people's behavior.

Mr. Speaker, this document also speaks to human rights. Barbados has signed on to many conventions in relation to human rights. We have to look at the rights of

children who live in families who suffer from HIV; children who live with the stigma of having a parent suffering from HIV; children who live in situations where they are abused and so they are exposed to HIV. As a Government, children have to be our primary concern because they cannot protect themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I think if nothing else justifies this \$180 million cost of this five-year Strategic Plan, is that of the children. Sir, maybe it is because I am a mother but it has to be the children because if nothing else, who have to protect our children.

Sir, at the present moment, we do not have cases in the under 15-age group. We refer to that 5-15 age group as the window of hope because they are the ones we need to get to. We know there are children between 10 and 12 years who are sexually involved, but we need to get to them. We need to change their behavior and to influence them from an early age. Sir, if we do nothing else, we need to protect those children.

Mr. Speaker, it is the intention of this Government to amend the existing legislation under the Sexual Offences Act, Cap. 154, in order to enhance the protection of children. We have to protect our children and our orphans. We cannot just talk about it. Sir, as I said, if this trend continues, we would see more and more orphans. Likewise, as we talk about helping children, we have to help parents. We are now reaching the end of Child Month and the Child Care Board has celebrated Child Month with a series of activities.

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Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: We are now reaching the end of child month and the Child Care Board celebrated child month with a series of activities and their theme was AChildren live what they learn, parents, play your part@. I think that is timely to introduce into this debate, children live what they learn, so when we are talking about teaching sexual practices to children, we need to talk to the parents, because there are many children in the society that will tell you the things they heard going on in the room next door when the parents thought they were asleep, when one man after another, after another came into the house and thought they were asleep.

Sir, there are children who sleep in the same bed with a parent and a visiting partner, but they thought they were asleep and they are exposed to that. We need to encourage parents. We need to tell parents that they are responsible, and we need to assist them in how they approach this aspect of parenting, and how they set an example for their children.

Mr. Speaker, children watch everything their parents do and you can talk as much as you want, they will turn around and do what they saw you do. You can never tell a child, do as I say and not as I do because that will not work with children. They will do just what it is they see you do.

Sir, it is the same argument we have to use with our youth. Right now the youth are our biggest focus in our fight and our response to HIV/AIDS. Again, as I have said, we have to convince them that they are not invincible. We have to put the focus on abstinence for them. This may be widely debated. There may be those who think that is just a religious view but, Sir, it is as we know, the one way that we can prevent our young people from getting HIV/AIDS -- abstinence, and so we have to continue to enforce that message.

Mr. Speaker, for those who have already been active, we have to convince them of waiting - secondary abstinence, I think, is what they call it now - waiting before they get involved. Sir, there is a lot of promiscuity among young people today and, as I have said, they live what they learn. It is among young people because they are learning it from their parents and older people.

There is a lot of promiscuity and it has come into their mindset and is becoming a way of life for them and they think nothing of it. When an eighteen-year-old could say to her doctor that she is practically a virgin, but that she has only had four partners, that tells you what is happening to some of our young people, when they think that relative to other people they are okay because at 18 they have only had four partners because they know some at 18 who have had 15 partners so they are okay if they have only had four partners.

We need to get into their minds. We need to change their mindsets and we need to help parents to be able to change their mindsets as well to what we are speaking to. Sir, this is what this is all about.

Mr. Speaker, the National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS and Control, 2008 to 2013, as I have said, we are discussing the Resolution for both of them because they are similar. The policy is a framework for action. This is our plan. It speaks to what some of our issues are. What we are going to be doing and it is a two-tiered approach. It speaks to the first two years as one tier, which really speaks to collecting data, assessing, see where we are and what we need to do. The second tier of that response is to implement actions based on the findings in the first two years. Sir, it will call for monitoring. It will call for evaluation, and it will call for adaptation of the plan. There has to be a lot of emphasis, as I have said, on monitoring on evaluation because we have to know if what we are doing is getting through. If we do not have a way of telling if it is getting

through, then we are wasting our time and our money. We have to be able to evaluate it. to assess what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, this document, the development goal, it speaks to is mitigation of the social and economic impact, some of which I have spoken to, and I know my colleagues will speak more to that later. The mitigation and social impact of HIV/AIDS on the population, to reduce new cases and ensuring the sustainable development of our nation. Sir, our sustainable development hinges on our human resource and we have to protect our human resource. In the Ministry of Youth, we say that national development cannot happen without youth development, and youth development cannot happen without national development, so even as we talk about sustainable development issues, we have to talk about protecting and preserving the lives and way of life for our children and our young people.

Mr. Speaker, we have to look at women. Again, this is another reason why it is fortuitous that the National HIV/AIDS Commission has joined the Bureau of Gender Affairs under the umbrella of the Ministry of Family because now we can work together. We can work in tandem as we deal with gender issues and as we look to empower women.

Sir, women are a vulnerable group when we look at the issue of HIV/AIDS when they are women who are single and unemployed, who may have children, who depend on somebody else to give them money, to give them a home, to buy a dress for them, to give them a hair style. When you depend on somebody like that, you have to do as they say and those women we need to empower because when you have to do as somebody says, you are not in control of yourself and you put yourself at risk.

Mr. Speaker, when women cannot tell a partner who they feel is unfaithful that he needs to wear a condom, that woman is putting her life at risk and, Sir, why does she do it? Because she does not have a choice, and we need to create choices for those women. We need to empower women like that and there are many of them in our society. Those are the women who also are not only at risk of HIV/AIDS but many of those women live below the poverty line out there, especially when they have courage to pull themselves out of relationships that are not beneficial to them. Sir, many of those women find themselves in relationships that are abusive, verbally, physically and sexually abusive relationships and they put up with it because they are dependent on that partner.

Mr. Speaker, it is the aim of the National HIV Commission, the Bureau of Gender Affairs, the Ministry of Family and this Government is committed to empowering women; to helping women find employment; to helping women stand on their own two feet so that they can stand

up when the time comes and say that enough is enough, that she is protecting herself and her children.

There are women in this country whose children are abused and they have to turn a blind eye to it because that is the source of their money, their food and their sustenance and so they allow that partner maybe to have their way with their children.

Sir, it is sad when you are in a situation like that. You want to get out. You want to move out, but you have nowhere to turn. You do not have a house. You may not have relatives. You do not have a job. You do not have a cent in the bank and you have to stay and put up with it. Sir, that is where we have to focus our fight.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Ministry, we in this Government are concerned about it. Sir, everybody in this House, I am sure, has been on the campaign trail and spoken to women. Everybody in this House, I am sure, sits in their constituency offices, I hope, and meet people who will tell you these stories. I am sure that everybody in here has met at least one woman who has told this story that she has nowhere to go, about being beaten, physically abused, sexually abused, children being abused and she has nowhere to go.

We cannot look to talk about sustainable development. We cannot look to talk about human resource development until we start to look at dealing with helping women who find themselves in that situation.

H/A10:11:10

Sequence 7

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Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Sir, in doing so we can help with the poverty situation. We can help with HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies and curtail cervical cancer, because many of these women go from partner to partner in search of somebody to help them. Sir, this is where I intend to put my effort. This is where the Ministry is going to be working with women. I believe that when you empower women, you empower families. I have said it in this Honourable House before, when you empower women, you empower families.

Sir, of course, we have to take the fight to other sectors of our society. We have to deal with sex workers as well. We have to go to sex workers and educate them, help to change behaviours. Just as we would with the youth and women, we need to change behaviours among sex workers, and to encourage them to be tested.

Sir, the same thing with homosexuals, as I said before, men who sleep with men. We need to encourage them to be tested, to attend counselling, to be educated on behaviours that are risky. Sir, there are men in homosexual relationships as well who need to be empowered to get out of relationships that they are not comfortable with.

The National Strategic Plan will focus in the second year on tourism workers. As I said, nobody in Barbados is exempt from this issue of HIV/AIDS. This is something that touches all of us. Even if you are in a monogamous relationship and you are careful, it still touches us. It still has an impact on our society, it can touch our children and it can touch our relatives. Everybody has to be involved.

We have to reach the tourism workers, workers at the hotels, tours and beach workers. We have to be able to educate them as well, to let them know of the risks. We have to go to the prison. We will not be issuing condoms in the prison, but we need to reach out to the prisoners, because we are aware that the potential for transmission of HIV in the prison is high. We have to encourage counseling, encourage prisoners to stand up and be counseled, encourage patients to go for treatment and care, encourage prisoners to be fearless to stand up and say, I was raped, this happened to me, knowing that their human rights will be protected in the prison; to know that as a raped victim in the prison they will have a recourse for action. That is what we have to do in our prison.

Sir, it makes sense to issue condoms in the prison, because the package reads that they are not safe for anal sex. That is to be the thrust of our action when dealing with the prisoners. We need to empower the prisoners to encourage them to attend counselling, testing, treating and harm reduction strategies. Sir, those are things we have to teach in the prison as well. Sir, we have to limit the mobility of the offenders. Those are measures that have to be put in place at the prison.

Sir, as we look at the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, we also have to look at the immigration issues, the migration issues, movement of labour, and how that impacts our challenges. We have to look at how we address that concern. We have to target non Barbadians. We have to allow non Barbadians to be able to come forward for testing as well as treatment. They must come for treatment, because it does not make sense protecting, treating and testing Barbadians when the non Barbadians who are living in our midst, not all of them legally, are taking risks and passing those risks on to Barbadians. We need to be able to speak to the non Barbadians. We need to be able to test and treat them. It has to be cross-cutting. It has to touch every sector of our society, Barbadian, non Barbadian, men, women, homosexual, heterosexual, young, old, rich, poor, religious, and those who do not have a clue about religion.

We have to be able to have a strategy in place for every sector of our society.

Sir, one thing we have learned in this fight is that the same approach we use in one sector, is not going to work in another. We have to be on our toes to adapt our response to the varying needs in the varying communities to which we go.

I want to publicly applaud the National HIV/AIDS Commission. They deserve our applause, because they have been able to assess and respond to the need quite appropriately. I am sure that with the support they have from this Government, the response would be stepped up, to further reduce the incidents of HIV/AIDS.

Sir, we need to get into the rum shops and on the corners and "blocks" with the guys and girls who are using drugs. We need to get to them. Sir, not only the "blocks", but wherever they are using drugs, in the fetes or wherever they are using drugs, we need to get to them. All of those behaviours are associated with high risks.

Sir, I talked about the older people. We need to get to them. Members of the security forces need to be a part of this approach as well as persons whose employment would put them in constant contact with people, for example, those persons who work in the Sanitation Service and the Transport Board, those who are always out there. You need to get to them for counselling, testing, education, informing and changing their behaviours.

Sir, we have people in our society, for example, who may work with places like the Barbados Water Authority. They are working in one village this week, and they have an encounter or two in that village. The next week they move on to another village, working there, have an encounter or two with other women in that area, and they go on and on. Sir, some of them yield children which means, as we know, that they were not protected either. Those are people we need to get to, to tell them about that behaviour that is risky. They probably do not think about it as risky. It is something that has been done for generations.

Sir, those guys who fix roads and water pipes, move from area to area and befriend somebody in the community - Sir, I am told that bus drivers may do it. We need to get to them. We need to get to the operators and workers on the Public Service Vehicles, the minibuses. We have to penetrate the minibus culture if we are to deal with the sexual practices in our young people.

Sir, our response has to be broad based. It has to be far-reaching. We have no room for stigma. We have no room for even sitting down to say what the last Administration did not do. We have to get beyond that. The fact of the matter is, whatever the last Administration did

or did not do is not relevant right now, because the disease is evolving. It is changing. It is dynamic and we have to have a new approach.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Of course we will remind them. I know that my colleagues will spend the rest of the day reminding them of their shortcomings. I know that. I can rely on you to do that. Even now they are preparing and they are making notes. I know that they will do that.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: We need to focus on what has to be done. At the end of the day it is our people, as a small island developing with issues of economic challenges, with issues of climate change and all of the other issues we are dealing with, our focus has to be on our people.

Sir, as I said at the beginning, Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, in April 1994, said at the first global conference on sustainable development, our focus ...

11.20 a.m.

Sequence 8

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House A10, Sequence 09, 11.20 a.m.

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: As I said at the beginning, Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford said that in 1894 to the first Global Conference on Sustainable Development that our focus will be our people. We have said it in our Manifesto that our focus will be our people. It continues to be on our people and we cannot talk about human development, unless we also look at stemming the tide of HIV/AIDS in this country.

We have to look at the Government's response. We have to partner with the Civil Service and the private sector. We have to encourage partnerships with them. We have to encourage employers in the private sector to be able to create an environment for voluntary testing and counselling in the workplace.

As I mentioned, we need to put anti discrimination in place to protect the rights of children. We talked about the need for young people to be able to access medical attention at the age of 16. We also have to deal with those persons who deliberately transmit the HIV/AIDS infection.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: There are those reckless people who know that they have it. They are some who would tell you: "Somebody gave this to me, so I am going to give it to somebody else." They go and do that deliberately. As you know, you cannot tell by looking. Now, with the anti-retroviral therapy, there are people out there with HIV/AIDS who look just as good as you or me, or better.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: I know you do not believe that, but there are those who look just as good as we do.

In fact, there may be some in here, but ours is not to discriminate. Ours is not to point fingers. Ours is, as I said, to create an environment so that persons living with HIV/AIDS can function at any level of our society, including this House of Parliament. That is where our society needs to advance to.

As I said, the Ministry of Health has taken up the challenge, and will continue to take up the challenge of providing treatment, testing and counseling, education, through our schools - We have to take this to our schools. We have to continue, rather to take it into school, and providing welfare and social services, especially for those families that live with HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, I hope it has been clear that this Government understands the challenges of HIV/AIDS and the response to HIV/AIDS. We are committed to that response. We are committed to being guided by those persons with the technical expertise at the National HIV/AIDS Commission. Sir, as I said, we are committed to the well- being and the development of our people.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that these two Resolutions on the Barbados National HIV/AIDS Policy and the National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control 2008-2013 do now pass.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second that Resolution and reserve my right to speak.

Asides.

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

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add my support to these two Resolutions and to ask your kind permission at some point, to allow me to make mention of persons by their names, if

that could be accommodated. I would not like, Sir, to break any rule at all. It would be in their official capacity with the Commission.

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: They would be very positive comments, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, would the details be provided before hand?

Miss C.Y. FORDE: No, Sir, if that is the case, I would just mention them in their professional positions, rather than names, if you would so allow me.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: I want at the outset to express our support - the Barbados Labour Party support and my support - for these two Resolutions that are before us today, the National Strategic Plan for HIV Prevention and Control 2008-2013 and the Barbados National HIV Policy - A Framework for Action.

Mr. Speaker, the BLP has set up numerous initiatives in the past, recognising the devastation that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has taken on our people. Therefore, I felt a little saddened when the Honourable Member for St. George South said in her opening remarks that never before has the HIV/AIDS Programme received such attention. I think it was really very unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party ensured that a policy was put in place for quite a few years now. I would like to think about 10 years, so that we can tackle the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Sir, a number of other initiatives have taken place, and I would like to mention a few. I believe that the political leadership and indeed leadership overall should be incorporated into a process of this nature, because we want to attract the national attention.

I believe that when the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter as Prime Minister, sought to place the HIV/AIDS Commission under his portfolio, it showed the political will and commitment to ensure that the HIV/AIDS in this country would be given top priority.

Sir, research has also shown that successful HIV/AIDS= programmes, all over the world, are those with the political leadership and the commitment that has engaged those institutions, in other words, Sir, leading from in front.

Mr. Speaker, in 2001, the Barbados Labour Party negotiated a loan of US\$15.5 million through the World Bank, to assist with the establishment and, of course, the

programmes that the HIV/AIDS Commission would pursue. Sir, that laid the framework for the success which this Government and this country have received as a result.

In the late 1980s, under the Honourable Member for St. James South, who was then the Minister of Health, the AZT Programme was introduced for pregnant mothers to be screened. Therefore, once they fitted the profile, those individuals were offered the medication or the cocktails for free, and so that helped to stymie that process. In other words, the Ministry coordinated and introduced an anti-retroviral therapy to the HIV/AIDS positive mothers. The result is here for all of us today to learn that in the past three years, only one positive child has been born to an HIV/AIDS mother.

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Therefore, I think it is a tremendous achievement for me, when we knew that so many young pregnant mothers who would have contracted the disease were passing it on to their offspring through the breast milk and sometimes at birth. Therefore, the then Government, of which I was a part, played an extremely important role in helping to eliminate the scourge of HIV/AIDS among our young children.

House A10, Sequence 09, 11:30:14

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Miss C. Y. FORDE: Sir, I want to know what is the new Government=s commitment to the provision of anti-retroviral therapy free of cost to all Barbadians who meet the criteria, because I have not been able to pick that up when the Honourable Member for St. George South, as Minister of Family, made her presentation.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to look at not only the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party for everybody else, but indeed, the one for the Youth. The Manifesto for the Youth uses the same statements as it relates to HIVAIDS, as does the one for the rest of Barbados. In essence, it is three sentences.

At page 12 of the Manifesto for the Youth, it says that research has shown that lifestyle diseases such as HIVAIDS and chronic non-communicable diseases are a major cause of death among young men and women in Barbados. They have the capacity to wipe out all the gains made since Independence. I believe that they refer to both the HIVAIDS and non-communicable diseases. Sir, the other document says the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, it does not give me any assurance that this Government really wants to seriously look at or pay any attention to HIVAIDS especially now that the

department has been moved, I called it demoted, from the Prime Minister's Office, where it attracted the national attention that was necessary, to the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment.

Mr. Speaker, I know that thousands of Barbadians are listening to us today and I want to remind Honourable Members, as well as the public, that AIDS cuts across the political divide. It knows no colour, class, creed or age. AIDS is a devastating disease, as we know, and as the Honourable Minister expressed earlier and, therefore, every Barbadian must take a stake in this particular situation and help with the promotion of the education and, of course, the prevention aspects of this HIVAIDS project to make sure that our people receive the best education.

Sir, I want every Member of Parliament, every Senator, every leader and every community group to be intimately involved in this exercise to ensure that all Barbadians receive the information and are therefore able to better protect themselves, their families, their neighbours and their friends in our fight to eliminate this scourge in our country.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party as a government, ensured that housing was made available to those persons who are living with HIVAIDS. Indeed, the Rural Development Commission, the Urban Development Commission and the Poverty Alleviation Bureau ensured that those persons in the communities received the shelter that was necessary.

Sir, you would appreciate the treatment that is meted out to those persons. We heard of the stigma and the discrimination. These are very true statements. Persons have been put out of their homes because families believe that they could get HIVAIDS by just looking at the person and so on. Therefore, the Government made a commitment, through those Commissions, to provide housing for persons living with HIVAIDS, especially women and children. I think that was another profound statement made by the then Barbados Labour Party Government to ensure that people at all levels receive the necessary attention.

Mr. Speaker, I can also make mention of another achievement, the Elroy Philip Centre. I would want the Honourable Minister to give word, if that is at all possible today, or whenever this debate continues, as to the status of the relocation of the Elroy Philip Centre. Sir, we know that property has been given over to the University of the West Indies. When we left office, there was a facility earmarked and I believe that work had started. Mr. Speaker, it is critical that persons living with HIVAIDS find a place of shelter or some location where there can be a communal approach that they can win friendships, counsel one another and share their experiences and so on.

Mr. Speaker, in all of the Ministries, the then Administration of the Barbados Labour Party ensured that a component of HIVAIDS education and training was incorporated in the Estimates. I know that had a powerful impact over the last five years in helping to sensitise individuals and in helping people to change their mindset.

Indeed, I can show you the document, "The Code of Practice on HIVAIDS and Other Life Threatening Illnesses in the Workplace" that has been approved by the Social Partners. This document came out of the special programmes that were being offered in the various Ministries to ensure that members of staff from the top to the bottom would have been familiar with the practices that should be put in place not only in the workplace, but indeed in their homes, in their villages and wherever they were able to perform duties.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is an excellent document. I can make it a document of the House. I can try to source another one. This document speaks of the kind of quality work that was put in place over the last 10 years to bring all Barbadians on board.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make mention of the Food Bank at the Personal Development Centre. I know that the Planning and Priorities Department has had discussions and that plans were afoot to be able to establish that facility. I think that too is critical because it helps to embrace the non-governmental organisations and helps to ensure that food and care is also given or made available to those persons living with HIVAIDS.

Mr. Speaker, I want all Members of Parliament today to take cognisance of the fact that we, the leaders, must play integral roles in our constituencies. I am not pointing any finger at anybody. I speak from a background of being involved in the community and ensuring that programmes were put in place through seminars, discussions, demonstrations, et cetera, because I believe that the people of St. Thomas matter.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that all Honourable Members in here have a keen interest in their constituents. However, I know that there are some "fly by night" ones, because I have never heard about some of them before, who would jump up and respond. I have never heard that they put a nail anywhere, or that they moved a piece of chewing gum off of a chair.

Sir, I hope that this discussion here today leads Honourable Members to understand that they too have to be intimately involved in order to be able to let their constituents know that they care about them and that is the reason they are rubbing shoulders with them and helping to empower them through education and all other aspects that are necessary for our people to be sensitised.

Mr. Speaker, the World AIDS Campaign has used the theme “Keep the Promise” for the past two years. I think that to keep the promise would be with reference to the number of things that we would commit ourselves to, for young people to be determining that they would abstain from having sexual activities while they are young. We would make sure that there is proper counselling. We would scrutinise our partners; and we would go and be tested, and things of that nature. I think that is a profound theme to have been used for World AIDS Day.

Mr. Speaker, from December 2007 to December 2008, there is a sub theme coming out of that, which says “Take the Lead”. Sir, we are taking the lead here today in discussing or debating these two specific and strategic pieces of legislation because we know that the human development of Barbados is extremely critical. We know we have limited natural resources, therefore we have to spend a lot, or pay a lot of attention to our human resource development.

Mr. Speaker, we know that when people are living with HIV/AIDS, they are going to become weaker if they are not having the necessary medication. Some of them would go to the workplace and because of the insults, the criticisms and being cast aside, they would not be productive. Therefore, I think that it is pertinent that we take the lead in embracing all of what is being offered here today to ensure that our people get the best benefits from whatever we do.

They are the taxpayers. We use their funds to repay the loans, to repair the roads and so on, therefore I believe that emphasis should be so placed on a project of this nature because it is all-embracing to all individuals in this country.

House A10 Sequence 10

11.40 a.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, are we as leaders in the decision-making process prepared to commit ourselves to do all in our power to mitigate the impact and to ensure a brighter and healthier future for the children and grandchildren who we will have, and for the people of Barbados?

Mr. Speaker, I now look at the policy document. I want to publicly express congratulations to the National HIV/AIDS Commission on the publication of these documents. Sir, I know these documents were being formulated before there was a change in Government, but I want to give credit to the Honourable Minister for having brought it here, because it is another phase of what the

Barbados Labour Party would have been doing, if we were the Government.

Sir, I want to laud this Government for bringing this Bill here today. Sir, some people would have thrown it in the backyard and never looked back at it but, I believe, if we are talking about people and families and about empowering them, this is the correct way to go.

Mr. Speaker, I also noted that the document provide policy directives in the key sectors, to expand and implement activities geared towards the accomplishment of the vision of the National HIV/AIDS Programme. I want also to encourage all Barbadians to come on board and to assist the people of Barbados, and this Government in helping to eradicate this scourge, which we know, since 1984, has taken a toll on us.

It has caused doctors who were only looking at other aspects of the disease to become aware that they too have to be trained and retrained, in order to be able to meet the needs of those persons who come into their offices or those persons with whom they work. It has caused the Government to step back and take a good picture at where we would be going if we do not implement programmes and policies that would help to stymie this process.

Sir, we are all in this together. As I said, the Social Partnership have come on board because they recognised what could happen in the workplace. In the schools, the Barbados Union of Teachers has also made important strides in putting together a policy, so that teachers and other care-givers within our schools and institutions will have a document to follow. Sir, teachers, especially females, have such a love for children, for example, when a child falls, that teacher would take a piece of tissue and wipe that cut, while forgetting that HIV/AIDS might be the challenge there. We know the screening of blood has been taking place for many years, as a result of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that the Commission has been established, funding has been secured and that it has come to fruition, but I want to say that initiative in itself was so profound that in our fight against this scourge, we have been able to surpass some of those developing countries like the United States of America and others. Sir, I think that the Commission under the leadership of the Chairman, who has been there for several years, must be highly commended.

The Director of the Commission has also done excellent work, and I know of her performance as an outstanding officer in the Ministry of Education. Therefore, I also want to laud the efforts of the non-governmental organisations and the private sector for coming on board and offering sponsorships, or helping to engage persons living with HIV/AIDS for employment, or making sure

those persons could receive a stipend to help support them, especially if those affected persons were once their employees. Mr. Speaker, in essence, all Barbadians must be commended for the effort.

Mr. Speaker, later on I will make mention of some of those agencies that have been out there in the trenches, that are the eyes and ears on this country. These agencies have been making a difference in sensitising the public about HIV/AIDS and the policy now before us, to be able to help those persons to become wiser in what they do. Sir, this Barbados model has been most successful, but I do not think we should sit on our laurels. We must go the next step to be able to eliminate that scourge altogether.

Mr. Speaker, I want to publicly commend the Honourable Member for St. Peter. Sir, the public of Barbados would not have known that whenever there was a raise in salary for Members of Parliament, the Honourable Member for St. Peter would donate that money to the HIV/AIDS Commission. Sir, we know that funding is necessary, if we are to reach that measure of success. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter donated that money quietly, and I do not believe the Honourable Member would want me to make mention of that but, I believe, when people do good, we should make mention of it.

Sir, we have heard so many negative things about the Honourable Member, that one kudo is necessary because that is what an honourable gentleman or lady would do. Sir, any honourable gentleman would offer that salary increase to the Commission to make sure that Commission could go forward and reach the targets set.

Mr. Speaker, I note the sidelining of this new Government, where the Honourable Member for St. John, as Prime Minister, does not seem to recognise the importance of the HIV/AIDS Commission, when it was under the portfolio of the former Prime Minister, hence the transfer of that Commission. Sir, that hurts me deeply.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Honourable Member for St. George South will do a good job, but I think that national priority is significant.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Sir, I am not going to be quibbling over it, but for it to be able to achieve the goals that have been set, I believe it should have remained there. Mr. Speaker, we will wait. We will give our support to the Honourable Minister, but we will be keeping them on their toes. We believe that what was being offered to that department should be strengthened, rather than slackened, because the funding is going to be extremely necessary if we are to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on the issue of stigma and discrimination. Of course, the cross-cutting themes of this document deal with the stigma and discrimination which will cause and are causing populations at risk of contracting this disease to be going underground. Sir, we are all here and we know and see these things. I talked about the treatment of families who get evicted I made mention of children at school, but for a child to be insulted and sidelined every day by teachers, friends, persons in their neighbourhood, I think that is a part of Barbadian culture that needs to be addressed.

We know that all over the world there are persons living with HIV/AIDS. These people who go on television, they attend seminars, and they talk to their audiences about HIV/AIDS, without anybody jeering or pointing at them. Sir, I do not understand why people in my culture would want to point others out, or would want to say awful things about others.

Mr. Speaker, when anybody interferes with me, I will talk, but I am not going to be walking around highlighting other people's challenges because some times those people need more help than we would ever know. Therefore, I have a problem when children in schools are sidelined and ostracised. I have a challenge in the workplace when people are sidelined and ostracised. Sir, this puts people in a stage where they could die from heart attacks or from the loneliness that would overtake them as a result.

Mr. Speaker, I want this Government to commit itself to introducing specific legislation which will foster a rights-base environment. If the programme of the National HIV/AIDS Commission is to be successful, it is pertinent that the rights of all individuals, regardless of their HIV status, must be upheld.

11.50 a.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I show the Code of Practice for the Social Partnership and I want to refer to Article 25 of the Declaration of Human Rights. I believe this might already be a document of the House, but I have no problem in laying it. Sir, in Article 25 it says:

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family including food, clothing, housing and medical care and the necessary social service, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control".

Mr. Speaker, I believe that these two Resolutions, once the rights of individuals are included will be able to continue to benefit from this activity that we are discussing here today.

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

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Sir, I thought I had the same time that the Honourable Member for St. George South would have had, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am sorry. It was not made clear that you were speaking on behalf of the Opposition.

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party Government has pledged to intensify prevention efforts, and this is laudable, but is it prepared to do what is necessary in terms of creating and enabling environment under which prevention programmes can achieve some measure of success?

Sir, when will the Minister of Family then meet with the Attorney General to prepare for the introduction of an omnibus anti-discrimination legislation, which was recommended by the Waldron Report? Sir, I believe the Waldron Report is already a document of this Honourable Chamber. I think that is extremely important.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister mentioned legislation and I believe efforts would be put in place because I think that legislation is critical and is not just limited to HIV/AIDS as one may think.

Mr. Speaker, access to adequate shelter is another aspect of it and I have spoken about it before. Sir, I know that with all the talk about 500 houses in 500 days, I want to ask the question. Can Government tell me how many houses it has built or allocated to persons living with HIV/AIDS between January this year and today, May 27? Are the persons living with HIV/AIDS, which I just mentioned, included in the figure which has been bandied about, or does this segment of the society not count for the Dems? I want for the rights of these people to be respected at all times. They may be ill, but they have dignity. They have the right to vote and they must not be discriminated against. I know, as I have said earlier, the women, children and aged are the most vulnerable in this whole exercise.

Mr. Speaker, in the National Strategic Plan I want to highly commend the Commission for its vision in linking the goals of the National Strategic Plan to Goal 3 of the Barbados Strategic Plan, which places people at the centre of development. This recognition means that HIV/AIDS is no longer seen primarily as a health concern but is being viewed as a development issue. Sir, I want to make some

other queries but the information I have - I would want to skip that one question because I would be generally asking of the Member for St. John again and he is not here. He put forward his proposal and ran because he cannot face the music. I will not deal with that right now.

Mr. Speaker, in the National Strategic Plan, it stated that not enough evidence is being collected on the impact of the programme. This document outlines how the National AIDS Programme will attempt to gather the evidence that is necessary to formulate programmes and policies adopting a two-tier approach. The question is: Is this Government committed and prepared to provide the necessary resources - the human, technical and financial resources - that are integral to putting in place a strategic information management system? Both the National Strategic Plan and the policy documents highlight the shift towards behaviour, change and communications as the new wave.

Sir, at the Barbados Community College, the programmes are extremely costly and the impact takes several years to be manifested. In addition, Sir, the behaviour change communications programmes are interventions targeting the most at risk population such as sex workers, homosexuals, prisoners and the youth. Sir, I have added on rape victims and victims of incest because Barbadians seem to want to sweep rape and incest under the carpet. Sir, incest in particular because many of our young children are exposed to awful experiences as children because adults, who they have put their trust in, have invaded their bodies in all forms and, therefore, I have added that to the whole exercise.

Mr. Speaker, persons working in the National AIDS Programme are criticised daily for attempting to work with sex workers, homosexuals and others who constitute the marginalised population. Sir, we know that every citizen, despite the sexual orientation, the age, the status, the colour or the creed must be treated again, I emphasise, with human dignity. All efforts must be instituted to work with them and all others through interventions like educational programmes, offering of materials, housing, equipment, food and health care, which would include the cocktails necessary for extension of their lives and helping them to enjoy a better quality life.

Is this Government prepared to provide the large quantum of funds that would be necessary over the next five years to mount effective behavior, change, communications and intervention? If the answer is "yes" from the Honourable Minister and her team, then I want to know why the position of behavior change communications specialist, a position that I am aware of, in the AID Commission, has not yet been filled?

Sir, in order for us to achieve those goals and what is expressed in these two distinguished documents, that position of communications specialist in the Commission should be filled as a matter of urgency, because people are getting sent home, so somebody should be put in place to be able to carry this programme forward. Sir, that is the only way it will be successful. Mr. Speaker, I mentioned people being sent home because my people in St. Thomas have been targeted, but that is another discussion, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the staff again of the Commission for the sterling performance over the years. I want particularly to make mention of some of the slogans that they have used. Sometimes we read articles in the print media, sometimes we hear people on the electronic media making harsh criticisms and insulting the members of staff and the other organisations that are in the vanguard helping to eliminate the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

H/A10/12:00

Sequence 12:00 noon

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Therefore, with your permission, I want to laud them again for slogans such as "You cannot tell by looking". Sir, when you look at the back of the document presented to us, you can see a whole set of faces that are of different ethnic groups. Therefore, that slogan is profound. You cannot tell by looking. Sir, there are badges offered for their programmes that say, "Stay Safe, Love Life". It takes a lot out of individuals to put on that badge and walk boldly with it. Sir, I have not removed this pin from this suit for many years. I have had it for a long time. The pins also say that you are supportive...

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: I would not go to Miami. I am not going to join the rest in Miami to buy a \$3 000 suit, who look like they are wearing a bullet proof vest. I am not going to deal with that. I am a very humble rural woman, who understands that I have to work for myself. Sir, if I were not a strong personality, perhaps I would be vulnerable like some of the persons the Honourable Member for St. George South mentioned earlier. I would have to succumb to some of the nonsense that some men bring to women. Therefore, I am not even going to mind the aside. The Honourable Member needs to worry about telling the man, that he cannot read and write, if not he would be able to read the document. Do not worry with me.

Sir, I want to show - and if you want me to make this a document of the House I will. "I choose to wait. I am worth it".

Mr. Speaker, in 2007 for the World Cup, "Its your wicket, protect it" - Some of the Honourable Members were in their law offices. They do not know anything about this.

Sir, the bandannas - I can only show you these because I have been an integral part of my community. The community programmes that I have assisted in spearheading, these are some of the tokens you could use to share with the young people, the aged and others in the various communities in which we live.

Aside

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Sir, I do not mind the Honourable Member talking. That does not bother me. I will meet them one on one when I have to.

Sir, "Protect, Love, Respect", the young people=s slogan, that we see on television every day, and the list goes on. I believe that this is a visual way of reminding persons that AIDS is out there. It does not care who you are. It will impact on you the same way that mental illness will, the same way that diabetes will, and all the diseases that impact on human beings.

Sir, the "Speak Sister Programme" was a highly successful programme, and I saw for the first time in my life a female condom. I believe that females are using them, because they have to protect themselves against all of the sexually transmitted diseases that would affect their future and their families.

Sir, despite our achievements over the years, there is still much work to be done. I want the HIV/AIDS Commission, NGOs, private sector and all other agencies to continue to give support to these policies and initiatives because, at the end of the day, each one matters, every individual in Barbados matters.

Sir, the Youth Affairs Department has, over the years, ensured that components of HIV/AIDS education have been included in all programmes for the youth, whether they were structured or unstructured youth. In 2006/2007, six thousand AIDS community projects were executed. They did murals, were involved in cultural activities, drama, workshops and seminars. I think that is another important way of spreading the message through young people.

Sir, the Youth Affairs Department has made a tremendous change in the lives of Barbadians, especially the youth, over the last 12 years. I want to commend the former Director, who is now working with the HIV/AIDS Programme, and all others who see it as their role to engage and support these various policies.

Mr. Speaker, over 1 000 young persons volunteered and participated in HIV/AIDS sensitisation programmes in their various communities. The Youth Service has also incorporated many aspects of the training in its daily programmes. Sir, Project Oasis, under the Tent Programme, has also incorporated the HIV/AIDS training. Also included in the Drug Awareness Programme. When we talk about drugs and the impact that scourge has, to my mind, they are all interwoven. If you are addicted to drugs and must get money, you therefore become engaged in unprotected sex, which helps to add to the threat of contracting HIV/AIDS.

Sir, I want to mention the AIDS Education Educator, a youth commissioner, who has been not only educating Barbadians in sensitising and demonstrating to them what their roles are, in helping to protect themselves and their families, but he is now being recommended in the Caribbean. I can say that I had the privilege of witnessing him perform some time late last year, and I think that he is one of the best AIDS educators in the world, a youth commissioner who has now been assigned the duties of the AIDS Educator Coordinator.

He was in St. Vincent last week. Sir, unfortunately, week before last he had a serious murder in his family and, therefore, he is a little unstable today, but our hearts go out to him. He has also had other tragedies over the last month or so. He is the best and I really want to highly commend him without calling his name, because I did not alert you earlier. I also want to commend the private institutions that donate funds and other resources to keep the programmes going.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to refer to the Millennium Goals. Sir, Goal VI speaks of HIV/AIDS: "HIV/AIDS is a gender issue, not only that women and girls are disproportionately affected in some age cohorts and as caregivers, but more important, gender equality, power relations and gender roles stereotyping have implications for both women and men in the context of vulnerability to HIV. Economic factors are also of major importance in explaining the spread of the disease. Where economic need is high, young women are often at a very high risk of going into sex work, the drug trade, and engaging in transactional sex for family survival, all impacting on HIV/AIDS. The combination of poverty, gender and age explain why the age group most vulnerable, and the one in which the disease is spreading most rapidly, is girls 15 years old. Finally, there are also gender issues for people living with HIV/AIDS. Women as traditional care givers face particular risks in caring for people with HIV/AIDS. At the same time, women with the disease are unable to care for themselves or their families, and the whole family, especially young children, suffer as a consequence."

Mr. Speaker, I want to place a little emphasis on the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Honourable Member for St. George South mentioned our brothers and sisters in Sub-Saharan Africa who are less fortunate than us in Barbados, because their Government did not come on board as quickly as they should have, therefore, a large percentage, especially of

the academic population has passed on, teachers, principals and Head Civil Servants. Of course, we know of the polygamous way in which some of those countries operate. I believe that the spread of the disease would have been more rapid in that respect. This disease has taken toll on the populations, and has decimated them in a phenomenal way. Sir, millions of orphans have been left behind, to fend for themselves and to be at the mercy of agencies and younger brothers and sisters.

Sir, I am saddened at the mindset and the poor attitudes of some Barbadians towards the disease.

12.10 p.m.

Sequence 13

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House A10, Sequence 14, 12.10 p.m.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: I see it every day. While cautioning, and talking to some of the individuals both young and old, they inform you that a dog cannot give you because a dog does not have sex, and only a man can give you, or a woman can give you. I do not know, and I am not going to try but I believe it is a poor response and an illiterate response to this whole serious and dreaded disease.

Others give that callous approach that you have to die by something at some time, so why not enjoy the sex now and whatever. But after the enjoyment of the sex comes the suffering and the debilitating experience that will destroy one's psyche and one's body.

Many of them whom we consider to be middle-classed, as well as the ordinary working class, live double and triple lives. They are batting left and bowling right. We have too many of them living in the closets in Barbados, too many closet people. Sometimes I ponder on the actions of my people who behave as though sex has gone out of style, if they do not spread their organs here, there and everywhere. I believe that the days are over for the "Village Ram".

Once upon a time when men contracted certain diseases, they could go to the doctor and get fixed up, penicillin or whatever. Now, that cannot happen.

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: I am not calling any doctor=s names. The Speaker has cautioned me and I would not know of that, Sir, because I am not of the other sex. Therefore, I believe that more of our people should take cognizance of their roles in being responsible and setting the example for others to follow.

I speak from a background of knowledge. I have lost quite a few of my former students and they were some of the brightest and most productive individuals who sometimes because of a one night stand or because of going into Church and an individual sees you, they get into courtship and just by that one mistake, their life goes downhill.

It is painful to comprehend when one reflects on the millions of dollars as well that are invested in our people, only to lose them through one silly act or a series of acts that will destroy them for life.

The Honourable Member earlier spoke of teenage pregnancies. It is a pity that the Honourable Member did not turn up at the Edna Nicholls Centre last month, because those young women down there would have been glad to rub shoulders with a lot of people who are in positions to give them hope, because a teenage pregnancy sometimes puts young women in a better position to understand that it is hardship at a tender age, some at 12, 13 and 14 years.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that those men who impregnate those young women should be at Dodds, but mothers sometimes and fathers too, shut it down when the investigation has to take place. Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is statutory rape. I believe that more has to be done in the education of those young children, not only the girls, but the boys are vulnerable too. A lot of attractions in modelling and so on have a lot of our young boys following the wrong route for their sexuality.

I believe that more has to be done in homes, from parents and by godparents, neighbours, guidance counsellors and teachers. There are some excellent guidance counsellors and teachers in the system, both at the private and public institutions. I believe that we have to really take this disease more seriously to be able to protect our youths, who are our future, against these serious perpetrators.

I have seen some DVDs within the last four or five years, where some of our young Barbadian males and females are seen in the most vulgar of positions and performances on the Internet. I feel that those perpetrators should be locked up, who go and take photographs of young children and make a business out of it, Sir.

Therefore, all of us have to be in this together, because we would not like our young children to be engaged in such negative activities that will stymie their process of living and enjoying a good Barbadian life, that we all have had, without those kinds of negatives.

I admonish parents to be more vigilant where their children are concerned. Similarly, some adults have a taboo that if you have a virgin that you cannot get the disease, when we know that children are born with it. It is so wrong.

I have a problem as well with those who believe that it is better to do it from the back than from the front. Sir, the sensitisation and the work that has been going on in the Commission, is helping to eliminate some of that.

Mr. Speaker, the recent information as is mentioned in the documents, also indicates how our older persons are now being struck down as a result of that dreaded disease. I am conscious that money, drugs, jewelry, among many other material gains, seem to create that avarice for sex, thus eliminating the common judgment and the commonsense that should be adhered to, as well as the good moral standards that we know have helped to propel us to this level.

I also want to state, Sir, that the media must come on board and play a more active role. I am tired of seeing somebody who has been arrested, as a result of a fight in the bus stand and getting a cut, in the front page of my Newspaper with a piece of plaster on their face.

Sir, I had the experience only yesterday of looking through some old newspaper clippings to see two men on the front page of a Sunday Sun (Nation) getting married. I have a problem with that. That is helping with the decay of our moral fabric in this society,

I believe that the media needs to do even more. I do not mind if they do not highlight the Barbados Labour Party because they are not anymore, but I want them to emphasise education, sensitisation, family life, moral values and so on, in order for our youth to be able to enjoy that quality life that we know has always been the hallmarks of our Barbadian society. Sir, more timely intervention must be presented so that the whole notion of HIV/AIDS and the control would be at the forefront of the individual=s minds.

Mr. Speaker, too many people are saying to leave it to the teacher. Sometimes the teacher does not even know how to put over certain issues because it is a personal thing. If you are not comfortable with a topic, then you cannot present it with the vigour with which it really should be presented. We need to talk more with our children. We need to caution them about people touching them up and about taking gifts from people.

Mr. Speaker, I have passed my half century and have added on quite a few more years. When I went into secondary school, I did not know how to say to someone I need a pair of earrings for my birthday, or for Christmas because I was taught not to take anything from anyone because I have to give something if I get something. Sir, that has remained in my psyche all my lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, you could imagine being raised in a household of seven girls and one boy, so I do not know until now, how to take it, because I believe you would see me down town and say give me my earrings, take off the shoes I gave you, take out my gold tooth, take off that bra and I do not know but some young women are not dressing properly either. Those are some of the embarrassing situations that develop as a result of the whole exercise of “gimme, gimme, gimme”.

And so, I believe as parents, guardians, leaders, we need to reach down to our young children and young people, and talk to them even more and say to them that you are only a child until you are 16 years old. Enjoy your life to the fullest. You do not have to be intimately involved in any sexual activity to enjoy life. Mr. Speaker, you and other Honourable Members in here would understand that there will come a time in life, when you do not care if sex lives or dies. That will happen as our lives unfold, but we need to talk to our young children.

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: I cannot speak for you, Sir.

Asides.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Sir, I am not minding the Honourable Member for St. Joseph. I do not know if that bothers him.

House A10, Sequence 14, 12:20:14

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Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: All I am saying is that it is important that we talk with them, that we nurture them as children have been nurtured and ensure that they follow that moral path that would help them later on to better understand what is going on in this world where there are myriad challenges that would continue to impact on them.

Sir, I believe that collectively, as Barbadians, that changing the mindset is important if we are to reduce the whole impact of HIVAIDS in our midst. Sir, I spoke on another occasion about our non-nationals. I am happy that the Honourable Member for St. George South, who is

responsible for the AIDS Commission and the educational programmes and so on, has supported me in this respect. Every day I see many non-nationals. I know that there are thousands of them among us.

Sir, despite the fact that last year and the year before the Barbados Labour Party was being criticised for embracing them, I now see the Democratic Labour Party kissing up to them. Mr. Speaker, I do not mind that because they belong to us. They are in Barbados. Some of them have children from our natives. Some of them are here on working assignments. Some are diplomats and so on, and therefore we should continue to embrace them.

Sir, I believe that those who are living with HIVAIDS must get help from the Government to help them to live a little longer and to stymie that process. Sir, the reason I said that is because I know some who have been living here for 20 and 25 years and some only as much as five years, but they are cohabiting with the locals, both male and female.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Immigration knows that sometimes you would see some marriage certificates come in and you could tell that they are arranged marriages, and when you check, the person already has two children from a Barbadian, whether it be male or female. Therefore, if they are living among us and they are suffering from the disease, it is economical sense and good social planning, especially if you are talking about human resource development, there is nothing else that takes the cake, than to offer them the anti-retroviral therapy that is necessary to help them to be able to live a little longer and to stop the disease from spreading among our locals.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the architects of these two important documents. I eagerly look forward to this Government's role in treating to the HIVAIDS agenda as an important component of national development. I think it is integral in this whole exercise for all Barbadians, even those who have gone overseas as they have benefitted by the system, to come on board and give the additional assistance that is necessary for the Commission to carry out its role in helping to put strategies, policies, programmes and activities in place that would help to make the difference in the lives of all Barbadians and our visitors who are among us.

Mr. Speaker, I think that those persons who are living with AIDS who seek to spread the disease, because they believe that somebody gave it to them so they could give somebody else, should be put in prison.

Mr. Speaker, in the early hours of this morning, I learnt from the BBC News that there is an African woman in England who is living with AIDS. Sir, her status has

been denied because they said that she could now get the anti-retroviral therapy in the country of her birth.

I am not going to comment on that, Sir. The only point I am making is that if Barbados is to go forward to reach that level where we are comfortable that our people are receiving the best from the health sector, the education sector and the employment sector, and that they are all productive citizens, we need to come together as a people and work together because, as I said, it cuts across the political divide. Therefore, we are supporting the Government in this exercise because we believe that human beings matter and that they shall have their dignity and they should enjoy the same rights as all other people.

Mr. Speaker, I give my blessings to this Government in respect of these two pieces of legislation and look forward to getting updates so that we could all play our role in changing the whole culture and approach of how our people treat to the whole issue of HIVAIDS.

I wish to thank you, Sir, and I commend these two pieces of legislation.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 1.35 p.m. today.

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

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 1.35 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

House A10 Sequence 15

12.30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

RESUMPTION

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

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate, and it would not be the first time that I am entering a debate like this. Sir, I was fortunate to be here before to speak on this very Head, and I can assure you when this Head was first discussed, the rancour you are hearing today from the Other Side, you did not hear when we were the Opposition.

Sir, when we were the Opposition, you did not hear that because we understood the seriousness of this Head.

We recognised this is a Head that we cannot play politics with and that it goes to the heart of the development of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, if HIV/AIDS is not checked, we would have no population. Sir, I think it is regrettable that anybody could come and play politics with such a serious issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to know it was okay for one to make the point that this Head was previously under the Ministry of Finance, but those of us who would have been in Parliament long enough, would have recognised that I have always lamented the fact that I personally felt that when you look at the responsibilities of the Prime Minister and at the international callings, I honestly believe it was a good decision to move this particular Head away from the Office of the Prime Minister and to give it to a designated Ministry. Sir, in my opinion, it shows the seriousness of this Government in putting this particular Head under a Minister who will have enough time to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, it is okay when this was first started under the Ministry of Finance, where it would have wanted financing, but the policy is now clear on financing and, therefore, this Head needs not to be under the Ministry of Finance any longer but under a designated Minister, who would find time to deal with this social and very far-reaching issue. Sir, if we do not deal with it today, we would find ourselves into deeper problems.

Mr. Speaker, it is okay for persons to write a Manifesto with about 6 or 20 pages on a particular topic, but it is not what is written in that Manifesto it is about what has to be done when coming to Government. It is about recognising that there is a problem with which to deal. Therefore, if one wants to judge the Democratic Labour Party, based on its Manifesto, then those persons would be wrong. They would have to ground that judgment based on what is occurring. Sir, this shows the seriousness with which this particular Head has been taken by this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I would hope when the officials who have responsibility of administering this programme start to promote and decide that they are going to use persons in Barbados, who the status quo might believe should not be used, but those persons who are effective and who can reach others in Barbados, who certain persons believe they could reach but they cannot, I hope that we, as politicians, would not criticise the technocrats for being able to pull persons who would be able to target and deliver the messages.

Sir, I look forward to the day when artistes like >Lil Rick= promote the AIDS message. Sir, there is no doubt that "Lil Rick" is one of those persons who can effectively deliver the message to the young people, to whom we want to deliver this message. Sir, I could only hope that the

Committee would be able to focus on those popular artistes who are known among the young people of Barbados. I hope too that the Committee would not be deterred by comments that would come from certain persons in Barbados, who believe there are certain people who should not be promoting certain things.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand this is a very serious problem with which we are dealing. We have already lived our lives, but we have to understand that we have children who have to live their lives too. Sir, it is okay to talk about prevention. Prevention sounds good, but we have to be realistic about this particular issue. We have to understand there is population growth and that this world has to be continuous.

Mr. Speaker, condoms have their role in delivering the message, but we have to understand that we have young people now coming up in Barbados. It, therefore, means that we have to move the message from prevention to cure. Sir, I am calling on both the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Health, to recognise these Ministries have a very pivotal role to play in this particular issue. Sir, I look forward to the day when the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development could have a HIV/AIDS scholarship. Sir, it is about time that we recognise HIV/AIDS. It does not mean that because we are a small country, that we cannot find some educated person who would have the capacity to find a cure for HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the time is ripe for us to allocate money and time on some of those scholarships, so that they could focus on trying to find a cure for HIV/AIDS. Asides.

1.40 p.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I have young children who have to live in Barbados and I cannot continue to tell my son when he gets to the right age that the right road to travel is a condom because the same pleasures in life you had, my son must have too, and he must be able also to make me a proud grandfather.

Mr. Speaker, it is okay for people to joke about this matter but just consider being at the age of 17, 18, 19, 21 or 22, you want to get married, you want to have a family, and you want to have children, but how are you going to guarantee, whether you are man or woman, that the first person you come in contact with, that they do not have HIV/AIDS? This is why I honestly believe that we are at a stage that we need to take it a step further.

We will continue to promote the message, but while we are promoting the message, we must also be looking for a cure. Sir, it worries me that when I turn on my television I can see people wanting to find water on Mars. Sir, billions of dollars are being spent in the world trying to find water on Mars, trying to fight a war but none of that money is diverted to find a cure for HIV/AIDS. If I really look at it, to me, it is easier to find a cure for HIV/AIDS than to find water on Mars because to find a cure for HIV/AIDS is the most important thing.

We must change the agenda and we must ensure that we make our voices known and never believe that because we are from Barbados, and people believe that we are from a small country, that it is measured like that when we get to the international forum.

Mr. Speaker, as from today, wherever we travel in the world, the message must be, prevention, yes, but we need to find a cure because it will affect the smaller economies like ours, and when one looks at the possibility of the bill, we would have to foot it if we continue without finding a cure, not only would we wipe out our whole budget, but we will not have anybody to budget for. Sir, it is that serious.

Mr. Speaker, in the 1980s, a lot of us would say that it could not be us, but today we cannot say that. A lot of us would have said that it could not be in our families today, it cannot be said anymore. What we need to do is to ensure that we focus right, cut out the garbage and focus on those things that we could make the technocrats happy by ensuring that we provide the necessary finances to make their job easier. Sir, that is why whenever any money Resolution comes before this Parliament, I believe that we should support it whether we are Bees, NDPs, or anything for the simple reason that the health of the country is the most important thing.

Mr. Speaker, no world can operate without a population. War did not destroy the population of the world but if we do not watch it, HIV/AIDS and this is why it is very important that we have to find a cure to deal with this problem. If we do not deliver, those young people out there will continue to criticise us, and they will have more justifiable reasons for criticising us. Sir, right now, as we are going, we are not offering the young people of Barbados any hope by just preaching the method of abstinence and prevention. We must give them some hope and ensure that we demonstrate, without a shadow of doubt, that we are also encouraging people to be able to study to find a cure so that they too will be able to operate life without the stress they have to operate under at the present moment.

Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt we have done a lot. It is no doubt that as much as we have done, we have not found

a cure for it and until we can find a cure, I do not and will not support any political party that comes to this House to give the impression that the fight against HIV/AIDS has been won, and that this Government is now only continuing and something about a backward step.

Sir, how could you be talking about a backward step and praising at the same time. This is not time for grandstanding. This issue is too serious for us to come in here and grandstand over it and we must understand this because this is not time for politics.

Mr. Speaker, it would be good if the Opposition would recognise that there was a debate before this and they should have reflected on that one before they came here. Sir, for the simple reason that they would have realised the mature approach that was taken when this issue was first brought before this House. Clearly, one could see that there could have been a political divide on this particular issue but mature minds did not allow these things to occur.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward not only for the National Strategic Plan to be put in place, and not only for the framework for action but we also want to see the various Ministries, those important Ministries, and all of them are important, coming on board and ensuring that the finances are allocated so that we can also develop a scholarship so that people can see how serious we are. Sir, prevention is good but cure will solve the problem for us.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to the proposal and in doing that, I want to, at least, seek to understand the factors that have led us to the position in Barbados today where HIV/AIDS constitutes a serious threat to Barbados, its citizens and our society as we know it.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things identified in our National Strategic Plan is the need for behavioural change. Sir, maybe we might need to examine our society and the individuals that make up that society to understand what patterns of behaviour have occurred in our society over the last 30 years to 40 years that has led us to this position.

Sir, one of the things we clearly understand is that it has an effect on people and, in the context of our National Strategic Plan, which seeks to drive our society to a developed status, there are certain things in our behaviour that complicates how we achieve that particular objective of being a developed country. If we do it in terms of having certain behaviours and undermine it, we need to look at it.

Mr. Speaker, to the extent that those behaviours we have engaged in over previous years have brought us to this position, I think we need to compliment the Government on the fact that it is bold in terms of coming up with an approach that would help to, at least, address the consequences of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is clear on reading the brief is the case that the traditional approach, which involves information, education and communication have not been effective in the past of stopping the spread of the disease.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we need to recognise is that we have maybe, in the past concentrated too much on those things, which instead of helping the situation basically they have made it worse. Again, Sir, in terms of the approach we are taking today...

DR. W.F. DUGID: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member said he was quoting from the brief and I would like him to now make it a document of the House..

Asides.

1.50 p.m.

Sequence 17

-Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Sir, if the Honourable Member is quoting from it, he should make it a document of the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Those are the Honourable Member=s notes. There is no need to make it a document of the House.

Mr. J.D. PAUL: Sir, when you look at the notes, as indicated, the traditional approach of information, education and communication has proven itself not to be workable. When you look at some of the approaches that have been adopted, to accomplish that behavioural change, which we recognise is needed in the society, and the fact that we have chosen the approach of information, education and communication, it indicates, therefore, that at least something different needs to be tried.

Sir, recognising that we have behavioural problems, one of the things that we need to do, and in a sense we have done, is to invite social scientists more to assist us in determining the behaviours in our society that caused it. Sometimes we do not understand that there are some very basic things we are doing, that contribute to these behaviours. In a sense it is how we treat one another in

terms of our lifestyles and what we need to change it. Sir, there are certain things that we did in the past that we have left alone. Maybe we need to stem the tide to deal with this particular problem we are facing.

Sir, I believe that the news media has to be utilised properly and deal with this issue. One of the sad things we have witnessed - I know that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas pointed to something about AProtecting Your Wicket@. At that point and time when it was used, there was much discussion as to the appropriateness of that particular type of advertising, or its form. Sir, we need to understand that we must be sensitive to our own social values and norms.

When we engage in approaches that undermine those social values and norms, we are also creating a problem for ourselves. In that way, we might then be encouraging some of those very behaviours which are the root of the problem, but we are addressing the information, education and communication approach.

Sir, I want to give you a very typical example of what I am speaking about. Most of us, when we were children, one of the basic things our parents taught us was never beg a stranger. They taught you that you need to rely on the resources of the family. What we are seeing today among young children is a sickness in our society, in some cases, a lot of young children on the streets, in some cases begging and asking adults for things. It exposes young children to manipulation and exploitation.

Sir, this tells you that we are losing some of the values we were brought up with. We are encouraging young children to be solicited by adults in terms of certain activities. We need to look at building the values and norms of our society. Sir, we recognise the need to engage in behavioural change.

Sir, I want to advise that we use the media in a positive manner because the Press has the responsibility in this regard. They have to take up their responsibility in this regard because sometimes some of the behaviours advocated within the Press do not help to discourage those behaviours we are trying to deal with. Sir, it was amazing that in trying to show Barbadians the Labour Day activities, the only thing the Press could focus on to tell you how much people were enjoying themselves, is that you had women and men gyrating on top of one another. Sir, that was the only thing we could have focussed on.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that they could have shown other aspects of the Labour Day celebration. They could have shown the beautiful floats. They could have shown people enjoying themselves in a healthy manner, but we pick on those activities that, today, we are trying to deal with in our society in terms of trying to put forward a more

positive approach towards promoting healthy behaviours. Sir, in that regard, I think that the media has to play a critical role.

Sir, when we look at the whole question of behavioural modification and behavioural change, we need to identify those institutions in the society which would help and assist us in bringing about that behavioural change and that behavioural modification.

Sir, I note that is the direction we intend to go. We need to involve the institutions in our society which we tend to marginalise today because we appeal more to the marketing specialists who sometimes have no philosophical grounding, and in some cases some of them are not even value based, and some of them need help.

Sir, when you look at some of the promotional material, you wonder where are these people coming from. You wonder whether they are coming from a West Indian society that has certain morals and principles. Therefore we need to evaluate very carefully the kind of marketing professionals who come to us saying that they can produce the material for us. Sir, when you look at a lot of the material that is being produced today, they are undermining basic family values and, in some cases, they are undermining the ability of parents to actually have an influence over their children. We need to look at that.

I also want to focus on entertainment events that we have. We have a situation in some cases where young children who, to my mind, should not be exposed to certain forms of entertainment. We need to look at that because we do not understand the influence of symbols on a child's mind. The fact is that sometimes by our own actions, we give children the impression that it is okay to behave in such a manner. These are the kinds of things that we need to look at.

Mr. Speaker, going back to the function of the new media, we need to understand that the new media has to play a critical role, but it has to accept that responsibility. Sometimes when you speak to the media, it seems that they are prepared to come with a tape recorder, you tell them something, and they do and say anything without looking at what their perspective is as a media on the situation, what are the things that they are trying to promote in their society. We do not understand that is all part of the challenge in terms of behavioural modification. That is where the stress needs to be put, not the glitz and glamour that, for instance, when we had a World Cup we chose to promote these things. That is just the glitz and glamour.

Sir, I think we need to seek the effect of a

long-term change that would, at least, engender certain values and morals in our society and, in a sense,

Government has a responsibility to do that. Sir, last year, when we heard the furore over the whole question of whether we should legalise homosexuality and prostitution, it is really incredible that we as a nation and a Government, moreso, could not take a firm stand on the issue, and we should have done so.

We should have stated in very clear and certain terms that this is our position, which at least signals to our young people, which is, of course ... I will tell you that we do not support it as far as we are aware. We do not support it. We need to give, in very clear and certain terms, to our young people where our stance is on critical issues. That is where I think we can achieve a lot in terms of tackling the scourge that we are facing today.

HA 2.00 p.m.

Sequence 18

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

House A10, Sequence 19, 2.00 p.m.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, in that regard, I would like to appeal to our news media to help us in the fight, because while we may have a plan here that we want to, at least, tackle a very serious situation, we cannot do it alone. Sir, again, I go back to the other elements of the society that we talked about.

Mr. Speaker, the Church is a very critical and important part in this process. Our youth groups are a very important part of this process. Our schools are a very important part of this process. That is why, in a sense, that even in the schools we need to look at the re-institution of the old way of probably religious and moral education. We need to talk more about values. We must not give people the impression that the school is a place now where you come in and have fun and we jump and wave.

Sir, since the song, "Jump and Wave", it seems as if it has captured our approach and philosophy in terms of doing things. I am saying that those institutions which have formed the lighthouses for the direction in which our society is prepared to go, Sir, that people need to look to them for guidance and direction. Sir, they fail to see it and that is why we are seeing these problems today.

Sir, going back to the role of the Church, maybe even in terms of helping the society as far as dealing with those persons who might easily be afflicted, or for instances in some cases, they could assist and help with those persons who might show the tendency to engage in behaviours that we want not to promote.

Maybe, we need to enter into a very active dialogue with the Church to see how they can assist. Again, one of the things about our strategies to date is that we have not included those institutions as much as we can. Sir, maybe, we need to have an active discussion with our school teachers to see how they can assist in the fight. One of the mistakes that we make as a Government is that sometimes we seem to think that we know all. We have all the solutions. We listen to our people that tell us things and then we go up there and start to spout them and think that is the Bible. Sir, we forget to understand that there are people out there who deal with it on a day-to-day basis, who can come up with the solution.

Sir, we do not need to undermine existing approaches in the society which might actually be working in terms of trying to resolve the problem. Sometimes we come in with these grand plans and come with something new. The next thing you know that somebody is doing something and then we throw out everything. You wipe the page clean, forgetting that there were approaches that were working.

When we look at the approach that we are attempting here, Sir, what we would be doing is being the stakeholders in the society to help us in trying to deal with it which is, of course, a substantially different approach under the previous Administration, but we can see that this approach has the chance of working, once it is properly executed.

Mr. Speaker, now, we go to the Youth Groups. Sir, we are leaving out our Youth Groups. In fact, soon from now they are going to become derelict. Sir, one of the things that most of us as young people knew as we grew up, is that there were Youth Groups around which were functioning that played a part in our upbringing, in terms of giving us certain moral values.

For instance, there are those of us who would recognise the role of the scouts. At St. Leonard's Church we had the Church Lads' Brigade and the Church Girls' Brigade and these played an important role. Also in the community, there were Youth Groups that were associated with the community centres. Sir, we need to start to activate those groups as positive role models.

Sir, what we have done is that, unwillingly, we have allowed those institutions which played a very important part in terms of moulding behaviours in our society, to go by the wayside. Sir, the aspect of volunteering was part of those groups, which we have systematically undermined. Nowadays, if you ask somebody to do anything, they ask what is in it for them.

Sir, in the past we had a situation where people committed themselves, and these were heroes which have

not been honoured. We had people who committed themselves to come and work with young people, sometimes on evenings. They were not paid. Their only reward was to see that after a while, at least, they produced somebody who is wholesome and who could make a contribution to our society, and it was not a question of payment.

Mr. Speaker, we need to understand that if we are to get those kinds of behavioural changes that we are speaking about, in order to accomplish them, those are the kinds of things that we need to promote and work with, in our society, as we go along today.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage the Minister to proceed with haste as far as trying to implement the plan, because it is surely needed if we are to address the problem that we have in front of us. Sir, let us not underestimate the challenge because, as was already stated, we have children being born with the disease, and we have households that are actually impacted on and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Sir, one of the things that I remember when I watched television during the NBA that they had Magic Johnson, who was affected by HIV/AIDS and, over a period of time now, apparently, it is not there. I am saying that in a sense when you look at it, for him was possible.

Sir, what we need to do is to at least develop a society, where we give them hope to everybody who is affected by HIV/AIDS. Again, one of the things that we also need to do is to make sure that those persons who are affected by it, can still make an active contribution to their society, where it is possible to do so. This is why I embrace the suggestion that we should not discriminate against those persons who have it, because in many cases, it is not their fault.

It is really true that, in fact, you have the reckless behaviour of some people. Therefore, they end up to be the consequence of such inappropriate behaviour, and that goes back to the question of behaviour. Sir, that is why we should not apologise if the State has to commit more resources in order to ensure that those persons who are afflicted by HIV/AIDS, can lead normal lives in the society, as much as it is possible to do so.

Sir, finally, in wrapping up, I indicate that I would want to encourage the Minister again, in terms of her efforts. The challenge is big, but I have no doubt, Sir, hearing her speak this morning, the zeal and fire in which she displayed, I am sure that she has the courage to ensure that our country will be able to do it. Sir, I note too that she has brought her support on board in terms of the technocrats. I notice them there.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise that in everything there is team work. I have indicated in terms of the strategy that all of us need to put our hands to the plough. I think, she has been able to at least learn from the advice of her technocrats in terms of putting forward an approach, which will go a long way, in terms of trying to tackle this very difficult problem that is facing Barbados today.

I am sure that when we look at the results, we will see a substantial amount of success and, perhaps, in a more effective way than the last Administration was able to do it, Sir.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged to you.

I recognise the Honourable Member for St. James North.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago to today, an erudite and learned mind expressed the view in here, that illness ought not to be seen as wickedness. Sir, putting that statement in context, I recognise that where an illness is held constant and other factors are held constant, in other words, where the illness is not self-imposed and where the illness is not preventive, then certainly that particular statement gets stronger than it was intended in the first instance. I repeat. Illness need not be wickedness.

In looking at this matter, Sir, it is necessary to consider what progress we in Barbados have made since 1983, and the various steps that had been taken preceding today=s Sitting of this Honourable Chamber.

House A10, Sequence 19, 2:10

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that even though some of us can ascend the stairs of our lofty citadels and behave self-righteously as though we are insulated against this pandemic, the fact of the matter is that in this very small society, we all have to consider ourselves to be at risk. Sir, even where we do not consider ourselves to be at risk, we ought to be empathetic to those who are both infected by, and affected by the virus.

Mr. Speaker, it is possible to be affected by the virus without being infected. Mr. Speaker, suppose there is a young girl, 19 years old, called Mary who is HIV positive. Mary's parents are alive and six siblings. Sir, when they discover that she is HIV positive, and realise the hopelessness of her condition, if they do not get on board and help give her succour, then they themselves are

affected. Therefore, the position is that one can be affected even though one is not infected.

Mr. Speaker, in a judgmental culture, as this culture of Barbados has been, there had been many unfortunate instances where people treat the victims of HIVAIDS as though they are victims of a plague that should be avoided at every and all cost.

Mr. Speaker, an anecdote goes out like this. This particular young man in a good job allegedly was the victim of HIV. He used to catch the bus to go to work and when the people catching the same bus heard that he was HIVAIDS positive, they stop catching that bus, because as far as they were concerned, they were not supposed to expose themselves to this HIVAIDS carrier. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the standards of commonsense and decency than that type of behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard expert views that this virus has one or two specific ways of being transmitted. In an enlightened community, where every goodly doctor has already held forth that the virus cannot be contracted by mere social contact, we should continue the job of educating the populace that this HIV thing, though serious, cannot be contracted by mere social contact.

Mr. Speaker, I notice that one Honourable Member, I think it is His Excellency the Ambassador, feels that this disease could go to B, C, D, E and F but not to them, A.

Mr. Speaker, they are those who take a chance and are aware that they are taking a chance but are so confident in their own invincibility and that of their partner that they expose themselves to risk and sometimes when challenged they say: "Something bring you, something got to carry you." Mr. Speaker, that type of behaviour is callous, uncaring and reckless.

Mr. Speaker, permit me a few more moments to focus on a couple more things. A few years ago, we recognised fully that HIVAIDS is a health issue, but that if it hit hard in that age cohort between 16 and 49, then it would assume a character in addition to its ordinary character as a health issue, then it would become a human resource management issue. Mr. Speaker, if you take it that those at greatest risk are in that age cohort between age 16 and 49, then people in their most productive years are at considerable risk.

Mr. Speaker, in Barbados you can have some old fellows over 70 years who would tell you that they lived their life already and they do not mind taking a chance. Mr. Speaker, in a situation where there is such a thing called transactional sex, a lot of these men over 70 years old can fork out money and lure and induce innocent persons to become their partners for however limited time they might

need or what expanse of time they might need to pursue their activity and then when all is said and done a person who is not normally in the age cohort ends up contracting HIV.

In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, we have to bear in mind that there are certain cultural forces, as the person who led the debate has said, that are at work when it comes to our whole attitude and perception of this HIVAIDS virus. It did not shock me to hear that an adult and two and three pygmies are sleeping in the same bed. I am a Barbadian. I am in touch with reality and I know that these things exist.

There could be a good 25 000 to 30 000 people in Barbados who live below the poverty line and who are the ones most likely to be engaged in transactional sex. In my understanding, transactional sex goes beyond mere sex into the realm of finance and economics, where negotiations take place for sexual favours to be granted in return for money. Mr. Speaker, when money is traded in that way, money definitely assumes the character of filthy lucre and its consequences are dire.

Mr. Speaker, I did not proposed getting involved at all, but permit me to speak about the issue of discrimination. As the Honourable Member for St. Thomas has just said, there is a case in the United Kingdom right now where a lady from Uganda was arguing before the Court in England that she did not think she could get proper care in her country for HIVAIDS.

The Court ruled that in her country there were facilities to which she could expose herself in the interest of a protracted longevity. She has appealed the decision and, to that extent, I am not permitted to go any further than that because in a small global village, I do not know which judge or which justice in England would take offence to my expatiating any longer on this particular matter.

Mr. Speaker, the question is: Can we truthfully say, in a situation where all of us are at risk, that we have not at one point considered discriminating against those who are sick? I know educated people, who if they go into a group and hear that somebody in that group is HIVAIDS positive, will, what is called in Law, shun and avoid, when they should be offering loving tender care even when such loving tender care is short on the sexual side of things.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to the point, which the Honourable Member who led the debate has suggested, that instances exist where some persons are more or less duped or induced into risky sex or are otherwise exposed. My learned honourable friend from St. Thomas mentioned the extent to which incest can be a factor.

The Honourable Member who introduced this Resolution is also Minister of Family. In circumstances where she is Minister of Family, she has quickly to get hold of and arrest this tendency of incest in Barbados, especially when the incest is accompanied by duress.

House A10 Sequence 20

2.20 p.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, duress is not out of the terms in the context of this particular debate because it smacks of duress, which properly used in a given situation, cannot be irrelevant to what we are talking about, but we need to ensure that we do not stigmatise those who are sick.

Sir, "Magic Johnson" would have been allegedly diagnosed around 1988/1989. I do not know if he ever went for a second opinion or if, in fact, he had AIDS, but he went to Africa a few times. Sir, I do not know if he found the cure there. Of course, there are people who go on the media and offer the world a number of cures.

I remember for six months there was a cure-for-all called "dog dumpling", alias Noni juice. There are several things that you find in the health food store which are panaceas for everything. I even heard someone suggesting that under certain conditions, a particular blend could pull themselves up, so that they could stand erect, even though nature itself had condemned them to a different state. Sir, we ought not to stigmatise the victims of this dreaded disease. We should offer love, support and sympathy.

Mr. Speaker, I am heartened that in our school system, there are those teachers and Head Teachers, who sensitise the youngsters at an early stage, but even then there is no guarantee that peer group pressure would not be applied on these younger persons to take chances.

Sir, the National Commission on HIV/AIDS would tell you that during their tenure, which has been relatively short, they have been trying something called "Peer Group Counselling". This is a concept which, by its very nature, is one that says that peer group pressure could be applied in a positive way. Sir, in the same way there are peers who could lure their equals down the wrong way, there must be peers who could lure their equals down the right road. Sir, the National Commission on HIV/AIDS has done an enormous amount of work.

Mr. Speaker, I was in a church where the father of the Honourable Member for St. Joseph was talking about HIV/AIDS, about 12 days ago. The Church was looking at the extent to which it could go out into the highways and

hedges and carry the message. Sir, in this regard, I would love to give praise to Sister Lydia Waterman who, when she was an active nurse, went on the "blocks", the highway and hedges to carry the message. Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied there are personnel presently here, and in the Ministry who will do their utmost to ensure that we do our best to carry the message and to carry it effectively.

Sir, I am not too sure, but I am hearing signals that our rate has levelled off, but that it is still a cause of concern. I am hearing there has not been a marked or dramatic increase in the new number of cases. Sir, I cannot prove it but the person from whom I heard it is one who has his own formula as to achieving success.

Mr. Speaker, This Side has no difficulty with these two Resolutions, or in promoting further public education. We have no difficulty in cautioning Barbadians of all ages and all walks of life to be careful. This Side has no difficulty in respect of direct counselling for persons with HIV/AIDS. Sir, we would like to encourage the medical profession to get on board in a more concerted way than before. It seems as though some doctors are saying that since 25 per cent of their numbers is already actively involved, there is no need for the others to become involved. Sir, everybody should be on board. All doctors should be on board. All priests should be on board. All Members of the Bar Association should be on board.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, if these persons get on board, they could make the job easier.

Mr. Speaker, it is good that a draft National Strategic Plan has been introduced, but it would be untruthful for me to say that all I have heard today is new. This work started before 15 January, 2008. This work has to continue beyond 15 January, 2013. Sir, we hope that by then a number of persons who might be at risk or who are yet to understand what we are dealing with, are made more sensitive to the need to show humanity where humanity matters.

Mr. Speaker, with these few brief and modest remarks, I am deeply obliged to you. I thank you.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, please allow me to join this debate by first congratulating the Honourable Minister who introduced the Resolution, for her very erudite presentation on what, obviously to all of us here and the Barbadian community, is a very sensitive and critical area of public discourse and intervention.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is very good that there are a few issues that the political divide is not evident. We would hope there would be no political divide on the issue of how to treat rising oil prices, but we get divide on that, even

though there really ought not to be. We hope that there is no divide on economic policies, once we agree that as a small vulnerable economy, Barbados needs to do certain things to overcome its constraints, but we have divide on that.

Mr. Speaker, there are some issues that are over-arching, that go beyond politics, that go beyond our own personal views on issues in relation to our political stance and our own personal socialisation, and I think this issue of how we treat to the handling of HIV/AIDS in our society, how we use public resources to intervene in strategic ways to arrest what could become a potentially devastating problem in our societies, and how we begin to educate our society to respond positively to it, is one such issue that should not have a political divide. I, therefore, want to take the opportunity to congratulate the two Honourable Members from the Other Side, who spoke on this issue, and I hope that the level of constructiveness that we have seen would continue.

Mr. Speaker, let me make a few points in relation to this issue. I think all of what has been said, relative to the issue of HIV/AIDS and how it is treated in Barbados is true, and I would not seek to repeat those comments to any significant degree but, as the Honourable Member for St. James North has said, I believe we have to be very realistic about how we speak to these issues. This is a major national, regional and international issue that, frankly and unfortunately, is not going to go away any time soon.

2.30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: It means, therefore, that every sinew within the body politics of Barbados; within the body politics of the Region, and we speak in the context of our own regional arrangements with the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, has to return attention and gather in the greatest level of strength and connectivity to address this issue. If you look at it from an economic point of view, we take national resources that have to be put at the disposal of agencies across the spectrum, whether in health, education, social welfare. It is to deal with these issues whether it is treatment, education or whatever the case may be. It is a drain on the national purse that 30 years ago we did not contemplate, but we have to deal with today and those are resources that, perhaps, could have otherwise gone to support other developmental issues and options in our society. It means, therefore, that in the interest where the cost of treatment, the cost of education and the cost of engagement, have to be borne significantly and, almost exclusively, by the State, it can threaten to comprise the financial status and viability of our Government, of our State system and of our Treasury and it is something that if

we do not put a handle on it now, it can get away from us and pose significant problems.

Sir, if we look at it from that perspective; if we take the empirical analysis that is done by those who research the issue, who study the issue, and we speak to the fact that the disease has tended over time to affect persons in their most productive years, then we know there is an economic fallout in terms of productivity because people have to spend time away from work either because they are sick, or because they are too afraid of the ostracism which they will face in the workplace.

Sir, that is a fact. A lot of people will hide because once they feel that somebody knows they are infected with the disease they do not want to face that. This is why we will all support efforts at trying to reduce the level of discrimination of people with HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, it is also at an individual level because there is a significant cost associated with persons infected by the diseases. Recently, I was at the Sir Winston Scott Polyclinic to get a few shots.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Not gunshots and, certainly, not rum shots, Sir. I was over there to get an inoculation for yellow fever to travel to Ghana and on my way out of the clinic, a person came to me. I had never seen him before but he identified himself and said he was HIV positive. He was explaining to me, and I raised it with the Minister of Health, that there is a prescription that they get for eye glasses but his eyes were so affected by the illness that his sight was deteriorating and he needed a prescription that was far more significant than the one he was getting so that he could see properly, but the cost of it was not covered in what the Government was providing and he, therefore, could not get these glasses.

Sir, it came home to me there and then that here it is that his eyesight is deteriorating, he needs to get a better prescription but, cannot get it, because the Polyclinic or wherever he went, has a ceiling on how much they can give for that particular remedy. He does not work anywhere. He has no income and, therefore, he cannot afford it, so he is struggling.

Sir, at an individual level there is a serious problem that we have to face also in terms of the cost. Mr. Speaker, if we look at the social cost, here is where the greatest level of impact would be felt within this society and in ways that could be very debilitating to the rest of our society.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have to congratulate the AIDS Commission for the work which they have done to educate Barbadians to bring them four square and full

square with the issues affecting us. Therefore, empirical research is being done because, in the Barbadian society and the West Indian society, we like to do things without empirical research and this is just not going to work. We have to study issues right down to the last minutia in order to understand trends, in order to understand responses, in order to craft public policy in a way that allows us to get the most accurate and acute strategic interventions than to waste money by shooting across the bow, and in the dark.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the work which the Commission has done needs to be lauded. I believe that the work of the Chairman of the Commission needs to be lauded and I hope that every possible resource that we can provide would be made available to those good folks so that they can continue that work.

Sir, having made that point, I also must make another point that we cannot fool ourselves in this Barbadian society that behavioural change -and I think I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central making the point - is not going to be easy. Sir, the hardest thing to do is to change people who are set in their ways. I often say that many times we like to put things in newspapers. We like to put out newsletters and brochures.

These things are good but they target a particular segment of our population that reads but I often marvel at the fact that we have a workforce of over 140 000; a literacy rate of 95 per cent by UN standards, but yet we only sell about 30 000 newspapers a day in Barbados and this is amazing.

Sir, this means that a lot of people in Barbados, if they can, do not use the opportunity to do so. Mr. Speaker, even though we reduce these things to paper, we cannot make the assumption that because we have printed it that somebody has read it and understood what they have read.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I was speaking to a young person just outside my constituency in the area of Black Rock, who made the point to me that she does not read the newspaper. Sir, I find it amazing that you could have young people who admit that they do not read the newspaper but, Sir, it happens and we have to be very careful why we do this. It means, therefore, that in addition to literature, we have to find other innovative ways of getting the message across.

The Honourable Member for St. James North spoke about peer counselling which is an excellent programme, because young people are influenced by other young people. If some of you go to some of these fetes, you would see the amount of alcohol that is consumed and you would

see, at some of these events, the amount of marijuana that is consumed.

Mr. Speaker, I do not rain on anybody's parade, but I am making these points very seriously. There is a lot of blind-eying of this issue in Barbados. There are a lot of young people in Barbados who congregate either at cricket, football or wherever it is.

2.40 p.m.

Sequence 22

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Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Sir, they say the fellows drink rum at cricket and smoke weed at football. I have no problem with it, but I am telling you that it is a fact, and we can pretend that it does not exist. It exists in Barbados to a significant degree, and to the extent that we know judgment is impaired when these activities take place, we have to look at this very seriously.

Sir, the Honorable Member for St. James North taught me at school, and I am happy to share this House of Assembly with the Honourable Member.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: The Honourable Member can tell you that in my day at school you could not find anybody with a marijuana cigarette. That kind of thing was unheard of. The worst thing we did was to sneak out of school to go down to the Plaza to watch Kung Fu at 12.30 p.m., then the former Honourable Member for St. Thomas put the Honourable Member for St. James North on the Film Censorship Board, and he used to stand up down there waiting for us to come when he goes to review the movies.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: He used to give us 1 000 lines, saying why we should not sneak out of school to watch Kung Fu. Those were the things we used to do. Or you go down to the Garrison on mornings to watch horses and you would not come up in time. I went to the Garrison School, of which I am very proud.

Sir, now it is commonplace in schools and educational institutions for alcohol to be utilised and for smoking to take place, therefore, we have to get serious in Barbados, otherwise all the good work you folks are doing will go to nought. It is going to nought if we do not get in there now and begin to address these fundamental issues. Sir, one of the reasons for this is, we live in an entirely permissive society.

Sir, do you know the things that would shock you 20 years ago, do not shock you now? Sir, you see young girls - this fashion thing in Barbados. I assume the fellows like it. You see people walking around with half of their body exposed, and somebody somewhere is telling these people that they look good, man you look hot. They call each other on the phone and compare notes, but trust me, it sounds pretty when you are talking about it, showing or flashing flesh, whatever it is, but that thing breaks down your ability to form natural defences to behaviour that is not normally the behaviour that you would engage in, or your parents.

Sir, the parents have to take a lot of the responsibility, but we also must not come down on parents too hard. A lot of them try. They really do try. There are a lot of school girls in Barbados who leave home fully dressed and never reach school. They are walking about in town and going at people.

Sir, I would show you how the issue is becoming so desensitised. Sir, right now in Barbados there are people who, when they hear a bulletin from the Police, Voice of Barbados or CBC of a missing girl, they stupse and say, that is some girl gone somewhere. She will turn up in two days time. Do you know that lo and behold it happens?

Sir, to the extent that somebody could be abducted and to be in real trouble, but a blind eye or a callous and nonchalant attitude is taken to that, because it happens so often and has a particular result. That is what is happening in Barbados from this permissive society that we have developed here. Sir, the television is the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a point. The Honourable Prime Minister is not here, and I think that the Minister responsible for broadcasting is in the Other Place, but I want to make this point about CBC.

Sir, every Saturday morning at 1.00 a.m. - and if you want to know how I know this, I got it from the Honourable Member for St. George North.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Sir, every Saturday morning, at 1.00 a.m., on a Channel called City TV, they show pornographic movies.

Asides.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Honourable Member for St. George North, I am just pulling your leg.

Sir, every now and again the Cinemax channel shows them. You have to understand what is happening. This is a State institution, and I am calling on whoever is responsible for the Board and the management of that

institution to look at that issue, because we cannot have a double standard. We cannot have State institutions doing these things, and expect people to be out there in the trenches fighting for it. I think this is a matter that I certainly will raise with the Prime Minister. I believe I have raised it already with him. It has to be dealt with in that manner.

Sir, we had a very lovely going-away function for the former Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, former Minister of Home Affairs, and in her comments, thanking people for coming to the function, made the point

that one thing that has ruled her throughout her career in politics and service in Government was that you must always have a Plan B. The Strategic Plan, the Report, which the Honourable Member for St. George South laid is Plan A. We have a Plan B just in case we do not meet all of the objectives that we set ourselves in Plan A. We have to have a Plan B to treat to the issues that will likely occur if Plan A does not achieve its objectives. I want to encourage our colleagues on the Commission and in the Ministry, to work to ensure that we have a Plan B.

Sir, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Thomas making the point that she felt hurt when the Commission was transferred from the Prime Minister=s Office. I believe that the decision in earlier days, by the then Prime Minister, to put the HIV/AIDS Commission in the Prime Minister=s Office was a sensible decision.

I believe that it needed that type of attention at that level. I believe now that it is deserving of its separate Ministry, and I have every confidence in the Honourable Member for St. George South to execute the mandate of the Government.

Sir, when we say the Government, this is the entire Government, the Government on This Side and the Government on That Side. It is not the Democratic Labour Party=s plan or the Barbados Labour Party=s plan. It is Barbados= plan, and we have to implement it top to bottom. We have to review it. We have to have monetary evaluation. We have to ensure that at every step we check to see whether we are achieving the results.

Sir, I want to make this point. Mr. Speaker, I sat on the NGO working group on the World Bank, when we were doing the Twelfth Replenishment of the IDA, the International Development Agency Resources, and the then President Wilfinson made the point, and I agreed with him then and I agree with him now, that developing countries such as Barbados that have graduated from receiving concessional financing, but who are members, not members of IDA because we are not members of IDA, but we are members of the Bank for Reconstruction and

Development, commonly called the World Bank. We deserve to have the opportunity to assess concessional financing, even grant funding, to deal with issues such as HIV/AIDS. I really believe so.

Sir, I believe that to ask a future generation to pay exorbitant funds to save this current generation, and perhaps itself, at such cost is unreasonable to small developing countries. That is my own view. I have always said when the issue came to Cabinet I made that point and I would make it repeatedly, because I believe that we who are struggling to make ends meet literally, we who have constraints on our budget...

Asides.

14.50 p.m.

Sequence 23

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

House A10, Sequence 24, 2.50 p.m.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Sir, there are people in the international community who watch us and who feel that they want to graduate us back to some other state of pauperisation. It just is not going to happen. We have, on Both Sides, B, D, E, and F, all colours, all shades, all creeds and classes to ensure that we maintain Barbados= stature, status and position in this global community.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member poking some fun at me - in relation to non nationals living in Barbados, particularly Guyanese. Sir, let me make this final point. This Government is resolved to have a proper-type and a well-articulated-managed migration policy.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: We have obligations under the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, but we also have human and social responsibilities, as signatories to all kinds of International Conventions on Human Rights. If our immigration fails, and persons get into Barbados that should not be here, to the extent that we can invite them to leave, we will do so, but, when those persons are in Barbados, it is our responsibility and our duty to ensure that those persons are looked after, but in the least to ensure that we do not have persons in Barbados, dispossessed of fundamental rights and privileges, like the access to health care, housing and schools. Sir, we have made this point and we will make it again.

Mr. Speaker, people say that I tell the Guyanese they should come, and open the flood gates. I did not tell anybody to come. Mr. Speaker, I am telling you that once they are here, we cannot have little children riding around all day in constituencies, and when you ask why they are not in school, the excuse is that they are non nationals and they are not entitled to school, and those children are growing up finding mischief to do.

We cannot have women in this country, whether Guyanese, Jamaican, Antiguan who are pregnant and cannot get access to health care in Barbados. I am not part of that. I do not know who is part of that. This Government is not part of that. Sir, let me make it abundantly clear that we will meet our obligations. We will have a tight migration policy, but right is right and wrong is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, let me close on this. We need people in Barbados to set examples. Sir, behaviour is often learnt. You are not born a bad person. You are not born an indifferent person. You learn that behaviour. If we want young people to do the things that we get in here and other places and pontificate about and say that they should do, we have to change our behaviour too.

Sir, it is not just a superficial change. It has to be real change. That is why HIV/AIDS cannot be taken in isolation or by itself. It must be taken as an entire societal issue that relates to other diseases as well.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: The person that you cannot get disciplined enough to see more pork chops and leave them, is the person that is not going to have the discipline to see other pork chops and leave them too.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has three minutes in which to wrap up.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, what I am talking about is discipline. It is really a discipline. If you cannot discipline yourself to eat less, then you cannot discipline yourself to do other things. If you cannot discipline yourself to get a little exercise, and if you cannot discipline yourself to stop swearing, stop smoking, or stop telling lies...

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, people feel that you have a button that you switch on and switch off. Therefore, when it comes to HIV/AIDS - do not do this - switch on the button, and when you go there - switch it off,

but it does not work so. Life does not work so. Socialisation does not work so. Culture does not work so.

Finally, Sir, I want to say to our cultural icons that I love all these symbols that we hold up, and I think they are making a great contribution but they have responsibilities too, because they send mixed messages. We have radio stations in Barbados and I heard the management of some of these stations coming on and saying that it is not true. They do not do this.

Sir, if you listen to them carefully, in the dead of the night when they think nobody is listening, you will hear the kinds of raw and vulgar lyrics. Then they come with the foolish excuse that they have two versions to the song, a radio version and a dance hall version. Sir, let me tell you, that is not so.

Mr. Speaker, the young people go in the dance hall and hear the dance hall version and when the radio version plays, they just substitute the words. They take out the radio version and put in the dance hall version. It happens and, therefore, you cannot expect to have those kinds of double standards and then want young people to behave any better. It is just not going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is an issue that is of national importance. I think we can come together as Parties, and as a Parliament, and I think that we can work to bring down these numbers, to reverse the trends, to improve on what we have done already. I hope and pray to God that we can do so in the fastest possible time, using the least resources, and with the kinds of clinical and acute applications that are necessary in this particular regard.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I had originally intended to speak in this debate next week, as the Leader of Government Business has intimated that further consideration of this debate will take place next week.

I must confess that the quality of speeches I have heard today, has caused me to want to speak today. I say so with all sincerity because it is not often in an adversarial Westminster-type system that there is unanimity of purpose and clarity of vision and steadfastness expressed, as to the kind of development agenda that we want for this country and for our people.

I want, in speaking to echo much of what has been said, to support much of it, and to say that in a very real sense, it reflects the maturity not just of this Parliament, but of this country. Sir, matters of fundamental significance to the ability of Barbadians to live and to be able to prepare for themselves and their families in the next generation. We should unite in the purpose to be able to fight common challenges.

I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West who last spoke, spoke eloquently in relation to some of the societal challenges that we face. I have always been firm of the view that you cannot isolate the behaviour that leads to the kinds of challenges that we confront, whether it is in terms of HIV/AIDS, whether it is in terms of chronic non-communicable diseases, whether it is in terms of violence, whether it is in terms of substance abuse, or a whole range of other types of behaviours.

In a very real sense, the challenge that is going to confront us as a country over the course of the second generation of Independence, will be the recognition that a government can only go so far and no further.

House A10, Sequence 24, 3:00:14

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, unless there is the empowerment of your citizens, unless there is a change of behaviour and an acceptance of responsibility, and unless we understand that none but ourselves, at the individual level, at the family level, at the community level and ultimately at the national level, can make those differences, then a Government would never be successful in being able to limit the negative consequences that flow from many of these difficulties that we face.

Mr. Speaker, it is a serious issue. Sir, upon Independence, we came with the perspective that Government was the be-all and the end-all in terms of righting the wrongs of the past. Mr. Speaker, Government had to play that role given our historical realities.

We live in a world today where it is cheaper and quicker to move information than it is to move people. We live in a Barbados today where four times our population visit this country on an annual basis. We live in a Barbados today where more information that is used is processed and developed from outside of this country than from within. In that context, the ability to be able to hold steadfast to values that have brought us safe thus far cannot simply be taken for granted anymore.

We live in a world in which, even in the face of physical war in Iraq and other parts of the world, the real war that we face is the war of the mind. The cultural

dominance that has been established by certain countries in the Western Hemisphere has effectively undermined the ability of many countries to be able to retain their sovereignty and to be able to deal with issues that ultimately affect how individual citizens treat to problems.

What does all of this have to do with an HIV/AIDS debate and a National Strategic Plan? As a country, we have taken this challenge seriously. As was indicated, the level of seriousness was reflected in placing it in the Prime Minister's Office. As was indicated, we have said, as a country, that we felt that we needed to do things that other countries in the developing world were not even doing. More than 10 years ago when we started to give the drug AZT to pregnant mothers, it was not being done in most of the developing world. We have been able to reduce the mother to child transmission ratio to under 1 per cent.

As a developing country, we have provided the anti-retroviral treatment such that persons who are confronted with the fact that they do not have the resources themselves but have AIDS are able to think and to realise that they can have a longer life because the State would be the buffer and provide that access to that treatment for them. We have done all of those things.

Mr. Speaker, what is worrisome is that in spite of all of the things we have done, the incidence would always be a problem as long as the behaviour continues. This is the point that I want to pick up from the last Honourable Member who spoke and to say to the country that there is no division between the Government and the Opposition on this fundamental issue because it is that underlying behaviour that places the individual, their family and ultimately the country at risk.

Mr. Speaker, when the economic studies were done initially, the projection was left untapped and left to its own device. This could cost us as much as 6 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product. That is what we confronted. The stories that we know of in relation to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa where the average age of death has dropped by decades is living evidence of what could have confronted us.

There is a perspective that I share sometimes that because Barbados has better mechanisms for collection of public health data than most other countries, you are probably getting a more accurate reading and therefore we are always closer to the top of the table. Mr. Speaker, the truth is, there is no comfort in that. As long as it remains a problem for some of us, it is a problem for all of us. That is the fundamental point.

What, therefore, lies ahead of this nation is not the easy part of making a decision. Even if fiscal resources are tight, we can make the decision to pay for the anti-

retroviral treatment. Even if the debates may be contentious, you can pass the legislation that you have to pass. Even if you have to make decisions about additional staffing, whether in the Ministry of Health, National Insurance and Social Security or from the perspective of the Commission, you can make those decisions.

The difficult action is to get each person in this country to take responsibility for themselves, their lives and their behaviour. That is a challenge that would not be achieved by the current Government, by the last Government, or by any Government in any short-term window. That is why there must be unanimity in this House, and across this country, as to what is the required action in terms of being able to change that type of behaviour.

There are issues pertaining to self-esteem that have to be confronted fully and squarely. It is all right to tell somebody to just say "No", but to get those three words out of their mouth is a monumental task, particularly if the person with whom they are having even a conversation, far less negotiating in some other form of activity, is somebody who they feel, for whatever reason, is better than them. The issues of self-esteem and self-love are really where it must start.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot deal with the schools alone without dealing with the adults. There has to be paralleled action on all fronts. Issues in relation to economic dependency continue also to be a problem.

I believe it was the Honourable Member for St. James North who gave a wonderful speech in here today, who made the point that, in many instances, people use sexual favours as a bargaining chip in order to be able to not openly get money but to get a buffer to support themselves. Mr. Speaker, in very many instances, it is not hard cash, but some other kind of favour that makes their lives easy. Those are the realities of the society in which we live.

Mr. Speaker, when you ask somebody, therefore, to just say "No" or to use a condom as a precondition for having sex, the process of them being able to get it out and do it is a different thing from the academic acknowledgement that I should do it.

Sir, we have to go into the communities and work with people. I believe that the programme the Commission did, ASister Speak@, some years ago was an indication that part of the difficulty was not just the sensitisation of the value of a condom but the negotiation of the ability to be able to use it or require its usage. These are some of the things that would face us.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned because I know how hard it is - I believe the Government is coming to grips with it - for you to run a Government in a small developing country where your flexibility of policy is becoming narrower and where the international arena believes that you should be penalised for having done well. As the Honourable Member for St. Michael West said, in relation to our relationships with the international financial institutions, the graduation of middle income countries threatens their pauperisation.

We have said so over and over in the last few years and we will continue to say so. There must be a sensitisation that no matter how well we have done as a country, there are a few things that threaten to undermine that progress. HIV/AIDS is one. Climate change is another. Violence, not in the way that we see it in Barbados, thank God, but how it is being exhibited in many other Caribbean countries, is another.

We have therefore to be firm. We have to continue to fight for policy space, flexibility and for access to concessional funding and grants simply because the very nature of our size imposes on us an inherent vulnerability that we cannot change. It is not good enough for them simply to say that by a raw calculation of per capita, they believe that we are doing too well.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition, when we were in Government, outlined our views to the World Bank and to the Inter-American Development Bank that we believe that there must be space for countries such as ours to be able to access developmental funding for issues that threaten to undermine the viability of the society and the State. We are firm on that point of view.

House A10 Sequence 25

3.10 p.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I also believe that the issue of stigma is one that we must confront. Sir, the Urban Development Commission, and I believe the Rural Development Commission, were quietly carrying out the job of constructing houses for persons living with HIV/AIDS on behalf of the Commissions. I believe that must continue because, in many instances, persons do not have access to money. They are marginalised in terms of their earning capacity, and the society must be prepared to take care of those who can least take care of themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I must confess that I feel strongly that we have to talk these things through. Sir, as the Honourable Member for St. James North has said, even the most educated among us sometimes are likely to want to shun

and avoid these persons. Sir, that may be one's initial instance, but because behavior is learned, we need to show people that ought not to be the response that we honour or respect in this country.

Sir, people make judgments easily when it does not affect their families, their loved ones, or themselves. Sir, people make these judgments in a cavalier fashion, for example, the death penalty. People say there should be no death penalty, but when the same person whose family member is attacked, brutally raped, and killed, would then change his or her position some time overnight.

Mr. Speaker, Tanya Stevens, who is believed to be one of the best writers in the Caribbean when it comes to music, has written a song that our radio stations - and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West would agree with me - do not believe they should play that music because it has positive lyrics, instead they would play what young people call the "dutty" music. Sir, she has a song called: ADo you still care?@ that, perhaps, is the best representation of the point I just tried to make, that is, so long as it is not about you, it is easy to pass judgment and not to care.

She went on to say in her song that a gentleman, who is a member of the Klu Klux Klan for all of his life, does not believe that the black race is equal to the white race. In fact, he believes they are inferior, until he needs the donation for a liver, and the only person who is there to be that donor is a black person.

Mr. Speaker, once persons find themselves in that predicament, do you still care that the liver comes from a black person? Sir, I live by a very simple premise in my life, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Sir, I truly believe if everyone in this country treated everyone else as they would want to be treated, we would not have to be here discussing the stigma that attaches persons who live with HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, as we treat to these issues, we also have to be careful that we do not talk about these issues, even if appearing to be sympathetic, as though these persons are not living or as if they are on the side. Sir, these persons become hurt the same way they feel happy, the same way everything with them is the same. Sir, because it has become a major policy response, there is also a risk of treating them as a detached entity, as if blood does not flow in their veins and as if they are not aware.

Mr. Speaker, I, therefore, believe that the inculcation of those values of tolerance and compassion and the recognition that one must be empathetic....There is no greater value than empathy because it allows us to understand whether the treatment we are meting out to the

other person is one which we would be prepared to accept as an individual.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome this debate. I believe the work of the National Commission on HIV/AIDS has been outstanding in this country. Sir, I say so without fear of contradiction because I have had the pleasure, over the course of the years, to have worked with them on occasions. I also believe that Barbados is a leader in the global community in its fight against HIV/AIDS, and that, very often, we do not stop to recognise or to thank those who have brought honour and distinction to this country.

Sir, while, without a doubt, the leadership of the Chairman, who has distinguished herself in the global fight, the Director and other members of the Commission, the staff of the Ministry, the persons in the Office of the former Prime Minister and persons in the present Administration have done well, the truth is there are some ordinary Barbadians in communities across this country who have taken up the fight against HIV/AIDS with a passion.

Sir, in my own constituency, I can think of not just the Youth Commissioners, but youngsters in youth groups, who have bandied themselves into almost teams, who go out and work. Sir, in every domino tournament they have in St. Michael North East, they take up contributions for the food bank. There is a whole set of activities going on, that are not inspired from the top down, but it is the natural response of people.

Mr. Speaker, I had earlier on the reality of having to deal with someone who worked closely with me, who was 30 years old dying from HIV/AIDS. It was a traumatic experience, largely because we saw someone who was absolutely brilliant and for whom there was a whole range of possibilities, from academic to artistic, to all kinds of things. In those days we were not given the anti-retroviral treatment free of cost. There was a charge. Sir, perhaps, had he been diagnosed earlier, and had access to that anti-retroviral treatment, he might still be living today. Mr. Speaker, these are the realities that we face and that is why I say there has to be a forthrightness and a commitment.

Sir, I was pilloried in this country a few years ago in saying that I believed that a country that discriminated, that for the majority of its life had people discriminated against, should not brook discrimination of any kind. That has nothing to do with whether or not you want to pass laws, or change those laws. I believe, fundamentally, there are some things that must be equated with human dignity, and that those of us who come from a history and genealogy where the majority of our people have been discriminated against, must not discriminate against others.

Mr. Speaker, it is for the same reason I find it difficult to read stories in the last two weeks about how South Africans have been treating migrants in South Africa. Sir, this is a country that has barely known what it is to have rights accorded to its citizens for 20 years, which should now be on the pages of global newspapers, perpetrating acts against migrants in South Africa. Sir, these acts are uncalled for, uncivilised and should not be part and parcel of their modern experience as a nation.

Mr. Speaker, these are the conversations that we need to have but there must be a benchmark below which we must accept that human dignity must not fall. Sir, I trust and hope this debate would signal, not just to the country, but to those outside of Barbados, that there is maturity in this country and that there is a unanimity of purpose. I hope too that there is a common vision as to what we believe to be sacrosanct in relation to human life and dignity, and what we believe to be the level below which neither party would go, as we prepare this country to continue to fight what is really the new face and new challenge. Sir, how do we stop the new incidents by seeking to fight the cultural wars that have undermined our values and behaviour, such that they render our populations more vulnerable than there might have been 30 or 40 years ago?

3.20 p.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, before 1970, there were no drug cases really in our Court, now they constitute perhaps as much as three quarters of the Court's workload. Sir, the society changes and values change. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West spoke about how some women choose to carry themselves. I can only say, and I have said to the Attorney General when he said it that, clearly, they do not realise that less is more and that there is virtue in making people imagine rather than to see all upfront.

Sir, I believe that a lot of that goes back to a lack of self-esteem. Sir, we try to work with the radio stations and they may try to make a change for a few weeks but then they fall back down. We try to work with the artistes. They may try to make a change for a few weeks but then they fall back down.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I cited Daniel Stephens. Why do you hear only the music that incites them to loose behaviour but you do not hear the music that incites you to be able to build your mind, to build your tolerance and to build your self-esteem? Maybe, if we achieve nothing more from this debate than the message going out to the country that there is no divide between the two political parties in this country and that we believe there is time to take back aspects of our country with the ability to be able to root our

people in a value system that makes sense to who and what we are, that if we can achieve that, maybe those in the media and maybe those in other areas of life, social and economic, will understand that we mean business and that we are not prepared to allow this country to be laid bare to the vagaries and the risks that would lead to the kind of behaviour that will decimate the population of this country as it has done in other countries across the world.

If that is all we can achieve from this debate today, then we would have done well and we would have done it as our duty recognising that we are really not the ones who have power in this battle. We may just be the guardian. We may just be the facilitators but, ultimately, it would do well for every member of this country to heed the words of Mahatma Ghandi that Athere be the change that they seek@. If you want to live a long and prosperous life, then you have to take responsibility for your actions.

Sir, for every action, for every choice you make, there is a consequence and sometimes we do not talk it through with people, sometimes we talk too much at people instead of talking with people and, Sir, it is this kind of conversation. I believe that if the HIV Commission were to call on members on us in here to be part and parcel of their community sensitisation, not with one side and one side separately but with one and one, going together so that people understand that there is no political divide on this issue that, certainly, I commit on behalf of the Barbados Labour Party to participate in that kind of activity for the wider and national good.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

NOTICES OF QUESTIONS (Recommitted)

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Will the Prime Minister state the following:

Question No. 1 - To ask the Prime Minister

Will the Prime Minister state whether he undertook any overseas travel between February 17, 2008 and February 25, 2008, in his official capacity as Prime Minister or public capacity as Political Leader of the Democratic Labour Party?

(a) If so, will the Prime Minister indicate which aircraft or airline was used and whether such aircraft or airline was commercial or private??

(b) If such aircraft was not a commercial carrier, will the Prime Minister indicate the ownership of the aircraft and the operating conditions of the licence?

(c) Will the Prime Minister state whether this entity, its related companies whether parent, affiliate or subsidiary

has any contractual relationship with the Government of Barbados?

(d) Will the Prime Minister state whether Government has paid for this official travel and if not whom?

(e) Further, what was the amount paid for each trip?

(f) If the trip and/or trips were paid for by Government, will the Prime Minister please state if this is the commercial rate normally charged or was there any subsidy received by the Government or any premium paid by the Government?

2. To ask the Prime Minister: 1. Will the Prime Minister in the interest of full transparency and accountability state whether Government has created a post of political advisor to the Prime Minister or whether anyone has been contracted to provide political services to the Prime Minister? 2. If so, will the Prime Minister state: (a) whether a contract has been executed to give effect to such a post? (b) who is the holder of that post and what are the terms and conditions of any such contract and/or engagement? 3. Further, will the Prime Minister state: (a) whether the holder of that post has undertaken overseas travel in such capacity since January 15, 2008? (b) the details of such travel and how it was financed?

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (resumed)

ORDER NO. 3 (resumed)

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is the order of the day. The Honourable Member for St. Michael Central.

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was first going to comment that our political ancestors must be rubbing their hands in glee at the nonpartisanship of the direction the debate has taken so far for the day. It is now 3.35 p.m. and, of course, that nonpartisan nature has been brought to a screeching halt.

Certainly, Sir, I want to first congratulate the Honourable Member for St. George South for bringing these Resolutions to Parliament and also to further congratulate the National Commission on HIV for their work that has been nothing short of stellar in bringing the matters of HIV/AIDS to the fore in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I was a young man of 28 years old when the first incident of HIV/AIDS was diagnosed in Barbados; a pandemic that has taken on enormous proportions in this country, so enormous the proportions, Mr. Speaker, of a population of 277 000, we now have 1.7

per cent of the population being affected with HIV/AIDS. If you want to quantify that amount, it is 4, 700 people affected with HIV/AIDS in Barbados. Sir, most of the Cavalcades that have been held so far this Crop Over season, we have had averages of about 5 000 people, if you want to quantify how many people in Barbados at any one time suffering from HIV/AIDS, you can look at the people who attend one of these Cavalcades and you can quantify what a significant number of people in Barbados suffer from HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, between the years 2003 and 2004, some \$10 million, 0.38 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product, our national budget has been spent towards HIV/AIDS and our per capita expenditure some....

Asides.

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: Sir, that is a significant amount of money to be spent on any one particular facet in our society and, therefore, it is a significant expenditure on our Government.

Mr. Speaker, HIV/AIDS has changed the complexion of Barbados for all times and it has changed our sexual habits. I have three sons, two teenaged, and they are at the points where they are beginning to explore the things that young men ought to be exploring, if they are my sons.

3.30 p.m.

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Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: Sir, I feel very sorry not only for them, but young men of similar vintages, because it is at that age they begin to explore. I believe that they have not really - I want to couch my language carefully - experienced the real thing. That is purely because the use of a condom at this age is extremely essential and necessary because of what can happen with the non usage of a condom at this stage would bring about. Therefore, it has brought about some change in sexual habits and also a change in our behaviours.

Sir, it has decimated families throughout the length and breadth of Barbados. Both parents have died of AIDS leaving children parentless. Children, because they have been born to an HIV infected mother they themselves die eventually. We once had a large homosexual or transvestite population. They, themselves, have been decimated. Known homosexual and transvestites who were seen parading on the streets in Barbados, several have left the scene because of this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, like I said before, it has changed the face of Barbados for all time. Sir, there is discrimination throughout the length and breadth of Barbados, especially in the workplace, playing fields, schools and churches. There is even discrimination when it comes to acquiring life insurance, health insurance or any kind of insurance in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the leading cause of death, according to the statistics presented to us in these reports, between the ages of 15 and 49 years, 76.5 per cent of HIV cases are located in that particular category. That is a staggering statistic, one that leaves us, of course, almost dumbfounded.

Sir, this HIV/AIDS policy that is being brought to this Honourable House today is of extreme importance. I believe that, as a Government, and as an Opposition, as we have exhibited today, we should throw our full support behind whatever is presented in this document to help in this situation regarding HIV/AIDS.

Sir, the policy clearly states that it advocates for the mitigation of the social impact of HIV/AIDS on the population, thereby reducing new cases or incidents ensuring sustainable development of our nation.

Only today, I was discussing with one of my Honourable colleagues that the emphasis by us all, as a collective, should really be towards the prevention of HIV/AIDS. There is a heavy focus, of course, in this document and in the additional documents provided for us, in the treatment of HIV/AIDS sufferers. I believe a larger chunk of the national budget should be focussed towards prevention rather than the area of care.

Sir, another case that comes to mind readily is the cost of implementing the activities, under the priority programme areas over a five-year period. Over a five-year period, it is estimated that it will cost about \$180 million. This year, between 2008/2009, it is going to cost \$18 million, \$4.9 million towards prevention, \$10.2 million towards treatment, and an additional \$2.7 million towards care and support, placing a heavy emphasis on treatment, care and support, a total of about \$10.7 million in comparison with the \$4.9 million on the prevention side, showing a stark disparity in the allocation of funds when it comes to those two segments.

I believe that the way forward in this regard is to reallocate or provide a larger chunk of funds for the question of prevention, bringing some balance and narrowing the divide between treatment, care, support and prevention. That is just my suggestion.

Sir, the objective of the policy is to achieve positive and sustained behavioural change, not only among the

vulnerable and the marginalised groups, but also across the entire population. I believe we should be paying some attention to that also, because those who have contracted the AIDS virus, we can apply the anti-retroviral drugs and other drugs applied to sustain as long as possible their lives, and to make the quality of their lives better, but certainly, as I said before, we should redirect a sizable chunk of our resources towards the question of prevention.

Sir, prevention comes in a number of ways, and it has been outlined here within the overall framework of the policy consideration, that advocacy and communication, stigma and discrimination, confidentiality and support, gender, culture, age, poverty and social exclusion are all areas of which they are taking a look at.

I want to look primarily today at advocacy and communication. I believe that when it comes to this particular segment, we should explore a better way of getting the message across. I want to congratulate the Commission for the job they have been doing so far in reaching the people they intend to, but, of course, there is always more that can be done. Therefore, one of my Honourable colleagues on This Side has already made mention of using our national icons, especially in the cultural and entertainment categories, to further get the message across to not only their peers, but people whom they have a direct influence on in making that lifestyle change, in the case of prevention.

Sir, television shows and advertising - those areas have been exploited, but I believe some further work needs to be done in that regard. When it comes to the cultural and community development aspect, which fall directly under my purview, as Minister of Culture and Community Development, I want to say that we, in the Ministry, have stepped up to the plate and we are offering in our community centres across the length and breadth of Barbados, programmes that are helping to spread the word, educate and in some ways bring the ordinary citizen into the loop, when it comes to the education regarding AIDS and things associated with it.

Sir, we have had education given to community members, bars, patrons and facts about HIV/AIDS. We provide an opportunity for the involvement of the private businesses in the fight against this scourge. We also provided the involvement of community organisations in the HIV Prevention Programme to provide opportunities to educate teachers and students about HIV/AIDS through the medium of quiz and also question and answer programmes.

We provided an informal atmosphere for HIV/AIDS awareness programmes to provide the opportunity to the public about HIV/AIDS through the performing arts and also the cultural expressions of that kind.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone further within our community development programme of assisting the National HIV/AIDS Commission by increasing the awareness through STDs and STIs among youth, to create a wholesome activity, and to make our young people more aware of healthy living, and to do it in their own space within the community centres across Barbados.

Sir, we are also promoting healthy lifestyles to improve health awareness among community members through several health fairs being held in Barbados.

3.40 p.m.

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House A10, Sequence 29, 3.40 p.m.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: We are also encouraging persons to be activists in the face of challenges with HIV/AIDS and the violence that affect the quality of life of children. We are doing this by developing an understanding of HIV/AIDS and violence on men and women alike' to assist Church leaders with getting the message across to their respective congregations, to further the educational programme, with specific focus for the Churches, the Christian communities and religious bodies in Barbados.

In this regard, I am pleased to say that in the Ministry of Community Development and Culture, we are doing our bit. We are assisting in the drive and in the education process in making Barbadians aware of what is happening regarding HIV/AIDS. We are bringing Barbadians, at the grass-roots level and in their own space, into the loop and making them quite aware of what is happening in Barbados regarding HIV/AIDS.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend again, and congratulate the HIV/AIDS Commission, its Chair and its Members. I believe that Barbados would be the poorer, was it not for the fact that this group of people is in the fray and making things happen regarding educating and getting the word out to our people in Barbados.

I believe, as a government, we have taken the right step in bringing these Resolutions to Parliament today. Again, I want to commend the Honourable Member for St. George South for having the foresight in bringing these Resolutions to Parliament. It is all right to have them in your Ministry, but it must take some will, political and otherwise to put these things on the front burner and to bring them into a national focus, and bringing them to Parliament, so we can have some direction in where we could take this question of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for the City.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the motion before this Honourable House, the Barbados HIV/AIDS policy and the strategic plan.

Sir, we heard the Honourable Member for St. Thomas= criticism of the current Democratic Labour Party Government for moving the Government=s fight against HIV/AIDS from the Prime Minister=s office to the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports, and the Environment. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas suggested that this reduced the importance that the Government placed in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further than the truth.

Mr. Speaker, in our system of Government, it is not a dictatorship. It is not a one member Cabinet. Does the Honourable Member for St. Thomas and That Side wish to send the Prime Minister to an early grave? We have seen situations all around the world, even in Barbados, where Prime Ministers died in office. The doctors would argue that the strains that are involved in being a Prime Minister could have resulted in their death from heart disease or whatever. Sir, in some jurisdictions, such as the United States of America and Venezuela, they limit the terms of office of Prime Minister to no more than two consecutive terms, accepting the stress that is commensurate with being in that position. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with a government deciding to appreciate this fact, for example, in this case where the fight against HIV/AIDS is now located within the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment.

Mr. Speaker, within the policy document, it is made very clear that the Government realises that the youths are particularly vulnerable within our society. In terms of targetting the intervention of the fight against HIV/AIDS, we realise that the young people would be the future of our country, the Prime Ministers, doctors, lawyers and preachers, and we must safeguard them. They are vulnerable because they are impressionable. They are not fully matured physically and psychologically, and therefore, they are more susceptible to the negative behaviours that we are seeking to change within our society.

Mr. Speaker, when we do surveys, we are all concerned at the fact that many young people are engaging in sexual activities of one sort or another from a very young age, even before they leave primary school. Therefore, it is important to focus on them to really make

them aware of what constitutes high risk sexual behaviour. We also have to instill upon them, a sense of ownership in the fight against HIV/AIDS in terms of developing some moral foundation that would keep them - as the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West mentioned - disciplined.

As I see it, if you have an anchor of some sort of fundamental moral code - be it religious or whatever - then, this would be a benchmark from which we could modify our sexual behaviour. Sir, I congratulate the Government for having the foresight to place the fight against HIV/AIDS within the bosom of this new Ministry which deals, as I mentioned, not just with the youth, but the family, creating proper family values that would make people resolute in their moral fabric to fight the temptations to engage in high-risk sexual behaviour. Sir, I dismiss the Opposition=s criticism in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, the last Government may have made an effort in the fight against HIV/AIDS, but I can critique their approaches. For example, we note that the disabled community is another vulnerable group. They have physical or mental challenges. They may be physically challenged in terms of being hearing impaired or visually impaired. Therefore, if the message of HIV/AIDS awareness and safer sex behaviours is not presented in a way that is accessible to them, the use of braille and the use of sign language, then the message is lost to them. Sir, this is an important sector of our community.

Mr. Speaker, there are even suspicions now that this group is very sensitive and vulnerable, and needs urgent attention. Certainly within the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development where we have the National Disabilities Unit, we assure the public of Barbados that this Democratic Labour Party Government will not forget the need to reach out to the disabled community in Barbados in terms of the fight against the HIV/AIDS national response.

Mr. Speaker, furthermore, it is true that the last Government did appoint staff members to be HIV/AIDS coordinators in the various Ministries, but this Democratic Labour Party Government has found a situation in which these persons have been left almost on their own. They did not have sufficient financial and human resources to strengthen their work and make their work within their particular Ministry more meaningful and effective.

This is a valuable criticism and we in the Democratic Labour Party Government pledge to really improve this situation so that the fight against HIV/AIDS is comprehensive.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: This is captured within the bosom of the National HIV/AIDS Policy, where we realise that it has to be a holistic approach, engaging not only just the public sector, but civil society as a whole, including the private sector, so that we can have an aggressive control of the spread of HIV/AIDS. It is a war against the spread of HIV/AIDS.

House A10, Sequence 29, 3:50:14

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, we should not seek comfort in the fact that the morbidity and the mortality rate of HIV in the country has gone down due to the accessibility of anti-retroviral drugs, which really delays death at the Ladymeade Reference Centre. There is no cure for AIDS, so what we are simply doing is controlling the onset of the opportunistic diseases from which persons with full-blown AIDS would succumb and die.

Mr. Speaker, death is inevitable until we find a cure for this pandemic. Therefore, the country should not seek comfort to say we have decreased the number of deaths from HIV. Sir, if we do not seriously reduce the incidence of new HIV infections, then we really are spinning top in mud, because the outlay involved in providing AZT and other anti-retroviral drugs is enormous.

Mr. Speaker, if the number of new infections is not controlled and, in fact, increases, then clearly a developing country like Barbados would go bankrupt in terms of being able to provide a growing number of our citizens with these anti-retroviral drugs.

Mr. Speaker, it is a serious war. It is a war for the survival of humankind really, therefore, it is a global fight.

Mr. Speaker, rather than nitpick at this new Administration, the Opposition should not just say that they support us and, on the other hand, try to undermine our determination to continue to wage war and to win this war against AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, in recent years, leaders over on the Other Side have been fairly ambivalent and soft on the concept of buggery. Mr. Speaker, we must be frank. This is a question of life and death. I am very liberal. I keep to myself. There are people of various religious orientations within the country and we have to respect each other's viewpoint.

I am not saying that the ontological approach to ethics and philosophy, where you argue that religious moral values, be it the Ten Commandments, must predominate in the Laws of the land. The people of a country have the right to determine their destiny and we are

here as lawmakers with that responsibility and mandate to legislate. Mr. Speaker, I am saying that a moral foundation helps to inform us. Sir, if we do not have this sense of direction, we as a people would be like a rudderless ship going all over the place without any clear focus.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party Government is bold enough to say to the public of Barbados that we will not legalise prostitution or buggery, be it buggery involving a male on a female, or a male on a male. It is against the Laws of the land, and the Democratic Labour Party Government has no intention to alter this fact. We know that there are limitations in terms of people.

We cannot put hidden cameras in people's bedrooms, but according to the Laws of Barbados, buggery is illegal. Two consenting adults, whether they are male and female or male and male, cannot determine that they, in the privacy of their bedroom, are going to engage in buggery because if it was videotaped, and it was sent to the Police you would have a prima facie case because the Law, as I understand it, I am not a lawyer, is that once the persons are caught in the act of buggery you have a case to prosecute them. Mr. Speaker, people would have to account to a higher being for what they do, so I am not here passing judgement on anyone.

Mr. Speaker, this high-risk behaviour impacts on the spread of HIV/AIDS and affects all of us as citizens in this country. As the Honourable Member for St. George South mentioned, I have seen on a number of condoms the writing that this product is not recommended for anal sex. Sir, the aggressiveness of this action could obviously tear the latex fabric and spread the virus.

Mr. Speaker, the nonsense about making condoms freely accessible to prisoners is a false sense of security. The last Administration shied away from this and that is why they are now in the Opposition because the public of Barbados was not willing to surrender to any international pressure to promote promiscuity, prostitution and buggery in all forms and fashions. They said they had enough of this and they voted the Barbados Labour Party out of office. Mr. Speaker, the concept of buggery is high-risk behaviour, that is why it is outlawed.

Mr. Speaker, in the fight against HIV/AIDS, we must be frank about this issue. I am not talking about homophobia. I am not in that. Mr. Speaker, we talked about music. I like a lot of the reggae music and what we call the "bashment" and the dance hall music, but when you hear some of those international artistes, very popular, talking about >Shaka bottie boy and boom bye boy, bottie boy must die=, very dangerous lyrics, they are promoting violence against homosexuals. I frown upon that because homosexuals are human beings too. They could be our brothers, our sisters or our friends. We know them. They

have rights too. We do not have to condone their behaviour.

In fact, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas supported that really. I made note of her speech as she was speaking. She spoke about something from the back as opposed to the front and she did not like that, so I know that I have support in that regard. That was male on female, but male on male, I also would support that.

Mr. Speaker, I notice that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas said nothing about lesbianism. Mr. Speaker, again, this is high-risk behaviour. Many people are silent on this. As I would say again, people have to account to a higher being for their behaviour. I do not promote lesbianism. I am a heterosexual. In fact, they say that balding men have an extra dose of testosterone, the male sex hormones, so I am 110 per cent heterosexual, and this is what I promote. We cannot force people to be heterosexuals, but we can encourage them to be. This is what this Honourable Member promotes.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the fight against HIV/AIDS, you would notice that not enough is said about this high-risk behaviour. When you are using a condom, that is normal heterosexual behaviour. In lesbian activity, you are talking about the exchange of vaginal fluids, be it cunnilingus, the connection of the vagina or the clitoris.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that some people would be getting very nervous about this language, but we are adults and this is a serious matter. I am saying that in the fight against HIV/AIDS, we have to address the lesbian behaviour. If people engage in this, then they must be engaging in safer sex, but there is nothing called safer sex. One activity may be safer than the other. That is why I support those Honourable Members who said that we must be careful about what message we send. We cannot give the general public, particularly the youth, the view that you just have to put on a condom and all would be well. Condoms are known to slip off. You have to put them on when the penis is erect. Some people do not know that. When the penis is no longer erect, the condom could slip off. Many people do not know this.

Mr. Speaker, you could get incorrect use of the condom. The integrity of the latex can be undermined and you could get holes. In fact, there are some members of the Roman Catholic Church, even in Barbados, who did research and there is a school of thought that the HIV virus can actually pass through some condoms.

House A10 Sequence 30

4.00 p.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, we should not make the public believe we could be promiscuous, that we could have a million partners once using a condom and that all would be well. Therefore, there must be that sense of morality to encourage us to be disciplined, not to be greedy, and that we must stay with one partner of the opposite sex. That is the solution.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to see in the fight against HIV/AIDS that we address this issue of lesbian sexual activity. Therefore, we must tell people up front that oral sex, or what is called fellatio, is high-risk behaviour, even among heterosexuals. Sir, it was only yesterday that at the age of 44, I know there was something called a "flavoured" condom on the market.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that people know these options are out there. When talking about the use of condoms, many young people believe it is quite okay to have unprotected oral sex. Therefore, they do not realise this is the exchange of body fluids, which is high-risk behavior. Therefore, we must send this serious message out to these vulnerable groups.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas has mentioned what is out there in terms of the cultural penetration from North America in these blue movies. Sir, I was not aware of those details but according to anecdotal evidence, I heard of some really horrendous sexual activities which are seen as being okay in North America, which is very rapidly creeping into Barbados on the Internet.

Sir, we are hearing about anal sex, in order to avoid pregnancy, and so a lot of young people are engaging in that. There are also orgies taking place in Barbados. Sir, I even heard of something called >dumping=, where people defecate on each other as a sense of sexual gratification.

Mr. Speaker, high-risked sexual behaviour is going on in Barbados. Sir, as I said, we cannot turn a blind eye to it because when these persons have finished having fun with each other, they end up as somebody=s boyfriend or girlfriend and you would not know, until it is too late.

Mr. Speaker, this is a war and, therefore, some people would not be comfortable talking about these issues, but we must stand up and be counted. We must take ownership and be responsible for our own behavior. This is why we are talking about behavior change. We are talking about this emphasis on addressing the fact that if you are engaging in sex, you have to be responsible.

Mr. Speaker, we heard the knocking of some of our disc jockeys, but I congratulate some of them. I listen to 95.3 F.M., 98.1 F.M., and the message from some of those disc jockeys is very positive. I do not want to call any

names but on both of those stations, I hear DJ=s telling young people to tarry till they marry. In other words, abstinence is okay. The DJ=s then they go on to say if the young people cannot wait, then they could at least use a condom.

Sir, those DJ=s must be congratulated. They are role models and have a tremendous influence on the young population of Barbados, and I encourage them to continue with the promotion of their positive messages. Mr. Speaker, we in the Democratic Labour Party are very resolute about our commitment to reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS, and this calls for the whole population to hold hands and to work together.

Sir, another fundamental flaw in the approach of the Barbados Labour Party in the fight against HIV/AIDS is that they did not provide enough resources, both human and financial, to the National HIV/AIDS Commission. Sir, that resulted in - and I got this from the horse=s mouth - the approach to the fight to HIV/AIDS was one in which abstinence was not promoted as a viable option, as soon as students got into secondary schools. Sir, it was okay to promote abstinence to the little ones in primary schools but it was felt that it was a waste of valuable resources to promote abstinence among young people in secondary schools and above. It was thought to be pointless. Mr. Speaker, I am saying that should not continue.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I hate to interrupt the Honourable Member in his stride but his reference to the last Administration, of which I am a part, not placing emphasis on abstinence is surely incorrect. Sir, it was a combination of a number of areas that have been promoted. Sir, therefore, I would wish that the Honourable Member would refrain from misleading this Honourable Chamber.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, you did not give me permission to call names but I am saying this is my understanding that abstinence was promoted as an option for primary school children but not for secondary and tertiary students. It is my understanding that the emphasis on the use of condoms was placed elsewhere because it was felt that the resources were not sufficient to allow the Commission to present abstinence as a viable alternative. Sir, I am saying this is a disgrace.

Mr. Speaker, two Sundays ago at the HIV/AIDS annual candlelight vigil, I heard "Bumba" Payne, a well-known calypsonian, rendering his award-winning song about abstinence, where he was promoting abstinence. Sir, there are still many people, both Christians and others, who determine that fornication is a sin. These people promote abstinence until one gets married.

Sir, we should not alienate this important sector of our community, who is seeking to adhere to this ideal. Sir, if we downplay abstinence as an option, these persons would be marginalised. They would be seen as nerds by their peers. They would undergo negative peer pressure and would easily succumb to promiscuous behavior.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the fight against AIDS. There is no cure on the horizon as yet and, as I mentioned, the use of condoms has its flaws. It is not about safe sex but about safer sex.

Mr. Speaker, I would go further and invite our population to seriously consider what option the Government has in terms of addressing young people, in particular, but any couple who presents themselves to the country=s magistrate or priest, saying they want to get married...

Mr. Speaker, in some American States, as I understand it, if a man and woman are about to get married, it is mandatory that they both have a blood test. Sir, I urge this country to seriously contemplate if it would not be useful for people, at the very least, to be encouraged very strongly to get tested. They must come together at the doctor=s office and get the test the same time, so that they would be aware of their HIV status, otherwise two people would be blindly going forward in just trust. Therefore, if one partner is HIV-positive and he or she may not even know, they could infect the other.

Sir, when you realise it, the use of condoms is not relevant to a married couple who is looking to have children. There will be unprotected sex, with no condoms involved. Sir, I would urge all players involved, the Churches, the community groups, et cetera, to promote very strongly to encourage people who are getting married to get tested before marrying.

Sir, I am a young man. I am not married, and this is an issue with which I have to deal. Therefore, I would be trusting the person I am looking forward to marrying with my life. Therefore, this is the sort of approach I personally have to address.

4.10 p.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Hon. P.M.T. Todd: Sir, there are lots of married people out there who are afraid because they are afraid that one partner is being unfaithful and they run and get tested. A lot of divorces are going on and people are dying because one partner affects the other.

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

Hon. P.M.T. Todd: Mr. Speaker, I believe there is a Ghanaian model certified against HIV/AIDS to be followed, the ABC approach, abstinence as the first ideal, and if that is not practical in the particular context, then B, be faithful to one partner. I do not know what they mean in Ghana but, in my view, the partner would be of the opposite sex and then C, would be condoms.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George South alluded to this in her presentation. The Honourable Member for St. George South, alluding to this in her presentation, talked about the fact that there is a concern about those persons who deliberately infect other people with the virus and I am saying that we as a nation have to look seriously at legislation. I understand in Trinidad on their Statute Books they have legislation to address this and I am calling for the country to implement legislation so that if someone, infected with HIV/AIDS deliberately infects someone with the virus, where that other person is not aware of the infected person's status and that results in the death of the second party, that should constitute murder.

Mr. Speaker, I am representing the people and this what is on the streets because now that we have the anti-retroviral drugs out there you cannot see people with all opportunistic disease symptoms like the loss of weight, lesions and so on, so that you know there is full-blown AIDS, and if you engage in sex with them, you know what precautions to take and what risks are involved.

Sir, now people are looking physically well and you do not know who is infected and who is not. I am calling for any discrimination against these persons, not at all because they have rights, but we must ensure that perspective is seen and we do not encourage people who are infected with HIV/AIDS to figure that because somebody gave it to them that it is their determination to infect as many people as they can.

Mr. Speaker, also with the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development, we have the Welfare Department. We have the Urban Development Commission and, as I have said before, these agencies are responsible for delivering vital services to persons infected with HIV/AIDS among others. Therefore, this Minister would not at all tolerate any discrimination in these departments against persons living with HIV/AIDS. Sir, in the past we talked about HIV/AIDS victims but this is discrimination and we encourage all and sundry to use the substitute Apersons living with HIV/AIDS@ because it could be me, you, your brother or sister.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central made the point that even in Barbados insurance companies discriminate. I have an insurance policy of \$200 000 and I had to get an HIV/AIDS test. I would not have got the policy if I were HIV/AIDS positive.

Sir, once your insurance policy is about \$100 000 this is mandatory and the Government has to address this blatant discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on but I am only saying that we must not be hypocritical and we must be consistent. Just as the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West said, we must be disciplined in terms of whether we over-eat, over-drink or what have you. We must be discipline. Within our policy and strategy they talk about the dominance of one partner over another in terms of sexual activity and this power issue.

We cannot promote the situation where we see lesbians beating up one another in public, or homosexuals, males, doing the same thing because you could end up with one partner raping the other and this is negative behaviour. Sir, it frightens me because when I go down town I see a lot of young unsuspecting girls out there, behaving more masculine than me and if all the men in Barbados or around the world were to be homosexuals or all the women, then human kind would be in jeopardy because there would be no procreation.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Government and we are going forward in this war to fight this dreaded pandemic to the last man and woman. Sir, we must not be hypocrites. We must be holding on the moral fabric of our society that frowns upon homosexuality, that frowns upon promiscuity, that promotes monogamous relationship among heterosexuals.

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

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

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, June 3, 2008, at 10.00 a.m., when hopefully we will continue debate on this Resolution.

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

The question that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, June 3, 2008 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

4.17 p.m.

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DUGID, DR. W.F.
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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Opening. The convening sentence is incomplete in the source ('the May 27, 2008, pursuant to the adjournment.'), and the meeting time is not stated. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Minutes. The Speaker's announcement reads 'The Minutes of Tuesday, May 13 ,2008, 2005'; the mover gives the date as Tuesday, May 13, 2008. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Papers and First Reading. Item 1 gives a quarter 'ended June 20, 2007', presumably June 30; the Housing paper reads 'The Iowa Report of the National Housing Corporation for the final year 2003 to 2004', presumably 'Annual Report' and 'financial year'; and the first Bill is given as 'Immigration (Amendment) and Valuation Bill, 2008'. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Suspension of Standing Orders. The motion to suspend Standing Orders is moved and seconded, but the source does not record the question being put. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 3, take-slips H10 Sequence 8 and House A10 Sequence 09, about 11.20 a.m.. The sentence about Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford appears on both sides of the take-slip: first as 'in April 1994 ... our focus ...', then as 'in 1894 to the first Global Conference on Sustainable Development'. Both are printed as in the source; 1894 is presumably 1994.

Q7. Order No. 3, Miss C. Y. Forde's speech. One paragraph beginning 'Mr. Speaker, I also want to refer to the Millennium Goals. Sir, Goal VI speaks of HIV/AIDS' has been set as a speech heading in the source, with the quotation that follows as its text; the words are Miss C. Y. Forde's. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Order No. 3, after Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley's speech. 'NOTICES OF QUESTIONS (Recommitted)', two questions to the Prime Minister given under Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley's name, and 'GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (resumed)' / 'ORDER NO. 3 (resumed)' appear in the middle of the debate as ordinary paragraphs rather than headings. Printed as in the source.

Q9. Throughout. The source carries word-processor conversion marks, such as 'Government=s' for Government's, 'Athere' for an opening quotation mark, and the label 'DR. W.F. DUGID' beside 'Dr. W.F. DUGUID'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Tuesday, 27th May, 2008, with Mr. SPEAKER in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood. The Minutes of Tuesday, 13th May, 2008 were confirmed on the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones. He laid the Reports of the Social Investment Fund for three quarters of 2007 and the Excise Tax (Rate of Tax) Order, 2008, and, for the Minister of Housing and Lands, a report of the National Housing Corporation for 2003 to 2004. The Immigration (Amendment) and Valuation Bill, 2008 and the Civil Aviation (Amendment) Bill, 2008 were read a first time, and Hon. D. A. C. Simmons moved the suspension of Standing Orders.

Dr. the Hon. E. R. Byer-Suckoo, of the Ministry of Family, Youth, Sports and the Environment, moved Order No. 3, the Resolution to take note of and approve the National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control 2008 to 2013, and with the Speaker's permission debated with it the Resolution on the Barbados National HIV Policy – A Framework for Action. She said HIV/AIDS had cost \$10 323 170 in 2004, 0.83 per cent of GDP, that 16 per cent of live births were to mothers under 20, and that the five-year plan would cost \$180 million. She urged that older people, mobile workers and the minibus culture be reached, called for anti-discrimination measures and action against deliberate transmission, and said the Government's focus would be its people. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce seconded.

Miss C. Y. Forde, speaking for the Opposition, supported both Resolutions, asked whether the new Government would keep anti-retroviral therapy free to all who qualified, and praised the Youth Affairs Department, noting that over 1 000 young people had joined sensitisation programmes; the Speaker at first gave her three minutes to conclude, not realising she was the Opposition's lead speaker. After the suspension Mr. D. St.E. Kellman regretted the partisanship of the debate and questioned reliance on the condom. Mr. J. D. Paul said that information, education and communication alone had not changed behaviour; Dr. W. F. Duguid asked that the brief he quoted be laid, and the Speaker ruled that it was the Member's own notes.

Mr. R. C. Eastmond said that in so small a society everyone must consider himself at risk. Hon. C. P. Sinckler spoke of drug and alcohol use among young people, television content, and the treatment of non-nationals under the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, who had meant to speak the following week, welcomed the unanimity of purpose, urged that the stigma be confronted, and recalled that the Urban and Rural Development Commissions had built houses for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Two questions from Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley to the Prime Minister, on his overseas travel between 17th and 25th February, 2008 and on any political adviser, are recorded as recommitted notices. The debate then resumed: Hon. S. D. Blackett spoke of the cost to Government and of young men and condom use, and Hon. P. M. T. Todd, for the City, warned against complacency over falling mortality and commended the ABC approach of abstinence, being faithful and condoms. Further consideration of the Resolution was postponed on the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones, and the House was adjourned until Tuesday, 3rd June, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.