
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour M. A. CARRINGTON, B.A., LL.B. (Speaker)

His Honour K. St.C. BEST, LL.B. (Hons.). L.E.C. (Deputy Speaker)

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B (Hons.) Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Labour, Civil Service and Energy)

Mr. G. W. PAYNE, Q. C.

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

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

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN:

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

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

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, M.B., B.S., B.Sc., (Minister of Economic Affairs and Empowerment, Innovation, Trade, Industry and Commerce)

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

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

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

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

Hon. F. J. STUART, Q.C., B.A., LL.M. (Deputy Prime Minister, Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, M.Sc. (C. Eng.) (Minister of Transport and Works)

Hon. E. G. F.C.C.A., C.A. (Minister of International Business and International Transport)

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

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

Dr. the Hon. D.S. LOWE, M.Ed., B.A., Ed.D.,

Dip. Theology (Minister of The Environment, Water Resources and Drainage)

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, Education and Human Resource Development)

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS, Dip., M.B.A., B.Sc., (Minister of Health)

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, M.Sc., B.A. (Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Rural and Urban Development)

Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is now in Session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, February 17, 2009.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the Minutes were circulated, and subject to any observations or corrections, I beg to move that these Minutes be confirmed.

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

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

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

Honourable Members, you may also recall that we had deferred from consideration of the Minutes of our Meeting of Friday, February 13, 2009. Therefore, we now have the Minutes of Friday, February 13, 2009.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of Friday, February 13, 2009, be taken as read.

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

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 12 – RESOLUTION TO MOVE THAT THE HOUSE RESOLVES ITSELF IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY TO CONSIDER THE GRANT OF SUMS OF MONEY FOR THE SERVICE OF THIS ISLAND.

On the motion of Hon. R. D. JONES, seconded by Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply. Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

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

TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$16 933 657 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2008-2009, AS

SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 19 2008-2009, WHICH FORM THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION.

HEAD 19

TREASURY

IN THE AMOUNT OF \$95 000

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, under Head 19 the matter is quite simple. You are very well aware of the desire of this Government and it has, in fact, moved to establish Missions beyond those which we currently have in other countries. There is a Mission to be established in the People's Republic of China and we therefore need to bring under this Supplementary the sum of \$30 000 for the purchase of vehicles and \$15 000 for the purchase of a soil sterilizer. Sir, these are very basic matters. Therefore, I beg to move that Head 19 stand part.

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

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

10.20 a.m.

HEAD 25

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT - \$1 455 000.

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, this is another simple matter which is calling for this amount of money. Sir, \$1.3 million of the total quoted is to cover operating cost for the remainder of the year. Sir, \$45 000 is to refit the Quarantine Container Laboratory and \$110 000 is to pay fees to a consultant for the Giant African Snail Eradication Project and the University of the West Indies for research activity.

Sir, these are basically non-contentious issues, because we have to protect the country from this ravaging giant African snail and great work is being done by several persons across this country. Of course, we need other persons to become involved in the process of the eradication of the giant African snail. We know why we have to have the Quarantine Container Laboratory in operation and this money is to retrofit it. Sir, as I have said,

\$1.3 million is to cover operating expenses for the remainder of the year to the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMC).

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 25 stands part.

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

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

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Chairman, I know that there is provision for the hiring and engagement of a consultant in respect of efforts to control the giant African snail. This pest has, more or less, invaded a substantial amount of our land mass and this pest seems to be able to multiply quickly, to be able to resist efforts at eradicating it and, Sir, a lot of farmers and people with kitchen gardens and all over Barbados have suffered the consequence.

Mr. Chairman, if the consultancy is going to result in greater efforts to mobilise communities to get rid of this snail, then clearly, the application before this Honourable House is to be supported. However, Mr. Chairman, I think Government needs to clarify one thing. In the 1950s and 1960s there were concerted efforts at enlarging the role that agriculture plays through the use of a range of activities, policies and programmes, including having a fair amount of extension officers. It seems to me as though, somewhere along the line, the 1970s and 1980s, at the urging of the non-political class that extension services declined because there was no more emphasis on locating extension officers and sending them around the country to assist farmers.

Mr. Chairman, one must be frank. One of the real difficulties in the Administration of agriculture in Barbados is that there are public officers very well placed to advise and assist but, who sometimes, quite frankly, operate, not in collaboration with those they serve, but in competition against those they serve.

Sir, there are persons working, particularly at the Ministry of Agriculture, who have their own private farms and who find ways and means to manage these farms in clear circumstances, where they should really be facilitating the farmers in the private sector, especially the small farmers, but instead they do their own thing and there is tension between the farming community and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. Chairman, I am not saying this is a political matter, either in a narrow sense, or in a broad sense. It is a matter that one has to face up to the fact that extension services have to be enhanced. The fact too, that those well placed at Agriculture should be able to contribute to the efforts of our farmers.

Mr. Chairman, one of the glorious achievements of agriculture, the Ministry and the country in recent memory, is that beginning around the mid-1990s, the total amount of food produced in Barbados, in terms of its value, was exceeding the value of our sugar industry. Sir, we came to a point, and the statistics would bear it out over a period of time, when the production of food started to exceed the production of cane, in terms of value. What that has meant is that efforts at diversifying agriculture along the way have paid off. However, our farmers are still faced with challenges.

Mr. Chairman, when one goes into farming, one goes into a fight against the weather, one goes into a fight against things like praedial larceny, one goes into a fight with gluts and scarcities and, Sir, gluts tend to undermine the efforts of farmers to get a good income, because wherever there is a glut, prices fall and even though the consumers benefit, the farmers complain.

Mr. Chairman, in our planning for agriculture, there is a need for us to go on the ground and see what the farmers are going through. There is a need to go on the ground to see how we could help farmers in Barbados. I do not think there is much effort at what we call crop insurance, because of the high risk associated with it and, in any case, crop insurance would be very expensive. Sir, as a Parliament, we have to do our best to help the farming community.

Mr. Chairman, efforts have been made, in recent memory, to resuscitate agriculture at the level of capturing the imagination of the public about the role of agriculture and, Sir, this is where Agrofest comes in. There is a good thing that a responsible corporate citizen, through the offices of the credit union, has seen fit to identify with Agrofest. Sir, Agrofest will never be an automatic replacement to the ancient agricultural exhibition, which was known as the "meet-me-by-the-clock" exhibition, where young persons coming to see the exhibits would meet by the clock and then go through the exhibits.

Mr. Chairman, the problem is, there was a hiatus between the collapse of the old agricultural exhibition and the advent of Agrofest. However, we on This Side are of the view that we must do our utmost to encourage people to produce in agriculture. Sir, we are into times that are very uncertain, and one of the uncertainties is, where is self-employment going to be generated, in a situation where the economic environment may be hostile

10.30 a.m.

in circumstances where there are persons who are employed in agriculture. We need re-look the incentives that have been granted over time with the view to lifting up the small farmers.

Sir, we have come to a situation where in an economic recession, and I have seen one in Trinidad between 1987 and 1989, people are often seen to turn to themselves, institution and families for support.

I would like to see incentives for backyard farming, or front road farming, whatever you want to call it. Each piece of available spare land where you can grow cabbage, lettuce, carrots, beets and such like.

All over Barbados we should be encouraging people to grow things, because it would help them to save, once they are not victims of praedial larceny. Usually, a kitchen garden close to your house is never the scene for praedial larceny. Once they can overcome any difficulties along the way and turn to the Ministry of Agriculture for technical support in relation to how to plant, grow and rear, we can go so far as to have kitchen garden competitions in Barbados, where those who have done well with kitchen gardens would be rewarded.

Sir, we are in an era where not much is known about what I am going to say, but I am going to say it nonetheless.

In Europe, there is an enormous demand for tropical flowers, which brings me to the question of our horticulture. People, especially when they use things such as greenhouse technology, ought to be encouraged to get more involved in horticulture, in circumstances where there is a ready export market for flowers, coming from the tropics, and Barbados has been singled out as a potential provider and producer of exotic horticulture products.

We must not lose the opportunity to capture foreign exchange through the export of flowers which are in demand overseas, and which gives the country more of a reputation than it has. Not that the country has a bad reputation, but that our involvement, for example, in the production of flowers, has taken us afar and the Annual Chelsea Flower Show is proof that horticulture in Barbados is not only alive and well, but a niche which bears tremendous potential.

Sir, I want to make these observations in light of what is before the Honourable House on agriculture, to indicate that agriculture must not be a Cinderella. Its contribution to GDP has declined for many reasons, one of which is, that economic diversification has seen other sectors shoot up, whilst agriculture, especially since there has been a reduction in the space and areas of land under agriculture has gone down.

In 1960, Barbados produced about 250 000 tonnes of sugar. We are hearing that we might get as much as 33 000 tonnes of sugar in a hostile environment, where preferential treatment of our sugar is virtually no more, and we are

exposed to competition in clear circumstances, where our cost of producing sugar will clearly exceed, by a long way, any return that we get from sugar in Europe. One of the ironies of this is, China and India have been known to send signals to Barbados, based on its reputation, based on its reputation as a high-quality producer of sugar, that they would like to buy sugar from Barbados, but we just did not have enough. Sir, there were times when we have had to give our quota away to neighbours like St. Kitts, Trinidad and such like. We just do not have enough sugar as is demanded.

Sir, one of the interesting things about the sugar industry is, there are newer producers emerging out of Africa, producing sugar at very low cost. Some of these countries have an abundance of water supply, rich and fertile soil which were never subject to the type of soil exhaustion that may have occurred in Barbados. A lot of countries in Africa and Asia are getting onboard with sugar, in a situation where in the international arena, Barbados is going to have to assert itself on the question of open and free trade and their abolition of preferences.

Sir, with these remarks, I am very much obliged.

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

His Excellency D.ST.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am very glad to hear the Honourable Member for St. James North understanding the importance of maintaining quotas. It was on the Other Side of this Honourable House where I begged the last Government not to cut the sugar quota by 10 000 tonnes. I produced the statistics to show the amount of money that we stood to lose by the decision of cutting the sugar production by 10 000. The Honourable Member for St. James North knows it well.

Sir, we have had a history in the sugar industry of ups and downs. There is no doubt that the sugar industry, for as long as I know it, or anybody, will always be that situation. Fortunate for us, the sugar industry has always been a nett foreign exchange earner in this country. It cannot now be argued that the same is true, but the important thing is, even though the sugar industry was making losses for its owners, Barbados was gaining from the sugar industry still being in production.

Sir, it is like the Transport Board and LIAT, for the simple reason that even though the Transport Board is losing money, every single business in Barbados profits from the Transport Board. If the Transport Board was in a profit-making situation, and you had to charge the commercial rates to make it profitable, every employer would be faced with a higher wage bill.

Sir, when we speak about social transformation, people do not understand the importance of the Transport Board to social transformation in this country, and how it enhances the lives of the masses. I am saying, we need to tell the Extension Officers who work for the Ministry of Agriculture, that there is no war between them and the farmers in Barbados. Sir, sometimes I have to get very personal with these things and people become very jealous.

Sir, when I was working in the sugar industry, whether it was Haymans or Porters Factories, I came and found a system where cane money was paid from 7.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. I had to remind the staff it was because of those persons in the long lines, who came to the factories, some as early as 4.00 a.m. It was because of them that we had jobs. I could not understand how an office could close at 11.00 a.m. and people had to wait in a line, and they were employing us. I told the Office Manager to sign the cheques, go and eat his lunch and I will pay the people. When 4.30 p.m., I ensured that every person in that line had a cheque and they went back home.

Sir, I am saying that professionals in this country have to understand that there are those persons that keep them employed. This is something we need to reinforce in this country. Too many people in this country make the masses believe that they are dependent on them, but when you really look at it, the masses are not dependent on them, but they create work for the people in the country. Sir, I am saying that Extension Officers need to be told that too.

Sir, I am from the North and we have the Land Lease Programme. I have heard the story many times. People believe once they become professionals, that farmers are not professionals. I am saying that every single person working in this country happens to be a professional.

10.40 a.m.

Sir, if we only treat it like that, we would have a better country and production would increase. I want to tell you this. This country is a crisis country. Sir, look at the 1990s. If you look at the statistics for 1991 to 1994, you would recognise that every single item in agro cost increased. Go and look at them.

I am telling you that coming out of the crisis that was left for us, in one short year, you will see the same thing occurring again. You will see yam supplies are up, potatoes are up and everything is up. Do you know why? Once we are in a crisis, the local people respond to the crisis. But the error that occurred, and you would find this in Hansard, is that between 1991 and 1994, we were able to reverse the downward trend in agriculture, but because of the policy of the Barbados Labour Party, that positiveness was reversed. The free-for-all was created and persons who understood the importance of moonlighting to supplement

their incomes, all of a sudden they stopped and felt that they did not need to moonlight.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member has suggested that things were going smoothly until the Barbados Labour Party took office. By 1996, under the Barbados Labour Party, sugar production had actually gone up to about 66 000 tonnes, while food production was coming up as well.

Sir, what the Honourable Member should be saying is that between 1991 and 1994, amidst high unemployment, people turned to agriculture and to the informal sector, and that kept numbers of people going. I just wanted to clarify that for the Honourable Member.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I could take that clarification, because it confirms exactly what I said.

Sir, this free for all system came after and persons who understood the importance of moonlighting...you see, let me say this to you. That is where we have a population problem in this country, because under the Democratic Labour Party, we put people in the place they should have been. We demonstrated to them that a 40-hour week was not important, that the country needed them to go beyond the 40-hour week. Then, we heard that two politicians went all across Barbados telling people that the population of Barbados must be increased and we must bring in more people to increase the population of Barbados, without looking at the counter side that whenever you increase the population of Barbados, you are also increasing the social cost to match that population increase.

This is why you would see, even in my writings, because when I feel strongly about something, I am not only prepared to talk about it, I am prepared to put it in black and white - that I told both of the politicians, that was not the way to solve the problem. The way to solve the problem was to free up the workers and the investors in this country, and stop people from working a week numbering 40-hours, and let them increase production.

The only way, Sir, that we are going to reduce cost in this country is if we can get increased output from the people that we have living in the country. Do not ever believe that you are going to increase it in any real terms by increasing population. It must be an increase in productivity per person. Sir, that is what is important, and that is what is needed in agriculture.

The next problem facing agriculture Sir, is that there is nothing called costing, as it relates to selling. It is not only in agriculture. I have said in this country and I think a lot of people are now realising it, that we are so caught up in revenue that we are destroying foreign exchange in this country. I repeat. We are so caught up in earning revenue

that we are destroying the capacity to earn foreign exchange in this country, and I stand by that, Sir.

Sir, what I would like to say to you, is that if you had to go today to any plantation in this country, and do an analysis in the cost of growing a field of potatoes, and if you were to arrive at the selling price, based on the cost of a pound of potatoes, it would sell for a cheaper price than a pound of English potatoes. I am telling you that as a fact. Sir, because we do not practice that, we allow plantations to limit their production, go after higher prices and encourage English potatoes, a product that is not good for the country - the doctor can tell you that - to come into this country, force Barbadians to eat potatoes, which are inferior to our sweet potatoes, and give the doctors a lot of money. I am saying, Sir, with proper costing, and knowing the importance of foreign exchange, that the reverse will occur.

Sir, another system we have in this country, and that while there are not only the African snails that we have to worry about, we have to deal with policies of Government. Sir, can you imagine that down at the Spring Hall Land Lease Project, they are farmers there with 20 acres of land? I have said this to every Minister of Government, including my friend from St. James North. We have land down there being wasted. Sir, people have 20 acres, which they cannot plant up, because they owe money to the Government. I have said to them already, to call them in, write off the debt, and ask for the lease. Give them back 5 acres, what they are capable of working, and give another four persons the opportunity of the chance to work.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I cannot understand why in this country we are still having a situation, where people have to sub-let when they are not allowed to sublet and all this ignorance. This Honourable gentleman understands exactly all I speak of, but all because of revenue, we are down there, waiting to get the rents that are owed and starving the country of foreign exchange. Sir, I am saying that it is foolishness.

Mr. Chairman, it is time that the Minister of Agriculture whom I am listening to, very closely, and I think he understands, would implement this policy, because we have to feed Barbadians. Sir, we did it in the 1990s, and we understand what is happening.

Mr. Chairman, I would love people to go and read the debate on the Barbados Agriculture Management Company, when it was set up in this country and the discussions. It is no way, Sir, that we should have the Barbados Agriculture Management Company controlling so much land in this country, and yet still we have shortages of those important crops like sweet potatoes,

yam, etcetera. They should be regulating the market. They have the capacity to do it and it was set up to do that, Sir.

Sir, last, but not least, the poultry industry. I am saying that thorough investigation should go into the poultry industry in the 90s, because it is regrettable that an industry, and do not let anybody fool you about high labour input, one of the easiest industries to manage in this country is the poultry industry. I challenge anybody to tell me I am wrong.

Sir, on mornings, you get up, you go into the chicken pen, and the farmer could do it himself, you check for the dead birds, you check to see that the water supply is good, you check to see the feed levels are right, you apply the medication, Sir, and you are cool. At midday, you check again, and you check just before you go to sleep. Yet, still the poultry industry - and I have said this and I will repeat it again - has allowed the feed plant and ADM to gouge the consumers in this country, and I am going to tell you how, Sir.

They allowed themselves to be pushed to increase chicken prices, when there was no need to increase them. They cut back supplies, when they were not supposed to cut back supplies.

Let me tell you something. The poultry industry in this country should have been exporting chickens, Sir, but instead of exporting chickens, they allow somebody to tell them to cut back supplies. Sir, the same thing at Pine Hill Dairy with the milk.

Sir, Barbados is the only country I know that believe in cutting back, and depriving the farmers from earning their true worth and increasing their true capacity. Check it well. Milk cut back, beef supply cut back, pork cut back. What nonsense am I hearing? We should have been exporting. Do you know what is the problem? Lack of proper Government policy, because in every country, you encourage your farmers to produce at their maximum and you subsidise them at that level.

10.50 a.m.

We go to the international organisations and once they tell us to cut back, we cut back.

Mr. Chairman, the United States of America and all of those countries do not cut back, they subsidise, because they understand the importance of increased production. Sir, whenever you increase production, you reduce your cost, but whenever you cut back, you increase your cost. Mr. Chairman, I challenge anybody to challenge me on this. Mr. Chairman, a lot of the problems we have in the agricultural industry are home-grown, because we have no respect for customers. Mr. Chairman, I will tell you why.

When the supply is not good, they want big prices. When the supply is good, they tell you they prefer to plough back, dump in the sea and all of that ignorance, forgetting the same consumers who have been buying from them when the supply was not good and the price was up.

Mr. Chairman, that is why I like my farmer Mr. Arthur Smith.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I could finish that in one minute, Sir.

Whenever Mr. Smith has an over supply, he knows how to use the rate well. He would tell the customers who would have purchased the goods from him at the high prices, to come and get some cheap goods.

However, Mr. Chairman, there is one farmer who met me once and said to me that instead of selling tomatoes at ten cents... He had nearly a million pounds of tomatoes and instead of making about \$100 000, he told me he would prefer to plough them back into the field. He would not even give them to the workers who work on the plantation with them.

Mr. Chairman, that is not so with the fishermen. Whenever they have a lot of flying fish, they drop the price. That is why I have always said that this Government has to look after the fishermen of Barbados, because when food prices were going up, it was the fishermen who ensured that the cost of living in Barbados remain within mean.

Mr. Chairman, that is why I cannot agree with the Barbados Labour Party of depriving the fishermen from that non-contributory pension.

Mr. Chairman, I am calling on this Government to ensure that the farmers and the fisher folks are entitled to that non-contributory pension, because they would have contributed.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: It was not me who said that you have to get an FAO Report on Fish Stock Assessment. It was left there by you all.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I do not mind him. He told the Prime Minister that he would have had 'nuff' tourists in this country and instead of having 'nuff'

tourists, he left the job. He said in this House that the Fair Trading Commission was supposed to bring down prices.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should wind up.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Yes, Sir, I am winding up. Instead of prices falling under the Fair Trading Commission, I had to say in this House that it is not FAIR but FEAR. If you doubt me, check Cable and Wireless in Barbados.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to support this request for the \$110 000 for the professional fees and for the giant African Snail Eradication Project. I am also really very pleased to know that the University of the West Indies is involved in the research.

Sir, I have just a few comments about the whole giant African snail situation. I will stick strictly to that because it is of grave concern at this time to all Barbadians, since the snails seem to be in every parish as compared to a year and a half ago when they were in only a couple areas.

We all know of the dangers of the snails. They not only pose a health danger, but they destroy crops which results in a loss of income that impacts not only on the farmers, but on everybody.

Sir, I believe that more conscientious efforts should be made to help with the eradication of these snails at the various community levels. I know that some efforts have taken place in the past but I believe now that there has to be a more concerted effort to be able to bring it to some kind of conclusion.

Within the Constituencies of St. Thomas, St. Joseph and St. Andrew, and in many areas in St. Michael and St. Lucy, the residents have become very creative because of the lack of the snail bait. This is the most middling problem that is impacting on the residents in Barbados. They are using bleach which I consider to be really good, because that is what I am using now too, and they are using a lot of salt. However, I believe that a better system should be instituted to accommodate the residents on a whole. I have tried in my own way in the last two years to acquire the bait and leave it at two pavilions for the residents in the communities surrounding the pavilions who were seriously impacted upon.

Mr. Chairman, there has to be the decentralization of the distribution of the bait. It is really unreasonable to expect senior citizens and ordinary folks to leave where

they live, whether it be in St. Lucy or St. John, to go to Graeme Hall to collect bait.

Sir, there are times when people call the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and no bait is available there as has been the case within recent times when I made some requests. I believe that if the decentralization could take place at pavilions, community centres and other locations, people would be able to get easier access to the bait, because we have seen the destruction that the snails have caused. They are not now only eating the butter beans, the cabbage and so on, they are now eating the hibiscus.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that a special regime should be put in place regarding the movement of soil. A lot of people are doing landscaping and when you move soil from an infected area to another location where there are no snails, the eggs and even the snails themselves may very well be in that soil, and therefore, that is multiplying that effect where it is impacting on communities that never had before. I believe that some system should be put in place where the soil can be tested in some way. I do not know how it can be done, but the moving of soil adds to the spreading of the snails.

Mr. Chairman, another challenge I am seeing has to do with these Skip containers which are placed in locations where there is a heavy infestation of the giant African Snail. When they are moved to other locations or they are washed after the refuse is removed, that adds to the transfer of the snails from one location to the other.

Mr. Chairman, I am really very concerned, as are the residents in St. Thomas and the other communities in other parishes, about the way the snails are moving. Sir, St. Thomas has hundreds of gullies. The snails are already in the gullies where few people may walk and where there is heavy vegetation and the water that comes from the gullies goes into other communities and bring the snails as well. That is another way the snails are being transferred. Therefore, I believe that more serious efforts should be made among community people to come together to eradicate these snails. It is not a Government problem, it is a Barbadian problem. When our farmers are suffering in the way that they do, it really is a serious concern for everybody.

Mr. Chairman, there is to my certain knowledge at this time no bait at the Graeme Hall location of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. I believe that some effort should be made to have the bait available. People only use small amounts, but it is very impactful.

I know that persons would talk about the challenges to the water supply and so on, which are really very pertinent issues, but when the snails are all on your house and on the windowsills... Some are in the district hospital

and the nurses and other workers have to be working around the clock to have them removed because there are senior citizens there who would not know what to do if they go on their plates and so on. It is really a very dangerous situation because we know of the health problems.

Sir, with this request, I would like to know from the spokesperson for the Government, what is the status of the bait at Graeme Hall for residents to be able to get better access to be able to help with the eradication. As I said, to my certain knowledge, there is none available.

I made the query before as to the decentralization of the distribution of the bait, especially when we know that persons find it so difficult to get from one location to another in order to pick up the bait.

Mr. Speaker, it is not something you can walk with in your handbag. The odour is so strong, it causes your lips to itch. If you are a person who suffers with sinus, it can really have a serious impact on you.

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, it is not easy to be transported in a vehicle, especially if it is a closed-in vehicle. It has to be transported in an open-backed vehicle or in a container. I believe if it is brought closer to residents, to cities or to farmers, it would make life easier, not only for the farmers, but for all Barbadians. Therefore, I want for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to devise some way in which people could get access to the bait.

I would also like to call on all residents to add their own input into the fight against the giant African snail. Sir, for me it is a worse epidemic than the millepede. We in the rural communities that have fertile soil would know of the destruction of the millepedes but the millipedes would not go on the trees and eat the fruits in the same way that the giant African snail would. Instead, the fruits would have to fall from the tree where the millipedes would form, but the giant African snails travel and eat.

Sir, in the parish I live, I know right now the situation is a very critical situation right now. Therefore, I would like to make a call for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to be able do more and for the residents in the various parishes to become involved, because at the end of the day, it is about our survival, and indeed, the survival of the farmers who have to be able to grow their produce and to have those produce available to Barbadians.

Sir, I lend my support to this Head but I would like the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to give a few answers as to when the snail bait would be available,

if there is funding in the Budget for the snail bait to take us to the end of the financial year, or when could we have decentralisation to be able to give people a measure of comfort, knowing that the snails are simply taking over in such a dynamic way that we would not want to see it happening in the future.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

His Honour K. ST.C. BEST: Mr. Chairman, I rise to support to this Head in respect to the funds for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Sir, agriculture is very dear to my heart because my first job was in the Ministry of Agriculture. Sir, I listened to the Honourable Member for St. James North who was once Minister of Agriculture. Sir, I am sure that when I last checked, when the Barbados Labour Party was in power, the production of crops at Graeme Hall, which was one of the principle research agricultural station, the production of crops there went to an all-time low. The Extension Officers were located at Groves and Jerusalem Agricultural Stations.

Sir, because of their strategic locations, those stations provided the necessary service for the farmers throughout Barbados, but there has been a sudden eradication of these important areas and stations, where the farmers would have looked forward for the Extension Officers from these various stations to assist them in the farming community.

Mr. Chairman, there are small farmers in this country who are suffering to have their land ploughed. There was once a programme where the Government provided the ploughing system for small farmers, and the Barbados Labour Party destroyed it. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party destroyed that programme so much so, that you would probably now have five or six privately-owned persons who do the bulk of ploughing land throughout Barbados. Sir, this makes life extremely difficult for those farmers who want to produce.

Mr. Chairman, I remember when various plantations throughout this country would give a portion of their land for the experimentation of various crops.

I am saying that we should be in a position to be self-sufficient in onions, because there were times when the only problem we had to be concerned about was the wind-blast in the onion industry. There were also varieties of English potatoes which were tried and proven to be efficient for the tropics. There was also a variety of sweet potatoes that were tried and tested. It was found that the ones that suffered from scabies were not the best ones to produce. There were hybrids of sweet potatoes that produced proper varieties, but now we have to pay

exorbitant prices for sweet potatoes and yams, because the powers under the Barbados Labour Party ensured that the production of agriculture has almost come to a grinding halt.

Mr. Chairman, under the Barbados Labour Party, there were a number of wars between the farmers and the bigger players with respect to production of milk and milk quotas, and we are now faced with a food bill that is high.

Sir, I would want to say that we must get back to the basic. One of the ways we could get back to the basic is for the Government of the day to re-introduce the tractor to assist with the ploughing of the land of these small farmers, to increase the number of Extension Officers, and to ensure that the relationship between the Extension Officers and the farmers is one that is compatible to good production and a healthy working relationship.

Mr. Chairman, throughout Barbados there were Farmers Market and so we need to educate farmers, as well as the players in the industry, so that we could have back those Farmers Markets in each and every Constituency in Barbados, where these small farmers in their respective communities, could have a particular area where they could set up their produce and sell, where they could also sell to others who would pass through those communities. Sir, if we could do that, the farmers would not have to be jostling for that small area in Cheapside, because the people of Barbados would know specifically where to collect their produce from every Friday or Saturday.

Mr. Chairman, it was a very good idea when the Minister decided that there would have an open market over by Probyn Street, but one must ask, is that location the best location, where there are a lot of senior citizens still doing the bulk of production of agriculture and struggling on mornings with their boxes and baskets on both Transport Board buses and mini buses, to get those produce there? Sir, I am saying if those persons could have areas set up within their own Constituencies, they would not have to travel so far, but would be able to sell their produce among the residents of those communities.

Mr. Chairman, those are the basic things we need if we want to take agriculture forward, if we want to have a rebirth of agriculture, after its death by the Barbados Labour Party. Those are the things we must do in order to ensure that productivity in respect of agriculture and agricultural produce are up. This would also mean that our food import bill would be reduced and we would be able to feed our nation.

Mr. Chairman, with those few words, I support this Head.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, I want to make a small contribution to this discussion on agriculture. Sir, in supporting what I heard on This Side, I want to repeat the point and to emphasise the difference and the approach of this Government to those who now would want to pretend to be, as they say, washed in the blood and are now ready to expound on all those aspects of agriculture, which have remained essentially unused and untouched for the 14 years of their Administration.

11.10 a.m.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke to the Spring Hall Land Lease Project, which is basically lying idle. This was overseen and managed by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas and her cohorts over the last 14 years and, Sir, we need to put these things in perspective because, when they get out in public, they would like to pretend that the woes in this country started on January 15, 2008.

We warned long before about the direction that was being taken on That Side. We spoke to the policy of land being sold to fetch its highest price. Sir, that was the Land Use Policy set by the Barbados Labour Party, by their Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. It was a famous well-stated policy, so they should not get up today and want to pretend to the world that they are these experts in agriculture.

What are the farmers saying about their contribution to their livelihood? What are the fishermen, the boat owners and those who use the fish market in Oistins saying about the way the Barbados Labour Party dealt with the problems they face? What relief did the Barbados Labour Party provide for the 14 years to those boat owners?

Sir, there were no cranes or no equipment. There was a yard that was untreated, full of debris and unattended to. The market was built in the 1980s and was absolutely, woefully in need of maintenance and it is our job now to fix and, Sir, we will fix it.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Agriculture toured that facility and, of course, I often visit Oistins because it is part of the area for which I have the responsibility in this Honourable Chamber to represent. Sir, the conditions of the cupboards, the drainage, the whole treatment of offal and the car park, which renders the area largely useless to the small boat owners and those boat men, who sell their fish directly to customers.

Mr. Chairman, they should not come in here and talk about throwing bleach on snails because, Sir, that is what

the Honourable Member for St. Thomas wants to do. Sir, the Honourable Member walks around and throws bleach on snails, but I would have thought that, in this day and age, one would seek proper scientific guidance before you go about doing things like that. Sir, bleach is one of the last chemicals someone...

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. Sir, all I said is that we are trying to be creative by using the bleach because of lack of access to the bait that the Government has been offering. Sir, that is all I have said. The Honourable Member can rant and rave because this is four times that he has run to become a Member of Parliament and, therefore, he should be talking about Oistins all the years, not only today.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I want us to be very concise with points of orders. Once you raise a Point of Order, I want you to be concise.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, I indicated that the Honourable Member should not be throwing bleach on snails because bleach is not a chemical that one recommends to throw around willy-nilly. Sir, bleach is a very serious chemical and its use is being curtailed in most developed countries, and, Sir, the Honourable Member must be aware of that.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is known for her unconsidered approach. She did the same thing...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I want the Honourable Member to focus on the debate, not on the Honourable Member for St. Thomas but on the Resolution, so let us get to that point.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, despite the interventions from the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, I will adhere to your ruling and recognise that we need to divorce ourselves from the kind of thinking which the Honourable Member brings to the Chamber, when it comes to the treatment of these problems. One has to seek proper and serious consulting advice and not depend on the Honourable Member's natural flair for solving problems. We know what she did with the roads in her village again, because of the same reckless approach.

Mr. Chairman, the Democratic Labour Party in Government has set about restructuring the agricultural sector...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I am trying to focus the debate on relevance. I would not want to encourage one Member to refer to another Member as engaging in reckless practices. I would encourage you to withdraw that remark and to proceed with the debate.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, I am again guided by your ruling. Sir, I want to get to the point that the Democratic Labour Party is about a solution for agriculture. Indeed, we have gone about setting up our open market and we are sure that, with the fullness of time, the farmers and vendors in Barbados would get accustomed to this new vendor and will participate fully. As we have stated before, this policy is aimed at helping us to drive down and contain the cost of living in this country.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy alluded to that point when he spoke to gluts of produce, which sometimes have to be disposed of. Sir, we must make the point that we should have open markets for unlicensed vendors that the people of Barbados can attend freely and the Ministry of Agriculture is mandated to identify and expand these opportunities for the Barbadian populace.

Mr. Chairman, these are the kinds of real concrete approaches, which I wanted to address. Sir, if you listen to those on the Other Side, without, first of all, being aware of their record in non-performance in agriculture and then, not being fully seized with the projects and plans of this Government, one may tend to come to the wrong conclusion and, Sir, we cannot allow that to happen.

Mr. Chairman, we have to recognise that this Supplementary for agriculture goes hand in hand with a larger policy aimed at all those factors, which I have raised in my presentation and aimed at finding solutions in assisting us in the management of our affairs, in bringing down the cost of living along with offering greater opportunity for economic activity in agriculture. Sir, that is the important thing.

Mr. Chairman, I am obliged to you.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Sir, I rise to support the Resolution under Head 25. I just want to make a few brief comments in respect of it and to give support to it. I want to say that one of the things we need to recognise is that agriculture over the years has changed in a drastic manner, and to say that a lot of the assumptions we made about agriculture 10 years or 20 years ago, we cannot make them today.

Mr. Chairman, I would deal especially with the point made in respect of extension officers in the Ministry. I think we need to take a look at the way we are currently managing extension officers today. One of the things we need to recognise is that knowledge is pervasive and, Sir, we might find it strange to accept this. Mr. Chairman, everyone in the society has access to know and, Sir, very often when we thought that the extension officer in the past

was the Lord, it does not obtain today, because a lot of agriculture information is readily available to members within the farming community. As a matter of fact, Sir, what we can safely say is that within the last 10 years or so, a lot of advancement seen in agriculture has been done as a result of private initiatives in terms of getting knowledge and implementing them on the farm.

Mr. Chairman, in that respect, I would want to say that Government should take the approach whereby it needs to support private initiatives in terms of the development of agriculture, even more so today.

11:20.a.m.

We are moving away from the concept that knowledge was the characteristic of a few, to one where knowledge is readily available to all sections of the community, where people are able to develop innovative ways of using some of the tools available to them.

In that respect, I think we need to change the attitude of those persons who are in that department. It is not for anything that we have to belittle the Extension Officers for. It is a natural thing. We have to recognise the signs of the times as far as where we are going.

Sir, we must recognise that we need to take an interest in the development of people. We must also recognise that if we are to reap real success in agriculture, there are certain things we need to do. I note the question of strengthening the Plant Protection Department with regards to personal equipment.

Sir, we need to recognise in this age where pests travel across boundaries. It is especially important this is done. The recent debate on the African snail and its eradication, while it is true that Government is playing a role in trying to ensure that the necessary instruments to fight the snail are available, there is also the need for people within their districts and households to take steps to ensure that they reduce the spread of the giant African snail.

For instance, this Government recently started a debushing programme. I want to give encouragement to the Ministry of Transport and Works and even to the Ministry of Agriculture, to continue the debushing programme. It is proven and known that the snails are very prevalent on lots where there is overgrown bush, which provides protection and or breeding ground. I believe, as a matter of priority, we need to continue the debushing programme.

Sir, individual householders or persons who own lots need to ensure that their lots are kept clean. One of the characteristics of the African Snail is, its dislike for heat. If we can ensure that we reduce the amount of bush on the

overgrown lots and allow the sun to get through to the soil, it would help to reduce the amount of snails that we see in certain areas.

Sir, another point is, I think that if there is to be real progress in agriculture, one has to ensure that farmers are given farmers access to markets. While I recognise the need for a farmers' markets, we have to be careful that the markets we are trying to develop should be markets led by the farmers, themselves. We should not seek to build markets in communities that farmers might not support, because the evidence within the agriculture sector, suggests to us, that unless the farmers are prepared to support those markets, they would fail, because the quantity of produce needed would not be available.

I also want to emphasise, in relation to certain commodities, one in particular, onions. Barbados has the ability to at least reach 100 per cent of the demand for onions. I want to emphasise the need to control the extent to which local onion growers are forced to compete with imported onions. As far as I am concerned, I think we need to give the BIDC the responsibility, a Government statutory organisation, just like the poultry imports.

Sir, when we look at what is happening in the world today, where Governments are now ensuring the support of locally produced goods, even the United States, under the present stimulus Bill, people are talking about supporting American made goods. Therefore, I think that in respect of the request for the Barbados Agriculture Development Management Company to become, at least, if not the sole importer, but to regulate the importation of onions in such a manner that does not compromise local onion production. It is not an unreasonable request.

Sir, when you look at what is happening in the world today, when we recognise that there is a need to have food security, and the fact that there are risks consumers are exposed to when we import food, from whose integrity we cannot vouch, I do not believe that is an unreasonable request to ask, that the BADMC be the sole importer of onions.

There are those who would argue that it is not consistent with our WTO obligations. I want to say that the WTO agreement was crafted to benefit the rich countries, by and large. I believe that it is an indictment on us that in many cases a lot of Governments sat down and signed this agreement without looking first to ensure that they protect their own people. It is testimony to the previous Government that they so freely embraced the whole concept of free trade, without trying to analyse and ensure that by signing, did not limit the ability to implement certain policies, that would prove to be detrimental to countries such as ours. That is why I argue that if we were to give the Barbados Agriculture Development

Management Company sole importer status of onions, first of all, it is not inconsistent with the WTO obligation, because when you look at it, countries in the more developed world do it. It would also add a tremendous incentive to farmers generally, to have an assured market for onions, without having to compete with cheap imported onions out of Europe and the US, whose onions are subsidised.

Sir, with these brief remarks, I fully support the measure here and hope that as a result, farmers will be able to make a decent living in this country.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Sir, I am delighted to speak on this Head. The Giant African Snail was discovered about five years ago in the Constituency of St. George North. At that time it was found around the Gun Hill/Newbury area. A lot of work was done over the years to eradicate the African snail, but with little success. I have called on several occasions in this Honourable House and other places for the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health to really get involved in a big way.

Sir, I do not believe that a sustained effort was ever made to eradicate the African snail. By sustained effort I mean that it was too sporadic, no consultant or a few community workers can really eradicate the Giant African Snail. It has now spread across Barbados in every Constituency. We now see it in Bridgetown.

I am sure that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown would speak today about the African Snail and the problems that they have with the drainage and rats that are associated with the African Snail.

In terms of sustainability, I think the Ministry of Health has a big role to play in this effort. The Ministry of Health is the only authority that can prosecute persons for leaving bush on their land under the Law. I may be guided by the Honourable Attorney General.

11.30 a.m.

Sir, if you have garbage or bush on your land, the Ministry of Health can go in, and bring in their team and clean the bush, or can prosecute landowners who do not leave their property in good order. Therefore, the Ministry of Health must start prosecuting landowners, whether they are small landowners or large landowners, who do not put their land in good working order.

Throughout the Constituency of St. Thomas and St. George, lands that were once very fertile, lands that are in the high rainfall area, lands that are very productive, are now growing grass, bush and shrubs, not for animals, Mr. Chairman, but just in a wild state of an affair and that is what is happening across our land.

Sir, a year ago, the Democratic Labour Party Government said that they are going back to farming in a big way. I have not seen any evidence of that at all. I have not seen any evidence in my Constituency. In fact, rather than evidence, there are still many large farmers, who are seeking to put the land in housing.

We notice that this started where landlords got permission to subdivide the land in the late 1960s, under the Late Right Excellent Errol W. Barrow, when lands in Rowans Park and Fair View were sub-divided and, once again, we see this. We are seeing landlords allowing their land to grow into bush, only in the hope of getting subdivision. I think the Government has to watch this. This is happening in St. John, too.

Sir, too many landowners are allowing their land to go into bush only to get sub-division. They are coming and saying that the land has not been worked for the last five to six years - it happened in our time too - only to get permission. We see it now at Kingsland Estate in Christ Church, where hundreds of acres of land have now gone into bush, where the landowners are hoping to get subdivision to put houses on. There is a need for housing, but we need to have food security as well.

Mr. Chairman, that is why I am saying that the Ministry of Health, under the Law can prosecute those landowners, who are not ensuring that their land is in good working order.

In fact, a couple years ago, under late Right Excellent J. M. G. M. Adams, those landowners who were not working their land came in for high penalties. Sir, we want to go back to that because we cannot eradicate the Giant African Snails alone. The Ministry of Agriculture, does not have the legislation or the manpower to do it. The Ministry of Health has a team that can go in and not only clean up derelict properties, but they can mandate those landowners to clean their property. The Ministry of Public Works can also do so, under the Highway Act - and the Minister can check that they have to clean the property a few yards from the Highway.

Sir, too often I see the workers at the Ministry of Transport and Works (MTW), and it happened in my time. I have argued with the Chief Technical Officer that he has to do his work. The Chief Technical Officer, under the Law, can prosecute those landowners who, under the Highway Act, allow bush and shrub to grow into the road.

I know the Highway Act is to be reviewed. It is a very old Act, but the Law is the Law. The MTW workers now have to clean three and four yards into a persons' land, in order to stop bush from growing into the street, and that is why I presume, when I saw that article in the newspapers recently, about what happened at Constant, St. George, where MTW men went in and cut down the garden of a lovely estate. I guess they were trying their best to clean the edges of the Highway.

Mr. Chairman, we have to understand that more has to be done in agriculture. I heard about the extension officers but the extension officers alone cannot do the job because they are only a few of them. How many extension officers, can the Government employ? The Government has general workers at NCC, NHC, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and all across Government. Sir, you can add all those workers together, put them under a team in the Ministry of Health and allow them to go and help clear and eradicate, because there must be a sustained effort.

Mr. Chairman, one sees that the African snails mainly come out when it is rainy. During the hot weather, you do not see them too much, but if you have just a small amount of rain at any time then you see them. There was a time when they were not seen in St. John, especially in the Claybury area, because of the red soil, but they have now gone right up to Bath, so they are all over the place and we must have a sustained effort.

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

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

I must call on the Ministry of Health in particular, to take care of the job. I have said this before, so it is nothing new. I am not saying this now because of the new Government. I have said before that the Ministry of Health must do the job and prosecute those landowners.

I have also noticed that there is an increase in rats as well, across the island.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Honestly, there is an increase and there must be a sustained effort from the Ministry of Health to provide the bait. I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Thomas that you must make the bait available. Sir, too many times you go there and the officers want to give you only two bags. Sir, you could only get two bags. It seems as though the officers want to keep back the bait. I do not understand why it is that the Ministry of Health only gives you two bags, here and there.

Sir, do you know what a community did? One day a community decided that we are going to trick the Ministry of Health. We are going to carry down a bus load of people to the Ministry of Health and everybody takes their two bags. I had to call the officer.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member said that he encouraged a community to go and trick the Ministry of Agriculture to get rat bait.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, one day we had to accumulate a few people in order to get a large set of rat bait and snail bait. I must tell you that when I spoke to the supervisor about it a couple of weeks ago, the supervisor understood and he came out to the community of the Glebe and he helped. I told him that he could use my Constituency office - I want Honourable Members to hear this - they could use my Constituency office as a central location, where they could bring all the bait and we could distribute them to the neighbours in the community. This is what has to happen.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, and I wanted to make this point for a long time. I heard the Government talk about open markets. I want to say that I agree with this whole concept of open markets. Sir, open markets are nothing new. From the days of slavery, there has always been an open market concept in Barbados.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should wind up.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Yes, sir.

I wonder if the Members of this Honourable Chamber ever passed Eagle Hall any Sunday morning. Again, the concept of an open market has been practiced in the days of slavery. It is nothing new. I believe that it has to continue and I want to encourage them to continue it.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Asides.

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, as I rise to hopefully conclude debate on this Head because Members have gone far and wide, agriculture is really a passionate issue because at its base, is the feeding of a nation and the feeding of the people. The contributions of the Members have been relatively to the point of trying to keep this Nation surviving.

11.40 a.m.

The Giant African Snail is now pervasive across Barbados. We are now seeing them in areas where we have not seen them before. I know that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development is very committed to the eradication of the Giant African Snail in Barbados, that is why over time he has participated in these national efforts by some communities, consultants and others to deal with the giant African snail in Barbados, but sometimes it is as though you are fighting a losing battle.

Mr. Chairman, if one understands the particular pathology and persistence of the giant African snail - I am not a scientist by any stretch of the imagination - it is known that one snail can produce between 800 to 1 000 eggs, that is a prolific breeder. Therefore, one has to be careful in what one does to combat or control the giant African snail. Simply poisoning the snail can cause the eggs to come out of the snail.

Sir, one of the best ways of getting rid of the snails is by burning. There is also, I am told, the use of white lime which I believe is found in Barbados that is used in combatting the giant African snail.

Mr. Chairman, we have to declare a national emergency. In that declaration of a national emergency, every man, particularly those under the control of the State, must be involved in this particular matter. Sir, sometimes citizens just stand back and believe that it is somebody else's job to take care of rodents and pests, in this instance the giant African snail. Sir, the entire 280 000 Barbadians must rise to the occasion to deal with this voracious predator of green matter in our country.

Sometimes one read of efforts in particular communities where the citizens are mobilised, let us say you have 300 or 400 citizens, but then only ten persons rise early in the morning to participate. Sir, because of the nature of the snails, they come out during rain, as has been emphasised, or in the dark when the temperature drops. The citizens do not come out. It is somebody else's job. We need to move away from that thinking where we have the invasion of our homes, our lands, our gardens, etcetera.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has been trying to provide the appropriate pellets for this. I have been assured by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, that the hiatus on the pellets will be removed as quickly as possible.

Sir, one would need to state that is what has happened, but it is the efforts of persons coming out across this country creating a small fire in a can in an open area, and plucking these things and putting them in there, so that you destroy the snails and the eggs as well. We need a

national effort. We should have a major debate on agriculture, it is important to the survival of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I live just a stone's throw from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. When one looks at what was happening there, and the general feeling that was coming from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, not during the time of the Honourable Member for St. James North, but in the last four or five years, there was a feeling as though we wanted to abandon agriculture in Barbados. This was being led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The greatest motivation that one has had in the last six years was in the last year and a month, under the capable leadership of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Honourable Senator from the Other Place, in getting people involved and engaged in agriculture.

Mr. Chairman, it is not like individuals who own lots and would not clean the lots. They have given opportunity for the neighbours to call, because the snails could be found within the tall grass.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I would encourage the Honourable Member to be silent and not interrupt me when I am speaking. Clean your lots so that you would not have an opportunity for the snails to breed inside those lots all across Barbados. The Honourable Member owns about ten or 15 lots. There is nothing wrong with that, but the Honourable Member must clean them and do not give the snails the opportunity to breed.

I have noticed that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North did in fact clean his lot in Newton. I do not know if he found snails, but where he has the other lots, he should go and clean them too, so that we would not have snails in those areas. The Honourable Member needs to rest back and be quiet and give us an opportunity to speak to deal with the issue of agriculture in this country.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: He has a taste for snail. He might be a gourmet eater or something like that. Everybody has their own particular taste and liking for certain things, so let us not worry about that.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying that we have to approach the whole notion of agriculture in a very rationale and systematic way. I was making the point that the Minister from the Other Place has been trying to revive, motivate and create that whole vision for agriculture in Barbados. There was a time when the 4H Movement in this country

was heavily involved in various aspects of agriculture from the rearing of chickens, animal husbandry and kitchen gardens.

Agriculture in Barbados almost died, but we were pleased to note that 900 young people in one fell swoop are re-engage with agriculture in this country. That is because of the efforts of that Minister. He should be applauded. Through him, young people connect and engage with agriculture in Barbados. That is the kind of governance and the kind of behaviour that one would get from This Side either in this place or in the Other Place.

Mr. Chairman, let us understand that we all face disaster from rodents such as rats and mice. There is no need to scoff if somebody speaks about these things, because they pose a current and present danger to the viability of Barbados. We have had persons who died of leptospirosis. The rain fell, the rats urinate, they might have a little cut or something, they walk out into the yard barefooted and they are affected. The symptoms which are manifested - go and ask the doctors - can mimic symptoms of other ailments, so therefore you do not know, and you die. That is because of the presence of rats. The rats help harvest the sugar cane before its time and all kinds of things.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: The open markets, even though it was established by the initiative of going back to slavery, was not necessarily an act that was necessarily permitted by those who control the space here in Barbados during that time, so a lot of the activity then which continues right through that social behaviour were for persons to run and hide if they did not have a licence.

What is different, is that the Democratic Labour Party is establishing markets across Barbados which say to the people of Barbados that with or without a licence on this particular day, they could come and sell their products legitimately obtained, either by growing or purchasing. Sir, you are setting them up across the country bringing the product to the people.

We should have one in Oistins some time by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South. There should also be one in Wotton on the big pasture there. We will spread them across Barbados and bring the product to the people.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Lucy time over time make the point to let the farmers farm, and let the salesmen sell. There can be different solutions because at each stage, you are doing value added.

Mr. Chairman, one would want to see the farmers also benefit from value added. Therefore, you would set up solutions where they can benefit from the value added of the product which the farmer produces on his land.

11.50 a.m.

Sir, there will be opportunities for major debate. We have systematically to re-assert agriculture as a major force in Barbados. We cannot be moving away from it. It is what feeds us. It is what will continue to feed our people, and we cannot continue exposing ourselves to the vagaries of other countries and their marketplaces. We have to bring it home to roost.

Mr. Chairman, there is momentum and we must continue with the efforts of all men and women of goodwill to continue to cause agriculture to grow and to develop in this country. Sir, I would want to say that the Government is on the right path and that once we have and continue to have the people going forward with us, there should not be any difficulty in this matter.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 25 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 55

MINISTRY OF TOURISM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$15 MILLION.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, the matter for consideration, Head 55, is a request to provide the sum of \$15 million by way of Supplementary to Programme 40 of the Ministry of Tourism.

Honourable Members would want to note that a new sub-programme is proposed to be created and it will be entitled the "Tourism Industry Relief Fund (TIRF)".

Mr. Chairman, this has been in the gestation phase for a little while. We had representation in December 2008, from the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Authority. We also had representation from individual entities, for consideration to be given for some measure of financial

relief to players in the hotel, accommodation and other ancillary sectors.

The request is made against a background of the general softening of a demand for tourism services worldwide. The fact that we in Barbados have seen a fall-off, all be it marginal, but more importantly, we have seen a decline in the spending of visitors to the island. We are seeing a decline in the value of the Pound Sterling, the United Kingdom being our major market and a decline in the value of the Canadian Dollar, a fast-improving market, one in which we have been able to make some strides. Sir, these factors all contribute to an overall attitude of where everyone is watching what they are spending, therefore, Government has agreed that we would create a Tourism Industry Relief Fund.

I think the most important aspect of this Fund is that it is intended to be a revolving fund. It will be administered by the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited. Sir, there are a number of conditionalities that will apply to its disbursement. If I could just speak briefly to the revolving components, it simply means that when some sense of normalcy returns to the sector, and presumably the beneficiaries of the Fund will resume in life a profitability that they could then contribute back to the fund, by way of their organisation or possibly by some other mechanism that is being looked at. That, of course, makes it different from earlier efforts to provide some relief to the sector, but I will talk about that a bit later.

Let me just say that the conditionality and the thinking for disbursement for qualified recipients will work on the basis of those businesses having to make a claim for the first quarter of 2009, and in cases where you can submit, there have been losses or increases in losses over the previous first quarter, January to March 2008, or if the loss sustained now is greater than the loss sustained then, then your claim can be considered. Of course, the data to support the claim has to be verified by the appropriate accounting firm. Sir, we also expect that any villas that wish to apply for assistance, would have to comply with the requirements of the Tourism Development Act, that is, you have to be in the rental pool for at least nine months.

Mr. Chairman, the other consideration I think probably most important for all Honourable Members of this House, is that I would expect recipients to agree not to lay-off or to terminate staff, if they are going to benefit from these funds. However, it may be understood that there may be situations where staff may be placed on short weeks or may have to have certain creative situations being applied. What I would say is that the Barbados Workers' Union is engaging the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Authority, the Barbados Employers Confederation and the National Insurance Scheme, in looking at ways we could handle that creatively, using the training Fund and possible

lay-off options that may not see a total lay-off. But those talks are ongoing and are being dealt with at the level of the Ministry of Finance.

Sir, we understand the realities of business, and given the fact that we have not gotten to the bottom of this thing - we do not know exactly where the global recession is going - we would not want to be too hard and fast in that nature.

I also mentioned that being a revolving Fund, we would expect Barbados Hotel and Tourism Authority to work with the Barbados Tourism Authority, to see how we could come up with mechanisms to replenish the Fund. However, we recognise that Government will take lead, particularly in this period. Therefore, let us understand that \$15 million is going to the Fund now, and that there will be another disbursement in the new financial year. We must understand that Government is taking the lead.

I would say while the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited will be charged with the management of the Fund, there will be an Oversight Committee. This committee will ensure that there is proper Administration for the Fund. The proposed Membership of the Oversight Committee is:

1. Permanent Secretary, the Ministry of Tourism (Chairman).
2. Permanent Secretary, the Ministry of Finance, or nominee.
3. President of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Authority or nominee.
4. Chairman of the Barbados Tourism Authority, or nominee.
5. Chief Executive Officer of the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited.

The Committee will also have to co-op persons to sit with the Committee where certain expert knowledge is required. I expect that to be the case because - I talked about the difference what happened before, but it is intended, and this is a fundamental point - this is about relief for the entire sector, so that any player in the sector who can provide the necessary documentation can benefit from the Fund. It is not only about the accommodation sector such as hotels, it is not only about the large restaurants, but anyone who operates within the sector in keeping with the Democratic Labour Party's philosophy that we should broaden the stake-ownership in this flagship industry. Sir, we are indeed working to see if we could assist those providers of the very important ancillary services. That is of fundamental importance.

12:00 noon.

Sir, that is of fundamental importance. If I would say right now that the Government of the day back in 2001, in the wake of the 9/11 attack, did come up with a \$10 million fund. I am told that the suggestion is that we merely photocopied that whole initiative, added on a few million dollars and that we now have a fund.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say that you can disabuse yourself of that right now. What we had in 2001 was a hotel sector stabilisation fund and, as far as the then Government was concerned, the industry was about hotels. They said that the industry was requesting a stabilisation fund to provide a life-line for hotels and to assist them in maintaining their operations in the 90-day period from October to December 2001.

Mr. Chairman, we have taken a deliberate decision not to keep it that narrow. It must be the entire accommodation sector. Home accommodation, guest houses, everyone, and it must also be the entire tourism sector, including providers of ancillary services. Sir, it is not going to be easy to administer but, we will make sure that the Enterprise Growth Fund has the necessary resources set aside from the fund itself, to provide administrative support. Sir, we will work it out, because I think it is important.

Mr. Chairman, I think that in differentiating what happened post 9/11 and what we are dealing with now, we have to understand that there is a definite shift in the thinking of this Government from what obtained last time. Sir, I do believe another very important and fundamental point Sir, being a revolving fund, it will exist in perpetuity. It will roll over and, on the next occasion there is a crisis, it could be topped up and it will have other revenue streams, through whatever arrangements are made with the partner and it will be there on the next occasion there is a crisis.

Mr. Chairman, this simply means that whereas, my predecessor did not leave anything in place by way of a stabilisation fund, the next Minister of Tourism, whoever he or she may be, will have something in place for whenever a crisis comes up in the future. Sir, that is the difference in thinking between the two Parties.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy made the point when we were discussing agriculture a few moments ago that the Democratic Labour Party uses the anvil of crisis to forge solutions that could make a real difference in how the process of Government could function in the interest of all the people of Barbados. Sir, this is what we are proposing to do here.

Mr. Chairman, I just needed to get that out there to set the framework for understanding that there is a difference between what happened in 2001 and what we are doing in 2009.

Mr. Chairman, let me also say as well that I recognise that the Enterprise Growth Fund is going through some changes. The Prime Minister would have spoken about the decision to bring all the individual funds together, so that it could be a bit leaner and some other decisions taken, so that it will function more as a financial intermediary and will be attracting more deposits. Sir, I believe that is a good thing.

Mr. Chairman, even participants in the existing arrangements that the Enterprise Growth Fund has for the sector is the Tourism Loan Fund, which belongs to Central Bank of Barbados that the Enterprise Growth Fund manages, and then there is the Small Hotels Investment Fund, the \$30 million fund that was started around the World Cup. That is still there. Just because you may have an arrangement with the Enterprise Growth Fund that does not, in any way, preclude qualifying for these grant funds.

Sir, even though it is a revolving fund, it is not intended charge would be made against beneficiaries of the fund and so, in your financial arrangements, whether with the Enterprise Growth Fund or whoever, you could look at the contributions you are getting here as grant assistance and not loan assistance. It is just figured that the sector could use the opportunity to partner with us and have a revolving fund.

Mr. Chairman, I would also say on that note that, in my capacity, as Minister of Tourism, I did interface with the bankers association just to let them know what we were thinking about in the sector. It is a fact that a few properties had come to the Ministry asking - having received some measure of pressure from their bankers, and I think it is important that we bring them on board.

Sir, we are not looking to take over all the bad debt in the area of tourism from the banks and put it under the turf. Sir, I am not suggesting that. I am just saying that if you have that sort of engagement, when the banks have to make their decisions, they will be aware of the Government's firm decision to provide sector support, and therefore, customers who would qualify for this assistance, they could treat them differently and understand the existence of this area.

Mr. Chairman, I understand that the other providers, people who are not necessarily Members of the banking association, who are growing in size, Consolidation Finance, General Finance and those places, that we also need to engage with them as well.

Sir, I do not think, as a sector, we could ignore the whole issue of finance, short-term, by way of overdraft facilities and long-term finance, is an issue that could choke the sector. If we are going to work to bring relief, we

have to look at all these contributors to the difficulty. Sir, that is what we have been doing.

Mr. Chairman, I will just turn briefly to some of the proposed modalities for the disbursement. I will add, up-front, that the Enterprise Growth Fund (EGF) will obviously be given the latitude to work out some of the specifics in how it works and that, obviously, we will provide the broad policy overview of exactly what we are after.

Mr. Chairman, I will start with relief for the accommodation sub-section and then I will deal with the ancillary sub-section. Sir, as far as participants from the accommodation sector, you have to basically provide proof of having incurred losses due to cancellation of bookings or discounting of rates. Sir, entities would have to provide some proof of registration, whether with the Barbados Tourism Authority, Barbados Hotel Tourism Association, the Intimate Group or some other approved grouping.

Mr. Chairman, that is important because there are a number of unregistered providers of accommodation. This is always a troubling issue and I believe we could use this opportunity to get some of these properties registered. We are using honey and not vinegar. We are not looking to punish people for not being registered. We are saying that you come and register and you could benefit from what we have on offer here.

Mr. Chairman, let us not fool ourselves because with the explosion of the internet as a tool of marketing, many of these properties are not as small as you would think. We have some large properties that are not registered with anyone that are making a substantial contribution in the accommodation sector of tourism. Sir, we cannot simply leave them out there to the vagaries of what is happening and only help those on the inside.

12.10 a.m.

We are trying to bring them on the inside. That is what we are trying to do. It is anticipated that you will still have to be prepared.

Sir, let me make it clear. Just because we are opening our doors, they still have to be prepared to subject themselves to some of the rigours of what we will expect, some level of organisation. It is not to say that we are inviting mavericks to come and collect a cheque and go back through the door. We are saying that you can get some sort of organisation, because they are providing a source of foreign exchange.

Sir, many of these properties, and this is important, are actually operating within communities. Those funds are reaching right at the heart of where you want it to reach. It

is not going through all the rigamarole of the tour operators, discount and what not. It is reaching straight in the heart of the community and bringing benefit to Barbados in a very direct way. That is why we are saying we have to support them and it is critical that they can do that.

Sir, we expect that, in addition to the usual Accountant's report, that I spoke about earlier, the necessary sworn declaration by the owner or the Chief Executive Officer of the particular institution, and naturally all the figures and so on, we anticipate that claims should be made to the Fund no later than May 15, 2009, given six weeks to put everything together. We understand you probably have to get your accountant to help you prepare the application and to put the figures together. That is the thinking.

Naturally no one would probably get all that they ask for, but we would certainly look at what we have at our disposal and the claims, and try as much to keep the sector going. We also expect, obviously, everyone to make sure that their record keeping is in such an order, that we can monitor how the turf is going and to what extent future contributions need to be made by the Government.

Sir, the ancillary sub-sector and the modalities for the disbursement on that end, will of necessity be quite different. In many cases we are speaking about independent operators and we are speaking about one-person operators and so on. It is really going to span a whole range of tourism operations. It is not as homogeneous as the accommodation, in terms of your ability to assess loss, therefore, we have to come up with some very creative means of assessing the claims and disbursing the funds in some way that is appropriate.

Some of the ancillary sector, of course, the larger attractions and so on, would in essence be able to provide all of the relevant documentation that we would expect from the accommodation sector, but in some cases we may have to be a little flexible with the documentation. In my discussion with the Enterprise Growth Fund, there are some models they are looking at.

Sir, you would recall, for example, there was the Reverse Tax Credit scenario, if you were below a certain threshold, Government would give you a contribution to mitigate against the impact of VAT and so on. I am not saying that is what we are doing, but I am saying there are those models that can be examined to even bring assistance to some of those smaller operators who are still very much a part of the tourism industry.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Let us face it. The hotel is someplace where somebody sleeps. In order to enjoy your vacation is how we interface with those fellows on the beach, the vendors, when you go out and enjoy yourselves, whether it is Harrison Cave or Oistin, on a Friday night or wherever. You cannot simply omit the real and true experience that one gets from taking a vacation. That is why this programme has to be structured in a manner that we see fit.

Another possibility for dealing with these groups is the relief and the number of persons they employ. A fair way of making an assessment might be looked at along those lines. We are refining the disbursement mechanism and we are determined to see that the ancillary sector, and I mean the entire ancillary sector, is properly engaged, involved and benefits from this Fund.

Sir, I would only say that we are determined to make this work. We have to bring relief to the sector as much as possible. Some will criticise whether this is appropriate use of Government funds. I would suggest that you just turn on your television, and see that most right-wing Governments in the world are now piling up funds to pump into the private sector all over the place. We are not proposing that all is for the tourism sector. We have opted, as a Government, to boost the marketing end and we are trying our best to make sure we continue to drive business here, while at the same time maintaining this relief fund from the Other Side very carefully.

We are constantly looking at the appropriate ways of dealing with this very critical sector to Barbados. We think that increasing the marketing end of it, being more clinical and creative on That Side, but still coming up from the Other Side with a relief fund structured in a way, that it would not only be here for the short-term and short-run, but it would be there for future Governments, and by extension, future Barbadians to be assured of its existence.

Sir, we do not know what it will be. It could be a war somewhere. It could be the price of oil going through the ceiling. It could be a natural disaster or it could be a manmade disaster, but we still know that we are being responsible in setting up this relief programme to the sector and ensuring that we will have a safety net to cover, not only the big players, but to cover everyone who is playing their part.

We have said before that tourism is our business, let us all play our part, and this Democratic Labour Party is demonstrating very clearly in its actions, that it understands what that is all about. We are providing an opportunity for everyone to mitigate themselves against the situation that the world finds itself in. It is not of our creation, but it is our responsibility to deal with it. That is what the Democratic Labour Party has always done.

Sir, whenever this country has faced adversity, the people have looked to the Democratic Labour Party and say, get us out of it. We are doing it in tourism and we are doing it in a way that makes sense.

Sir, therefore, with those few words I ask that Head 55 stand part.

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

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, I am somewhat pleased that my protestations in this Honourable House some two weeks ago managed to bestir the comatose Government into action. Sir, I really must say that someone was able to stir them to do something. It is a fact that on the day after I spoke, a meeting was held whereas a resolution was brought to this matter.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member is trying to give this House the impression that he has influence on this Party that he did not have on the Party in 2001, ...

12.20 p.m.

Sir, when the Honourable Member, who was Minister of Tourism came to this House, with all kinds of negativity, the Honourable Member for St. John and I had to tell him that was not the way to approach the programme, and we showed him how to be positive and to get the programme going. I am a bit surprised, Sir, that the Honourable Member is now giving the impression that he is better listened to on This Side than on his own Party's side.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, the fact is that what we have before us today, is a far cry from what I was expecting, because what we have now, Sir, is really too little too late.

Sir, hoteliers have been waiting for assistance for a very long time and many of them are now on the brink of collapse and a Minister of Finance and a Minister of Tourism can come, almost nine months after an issue broke, to bring this \$50 million package. In 2001, I heard the Honourable Minister make reference to that, Sir.

In 2001 the dire situation facing Barbados, they always say, was not comparable to what faces it today. Those were their words. Sir, on that occasion, we could not come and bring a relief package that dealt only with an accommodation sector. We were facing security issues. In addition to the \$10 million that was for the accommodation

sector, you had to commit some \$2.8 million on upgrading security at the ports of entry in Barbados. They do not have to do that now. Sir, some \$16 million went into marketing support, in addition to the \$10 million for the accommodation sector. Sir, \$800 000 went into direct airline support. They do not have to deal with that sort of expenditure now. How come, only \$15 million, for the most important sector in this country?

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the House the impression that the only additional money that is now going into the tourism budget is this \$15 million. The Honourable Member knows, Sir, that there have been Supplementaries on top of Supplementaries to the tune of \$20 million, on top of what was in the original budget and this occurred even before there was a crisis. What is important, Sir, the Honourable Member is speaking about money that they gave in a crisis, but we are speaking about money that we gave before a crisis.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, I am forced to ask why is it that this Government must always take its time on every single thing. Sir, you have a situation, where Jamaica has done long ago, what we are doing here today and they saw results that I outlined already, an increase of arrivals in January this year, whereas we are seeing a decline. Jamaica was proactive, not like this bunch, Sir, that must lag all the time.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, you have to withdraw that.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: I withdraw the last sentence.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Therefore, that is withdrawn.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Yes. Sir.

Sir, even little St. Vincent announced a while back, some proposals in relation to tax relief in respect of their hotel sector and tourism sector in that country. Sir, Barbados, which was the beacon in this region before, and everyone saw Barbados as the leader, now Barbados is playing catch up, and a measly \$15 million at this time, thrown at a sector, which is really, as I said, in dire need of help.

Sir, it is not only in this issue that the Government is taking its time. Do you know that there is an Air Passenger Tax that every passenger departing a United Kingdom airport has to pay? A meeting was held towards the end of last year and it was decided that the Tax was going to increase from November this year, to £100 pounds, for

every passenger departing the United Kingdom to come to Barbados. The Governments in the region felt incensed about it, Sir.

Do you know who was asked to take the lead in trying to do something about it? The Prime Minister of Barbados was told simply to send off a letter and get some discussions going to ensure that, in fact, it did not materialise. Do you know that up to last week, the letter was still languishing in the Ministry of Finance? Sir, just to send a letter off, and they could not get it off between November and now?

Sir, now the UK Parliament is to meet shortly on it, and when I say shortly, I mean shortly and, God help us. I sincerely hope that somehow, some meaningful communication and contact could be made in time, so that we do not have another obstacle in the way of the demand for Barbados, in one of our main source markets. Sir, lethargy total and complete lethargy, comatose is the word and this Government does not seem that bothered.

Sir, more money should have been pledged for this package at this time or, at least, the assistance could have been open-ended. As I said, we had to do a lot back in 2001, in addition to propping up a hotel sector. Sir, we had to do many other things that the Government does not have to do now.

Sir, look at these conditions that they put, in relation to the disbursement of these funds. Job. First of all, Sir, they talked about refunding losses. The Minister has not defined or explained what constitutes a loss. Sir, it is within my knowledge that they are giving a very limited definition of loss. Their definition relates to losses incurred for two reasons only to the sector, losses due to cancellation of bookings, and losses due to rate discounting by hotels and villas to secure business.

Sir, hotels and other operators will incur other legitimate losses. High Land Taxes now on hotels is resulting in them seeing severe hardship. Sir, under this definition of loss that I am reliably told is the definition they are working with, will preclude any recovery, based on a loss incurred because of high Land Taxes. It must be lost incurred because of cancellation of bookings or because of rate discounting, only two narrow reasons alone. Sir, this is too narrow a definition of loss to be meaningful.

Sir, in terms of the requirement in relation to jobs, I cannot accept that you are not going to put in enough money that will prevent, not only lay-offs, but also short weeks. Times in Barbados now are too hard. Inflation is too high. It is too excruciatingly painful in Barbados now to say that you are going to say up-front that we are going to give you money, but you cannot lay-off somebody, you

cannot fire anybody, but you can put them on a short week. Sir, that is a sellout.

12.30 a.m.

That is worst than a salary cut. Sir, it is a sell out to say that you could put people on short weeks. Sir, we have passed that stage in this country.

Sir, when a Government toiled for 14 years and leaves a successive Government with some \$2 billion in foreign exchange reserves, this is what it is for. You do not decide that you are going to hold back on what you have and send people home or put them on short weeks.

Sir, the object now has to be to shore up employment, maintain existing levels of employments and ensure that people are not disadvantaged at this time. Sir, more money could have been put into this project to ensure that people would not lose their jobs or a day's pay.

Sir, another provision which is very unbelievable, and this is unique, is that for the quarter for which funds will apply, January to March this year, a hotel cannot only show a loss this year and expect to be refunded or reimbursed. If it had a loss last year, it must show this year that it lost more than it lost last year and would only get the difference between what it lost last year and what it lost this year. Sir, a loss is a loss. If you are showing that you are not making ends meet because you have made a loss, you should be reimbursed for it.

Sir, they are saying that you have to make a worse loss now than you made last year if you want to get access to the fund. This is really a hair brain scheme. Sir, this was actually put together in 24 hours after I spoke in here two Tuesdays ago. Sir, some of these provisions are really unbelievable.

Sir, the Minister does not like resorting to statistics, but it is very bad in this country. Sir, where has the community tourism concept that was to benefit the small man and all these things gone to all of a sudden?

Sir, guest houses are owned by ordinary people, and you would expect that a Government that professes interest in community tourism and connection with the policy of the ordinary man, would ensure that these people do well. Sir, guest houses occupancy level is down 10.9 per cent in January this year as compared to last year. The smaller hotels of 50 to 100 rooms are almost down by 25 per cent as compared to last year. This Government says it has a connection with the ordinary man, yet the smallest sub-sector in the hotel sector is 'scrutiny' and struggling like this, and they are going to throw \$10 million for a whole hotel sector and expect that after the losses the big hotels

are incurring - because they are losing too, because the over 100 rooms hotels...

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. This Head speaks to \$15 million. The Honourable Member continues to mislead the House by saying that it is \$10 million for the hotel sector. This \$15 million is for all of the tourism players in this land.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Something is wrong with everyone's ears, because the Minister was clear to point out that \$10 million is for the hotel sector and \$5 million is for ancillary services. Sir, if he wants an explanation as to what ancillary means, we can give him that. Sir, the fact is that...

Hon. R. L. SEALY: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading the House and he is doing it deliberately.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: You cannot accuse an Honourable Member of deliberately misleading the House.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: It is a \$15 million programme for the tourism industry. I never said anything about any \$10 million for hotels or any \$5 million for ancillary services. However, representation was made to me by certain people to do that and I rejected it, so that is where he is getting that from. That is why we are in Government and those people who were advising him...

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member. Can we have some order please?

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I will not have people marginalised in this sector. They controlled him and his Party.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please. Thank you.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, that makes it even worst because it means...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, hold on one second please. I am trying to get back some order in the Chamber before we continue. Please, can we have some order? Thank you. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: The Minister should really cool it. The licks have not started yet. In a couple months, the licks will really start, the licks have not start yet, so he should cool it now and save that for then.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, you have exactly two more minutes to wind up your speech.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, if it is a \$15 overall thing, what really then is going to redound to the benefit of the ancillary services? Sir, when these big hotels that are now showing a decline of 16.5 per cent as compared to last year, start submitting their claims, what is going to happen then. Sir, I thought that he would have at least segregate out a certain amount for the ancillary services. Sir, if all is in the same bucket now, they would end up with five cents by the time the Government done pay out. Sir, this is really a calamity and it is really not acceptable.

Sir, I also want to go further and let the Honourable Minister knows that it is all well and good to prop up a hotel sector, but if you do not get people to come to the country to stay in the hotels all the moneys would just be thrown down the drain. Sir, the Honourable Minister does not seem to understand that you have to get people to come to this country.

Sir, the performance of the Government is appalling and it is getting more and more appalling every day. You have under this Government, not ours, two United States carriers, Delta and US Airways, cutting down on the amount of flights to Barbados under their watch.

Sir, Air Jamaica has ceased to operate from Jamaica to Barbados and has cut two of the four flights out of New York to Barbados and the two that remained comes in after midnight, which is not a very popular time to travel. Sir, Westjet that they did not bring here is a winter service, so after May it is scheduled to stop unless the Government could convert it now to all year round. I have not heard them say that yet.

Sir, this is time for the Government to pause. I should not have to tell them that, they are pretty good at that.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member is saying that Westjet came here before November 2008, and that is not true. He said that we did not bring it, and the first time that Westjet landed here was in November. Sir, even though they have been out of Government over ten months, they are still claiming credit for something that occurred after their time.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please proceed, Honourable Member. You need to wind up because you have exhausted your time.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, do you realise that I have lost about ten minutes due to interruptions? Mr. CHAIRMAN: Not ten minutes, I have given you some extra time.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: None of which really were points of order.

Mr. Chairman, it is time for the Government to really evaluate what it is doing because in our main market there is too much turmoil, uncertainty and non-performance.

12.40 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, I keep harping back to the Jamaican experience, but you tend to benchmark yourself against certain countries and Jamaica is one against which Barbados could comfortably benchmark itself against.

Sir, Jamaica realised way back that they had to go out and get into some of the non-traditional markets. They now bring people from China, via Mexico to Jamaica. They went into the South American market in a serious way.

Mr. Chairman, all that this Minister has said about Latin America and South America is that there will be Vice-President of Marketing who will be appointed but he has not said what that person is going to do. Therefore, what is the appointment of a Vice-President, without a job letter as it were, going to do for the industry in America? His contract, I believe, would have expired by now, if not very shortly. Is there any system in place now to replace the Vice-President of Marketing in North America, or is he going to come out of the job, then we hear that it is going to take another six to eight months to find somebody else? Sir, while the figures are lagging, the Minister now comes with another sad story.

Mr. Chairman, with those remarks, I am obliged to you.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, it is rather interesting that the last speaker said that the land tax bill has increased for hoteliers and nobody can dispute that, but it is also known that electricity and telephone bills have increased. The land tax bill was not under the Fair Trading Commission (FTC), but electricity and telephone bills were under the Fair Trading Commission (FTC), which the former Minister's problem was that, if there was no fairness in the Fair Trading Commission (FTC), he would have resigned, which he did.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, when the Honourable Member recognised what I told him in the debate, that the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) was not "FAIR" and that it was "FEAR" and when he saw the "fear" that was coming, he resigned.

Mr. Chairman, I want the Minister to know that I thought he would have been in this Honourable House today begging the telephone company, Cable and Wireless, to reduce those high rates that they are now charging for internet, telephone and other services that were given to them under the watch of the Fair Trading Commission (FTC). I thought, seeing that we are dealing with subsidies for the hotel sector, that this will all come in to help to reduce the losses in the hotel sector. Sir, what is happening in this country today is that the previous Government allowed Cable and Wireless to charge for wages that they are not paying.

Sir, let me explain. When Cable and Wireless went to the Fair Trading Commission (FTC), they put in a claim that affected the hotel industry. This claim was for workers who were supposed to be working, who are no longer working, yet the hotel sector still continues to pay those high rates charged by Cable and Wireless, even though Cable and Wireless is now charging those rates under the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) for workers in St. Lucia and not Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, if we are serious about helping the hotel sector, the first thing this Parliament would have to do in a discussion like this, would be for us to get up and tell Cable and Wireless that they cannot charge local expenditure to provide jobs outside of Barbados, which is exactly what is happening, and that is exactly what is punishing the hotel sector in this country.

Sir, I thought the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, considering the Honourable Member had resigned when he realised that it was not "FAIR" he was dealing with, that it was "FEAR", that he would have got up and joined me in this particular matter concerning the stance he took on this matter a number of years ago.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying this \$15 million is proactive. Sir, I would want to say that it is hurtful to hear about this doom and gloom that is coming from our tourism sector. When one listens to all reports coming from all over the world, you are hearing about hotels in some of the most popular places that are closing down, while not one hotel in Barbados has closed. Those hotels in Barbados have at least 50 per cent in occupancy. We are doing well in this crisis, yet when one hears the Opposition, one would get the impression that Barbados is doing so badly. Sir, hotels in the Bahamas and Jamaica had to be closed, but in

Barbados our hoteliers are doing well and so I know exactly of what I speak. Sir, it does not help Barbados for the Opposition to be talking about this doom and gloom.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what is regrettable? If you would go back to the debate in 2001, you would recognise that the Opposition at the time did not bring doom and gloom. What they did was proffered information for the then Minister of Tourism, who brought the doom and gloom. Sir, at this time, we said no, that this was an opportunity, we were not in a crisis, we were not in a danger zone, but that we are in a zone that has no war and that we should propel that as our platform to bring progress to the country.

Mr. Chairman, two years after, the Ministry of Tourism was admitting that we did not do as badly as he had thought, and it was because of the fact that the Opposition had proffered something that was positive. Sir, that is the difference between the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party. We see everything from the positive side and not from the negative.

Mr. Chairman, it is regrettable that we cannot understand that negativity can bring the best out of you. Sir, we have to demonstrate to young people that because something occurs that may be negative, they could remove themselves from being negative and become positive.

Sir, I carry a philosophy in life that if you go through life thinking of all the negative things you see on a daily basis, you would never be able to enjoy anything good. That is why you have to turn a negative into a positive. Sir, despite whatever one may do to you, you simply convert it into something good.

Mr. Chairman, this Party is always dogged in negativity. They need to stop it. They need to recognise that if they want to get people on Their Side, they have to demonstrate that they are thinking and that they are offering better solutions, instead of simply talking about negative things all the time. Sir, what they would be doing to their own people would be to deflate them instead of lifting them up. Instead, you need to lift people up and not to deflate them.

Mr. Chairman, we are proud that in this crisis situation we can come here and offer the hotel sector more money. On top of that, we are proud that we are in the world marketing Barbados as a place to come. We are now marketing Barbados in places in which we were never able to market it before. Sir, that is what is called 'positivity'. That is what we want in this country. We want a Government that is proactive and is prepared to do what is needed to lift it beyond the bounds of negativity.

Mr. Chairman, I carry a personal philosophy in life. The best time you can advertise is when the big players are holding back. Sir, I am proud of the Minister of Tourism for coming to Cabinet and to this Parliament to get the necessary funds to market this country, while the others are to be....

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I assume the Honourable Member is addressing the Chair.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I would want to say that I can leave politics at this stage. Sir, the one thing that cannot be said of me is that I varied a contract.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, what I am saying to you, that with regard to what is happening now, I am happy that instead of us agreeing with hoteliers to cut back the number of workers, we are providing them with a Fund to ensure that we are looking after the masses of people in this country and that we are keeping them employed.

12.50 p.m.

Sir, I am happy that instead of us agreeing with hoteliers to cut back the number of people they have been employing, we are saying that we are providing a fund to ensure that we look after the masses of people in this country and keep them in work.

Mr. Chairman, we are not giving them money to shore up only their balance sheets. We are giving them money to ensure that everybody gets a fair share for all, that they get their share and that the workers get their share.

Mr. Chairman, if you understood the philosophy of the Democratic Labour Party, you would understand that in our social engineering that we look after everybody.

Mr. Chairman, when we introduced free secondary education, we could have said to rich people that they had money and that they could pay, but we did not say that. We said there should be a fair share for all. Sir, that has always been our premise. We do not say that we are going to have something and that the Opposition will not get something. We have always demonstrated that we operate in the interest of Barbados and not only the political Party which we serve.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to come back and thank the Honourable Member for St. Lucy for his continued support and guidance, for his words today and his constant support and for our efforts to really change the whole culture of the tourism industry in Barbados. Sir, I think we are well on the way to moving in this direction.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North was notably silent on the fact that the Government is making a deliberate attempt to bring in stakeholders into the sector, to reach out to those elements that have been traditionally on the margin, but are providing an essential service within the context of tourism. Sir, we understand that clearly he was scrambling for a few things to say.

First of all, the suggestion that this \$15 million is a paltry sum when, he knows as well as anyone in here, that Government has already put an additional \$20 million in the Barbados Tourism Authority for this year towards marketing. The Barbados Tourism Authority's Budget is at \$100 million for the financial year, more than it has ever been before, and that we are pushing the envelope to make sure that we have constant activity happening in the markets. Sir, he claims that we have not been doing anything.

Sir, the Honourable Member is aware but I believe I need to remind him that for the first time, we have year round exposure on television and radio in North America for the destination of Barbados. It used to be for eight weeks just for the Best of Barbados package but we have now gone from eight weeks to 52 weeks, which is year-round promotion.

Sir, in the United Kingdom, in spite of the fact that Barbados is well positioned in that market place, regarded as iconic and aspirational. We still felt that in this period, it was still important that we maintain that top-of-mind awareness and we went in with a package. Sir, the House is aware that we have Sky Sports. We are sponsoring different activities on the radio and on television at specific periods, in order that we could still have that constant top-of-mind awareness for the destination of Barbados in these troubling times. Sir, that is what this Government is doing and has been doing.

Mr. Chairman, as far as Canada is concerned, we have also gone for a robust advertising schedule. We have year-round exposure on radio, on television, consumer magazines in Toronto, in Quebec, in key travel trade publications and a whole set of online activity as well via Expedia, Yahoo, Travel Zoo and the like. Sir, I would add that in that market, because of the West Jet service, we

have actually increased arrivals from Canada and, Sir, even during this crisis, we are continuing to increase arrivals.

Mr. Chairman, some would even ask if it is good money spent. Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, I do not know where the Honourable Member for St. Michael North is living, but Sir, because of the situation around the globe, everyone is down. Sir, everyone is down; all the marquis destinations, Las Vegas, Hawaii, the great Dubai, Florida. Everyone around the world is down and scrambling for business.

Mr. Chairman, it is important with everyone aggressively trying to get business, discounting and advertising that Barbados cannot be left lagging. Sir, that is why we insisted that these additional resources should be spent by the Barbados Tourism Authority in ensuring, that we have a presence in that marketplace and that Barbados does not fall off the radar, because the other destinations, in their aggression, is more seen now.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North continues to mention this Jamaica thing. Sir, do you know that hotel properties are being closed down in Jamaica? Did you know that there is war at this moment in Jamaica's tourism industry between the hoteliers, the product company, the marketing company and the Minister and that nobody can agree on what the figures are?

Mr. Chairman, there was a little report carried in the newspapers by a certain person claiming that there is a 3.4 per cent increase. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North latched on to that and is in here parroting it over and over again, but Sir, do you know that Parliament in Jamaica did not repeat. Sir, hoteliers, the Chairman of the Board and everybody is disagreeing over this increase when hotels are being closed down, but yet the Honourable Member continues to talk about this Jamaica thing.

I do not know if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North is aware that Jamaica's product and the product from The Bahamas is similar, but that Barbados' product is a little different. Sir, Jamaica is shutting down Cable Beach that is a profitable product and Atlantis which is one of the world's best known hotels, has sent home a few hundred people. Sir, this is the reality of what is happening out there and, Sir, this is what we have to do.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say also on the United Kingdom tax issue, that the Barbados Government took what I thought was a very reasoned approach. I do not understand the idea that the Prime Minister should fly off to Downing Street and knock on the door. We agree through CTO, because the region is affected, that we should take a regional approach to it, and that is what we have done. The Council of Ministers had proper communications done up, consulted with the relevant

persons, said we would get the Prime Ministers involved as well as the various missions in London. Sir, we are taking a joint approach and that way we will have stronger voice and more muscle at dealing with that issue.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, there was no request for the Prime Minister of Barbados or any Prime Minister, for that matter, to take any lead in anything. It was a collected approach and no Prime Minister was asked to take any lead in anything. I supposed that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North would be happy to hear that Jamaica is one of the islands that are involved.

Mr. Speaker, let us understand that I am not here to knock the wonderful work that Minister Bartlett, my good friend in Jamaica, is doing. I do not think that a parliamentarian should get in here and use a piece of a report, to give the impression that we are not doing anything in Barbados, when we are in the middle of a very aggressive campaign and we are not sitting and waiting.

Mr. Speaker, I really believe that what is proposed via the relief fund and the way we are going about working with the hotels, working with the hotels' association and working with the bankers is the right way to go.

Sir, sometimes you do not rush out and start doling out money left right and center. I do not know if that is the approach the Honourable Member was suggesting, but we sat and listened to what the sector had to say and were able to mould it in a way that they got more than they wanted.

1.00 p.m.

The so-called paltry sum, again he is ignoring the point I made that in the new financial year, more money would be placed at the disposal of the turf. It would be improper for me not to go against the Rules to anticipate what the proposed sum is. There is another occasion for that. It is called the Estimates exercise with which he should be familiar. I cannot say what is proposed. You never know. It may be adjusted between now and then. To suggest that it is just \$50 million and that is it, that is not all of what is on the cards.

I would not even bother to go down the line of the last \$10 million fund. What the real motivating factor was behind that fund, how the funds were disbursed, or who was the main beneficiary. I came across a little piece of correspondence that explained to me why HRL was the main beneficiary, because HRL also helped to design and conceal the whole \$10 million plan.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Again, the Honourable Member would know that. I do not understand, be careful.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: The Honourable Member never used to listen to the Honourable Member, the former Member for Michael South when they sat together on the Bench. Now he is listening to him. That is why he comes in here with those discarded proposals that we had.

Sir, nonetheless, before I sit down, the Honourable Member spoke about the lost of air lift and seat capacity. Let us understand something. Unlike many destinations with the profile of Barbados, we do not have a national carrier that brings our tourists here, like Air Jamaica, Bahamas Air, Caymans Airline, Emirates Airline and Australia has Qantas Airline. We do not have that. The Barbados Tourism Authority has to sit and negotiate with persons who offer that service to bring them here. You must also understand that the airline industry went through a crisis, and the Honourable Member knows this.

Air Jamaica lost US\$170 million last year and they have indicated that they cannot continue to sustain those losses. They have come with a proposal to us. It does not make much sense. What are we supposed to do? Having said that, just because we have lost on that end, that is where we work on the other end. We are in discussion with some other carriers to pick up those seats and those discussions are at an advance stage. I do not want to reveal too much at this point. Obviously the players in the regional market would be Caribbean Airlines, which is owned by the Trinidad Government, and LIAT, which for all intents and purposes, mainly Barbadian-owned operation, with some influences from elsewhere, operating in Antigua. That is where we have to locate the discussion to promote more regional movement.

There is no point getting in here and saying that Air Jamaica has stopped flying and that is the Government's fault. Air Jamaica is losing money like crazy. Nobody is going to buy that airline in that state. It has to go through major changes, so we must therefore, look for replacement seats.

Sir, the situation with US Airways and Delta, again, that is ongoing. We are fortunate that there are still coming at all. They have cut out entire destinations, American Eagle.

Sir, I remember when I was at the Tourism Summit in Washington, in June 2008, the Minister from the British Virgin Islands was scrambling around like a chicken without a head looking for airlift, because American Eagle had stopped going to Tortola and 90 per cent of the tourists

arrive on the American Eagle. We have not had to deal with those situations. We have been quite fortunate.

Sir, as airlines decisions may have impacted on us one way or the other, and we have had to look for creative ways of dealing with it, but I think that we have done well. It was not our fault that Sir Michael Bishop decided to sell BMI to Lufthansa, out of Germany. As a result of that decision, they cut all of their long-haul flights. The service from Manchester to Bridgetown had extremely good load factors. It is just good fortune again, that we were able to get Virgin to come on stream and to take up those seats out of Manchester.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Sir, BMI was a very good partner and we enjoyed working with them, but this is the reality of what the corporate decisions are that affect us as a destination.

Sir, sometimes you lose sleep because you have no control as a Minister of Tourism over the decisions that can be made by these corporate giants that control the airlines. We have to negotiate with them and work with them. I am saying that Barbados has done well to mitigate any loss of seats in most cases and in some cases, we have been able to grow on the availability of seats.

Sir, the West Jet service is doing extremely well. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North takes a very interesting approach. West Jet has worked well, so therefore, it had nothing to do with this Government. However, if there is a problem, whether it is the morale of the staff of the Barbados Tourism Authority, if it is now US Airways or Delta, it is the Government's fault. So the good things that are happening have nothing to do with us. It is because of what they did and all of the bad things that are happening have nothing to do with them, because of us. Sir, I find that, frankly speaking, very infantile for a fourth-term Parliamentarian. That is my opinion. Someone who has been in here long enough should really know better.

Sir, funny enough, I actually have more experience than anyone sitting on That Side, except for the Honourable Member for St. Peter, one or two of them would have served in the Other Place, but as an Opposition MP, I had close to five years and sometimes you have to pick your issues. You have to be responsible and reasonable. Sometimes you have to give the Government little kudos and people would respect you for that, because they understand that you have been balanced and mature.

Frankly speaking, we are seeing some behaviour from this Opposition inside and outside of this Chamber that is showing some immaturity, some desperate measures

and some statements being made that can only be designed to destroy this country. You cannot be so determined in your efforts to attempt to destroy, so we have to make sure that those efforts fail.

Certainly, where tourism is concerned, I have had to deal with situations which no Minister of Tourism in the history of Barbados has had to deal with. However, I think we have done well under the circumstances. There have been some areas where we would have liked to do better. There have been decisions that have affected us, but the point is, we have been able to try to mitigate the impact of what is happening globally, and to see that we can continue to help this very special country called Barbados, to protect it and ensure that it is there for everyone to enjoy.

Sir, I really feel sorry that I had to intervene and interrupt the Honourable Member with the revelation that he was reading and not listening to me, but reading from what he thought to be some nugget that dropped off the back of a truck, notes that would have been handed to him. Again, we will work with any hotelier in Barbados. As a matter of fact, the person who is responsible for the largest block of hotel homes in Barbados is the Chairman of the the Barbados Tourism Authority, and he is doing an excellent job.

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

13.10 p.m.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, we will work with anyone and all I say to the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Authority (BHTA) constantly, and again I think they have to respect me for it. Some of their Members, I believe there may be some who are probably a little less than progressive in their thinking and believe that tourism is all about hotels but, by and large, they all agree that there is more to tourism than just hotels and this Government is determined that we will work with all the players. Sir, it must be that way.

Unfortunately, because of what transpired in here today, we can see that there still seems to be a political divide on that point. We will not allow ourselves to be controlled by any one particular element within an element, who feels that the sector is about them and in their interest. Mr. Chairman, it has to be about everyone. They must do well. I want them all to do well.

In fact, I am on record as calling for more hotel properties, better hotel properties, better looking properties, better functioning properties and more profitable properties but, at the same time, we must have other people enjoying the fruits of this sector and feeling as if they are players at

the table, as well. Whether it is a vendor, water-sports operator, the operator of an eating establishment, a taxi driver, whatever you are doing. We do not believe in chasing the red caps out of the airport. We believe they are part of tourism and they must be there to enhance and add to the experience.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: We are going to deal with all of that too.

When you go to certain parts of the world, you find a stack of trolleys there, but you come to Barbados and you have a gentleman telling you welcome to Barbados and offering to help with your bags. It helps to the experience and it is a good touch that we have here and something we have to develop. Sir, you would be surprised how many people come here because of the Leroy, Dove and Pressy and all of those fellows.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: And the Devil, Zigga and all the others. Mr. Chairman, these people are all important and that is what this effort is about. It is about understanding that there is a global situation and relief needs to come to the entire sector. It is about understanding that once this Government is in office, we plan to take tourism in a different direction. Mr. Chairman, it is for everyone and not only for a few.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much and I beg to move that Head 55 stand part.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

HEAD 61

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FOREIGN TRADE AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$383 657

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Chairman, I believe I spoke last week, quite extensively, to this particular matter. Therefore, I would not wish to delay the Parliament in relation to this particular matter.

I beg to move that Head 61 stand part.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

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

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

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 2.30 p.m. today. Sir, at that time, we will continue the debate on the Constituency Councils Bill, 2009, which will, of course, be carried live.

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

The question that the House be now suspended until 2.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

1:18:p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

ORDER NO. 3 (RESUMED)

THE Constituency Councils BILL, 2009

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, let me on the onset indicate to the good people of Christ Church South who have asked me to represent them in this Honourable Chamber that it has been indeed a pleasure and a task that I accept with all the humility I can gather as I try to satisfy the very urgent needs of so many constituents.

Sir, I believe that this is no different from the task facing other Honourable Members in here who, because of the parliamentary election arrangements in Barbados, face similar challenges in terms of representing people.

Sir, it is significant that we in the Democratic Labour Party, through our Manifesto pledge, have sought to bring closer to the people of Barbados, the kind of representation which we would consider ideal. Mr. Speaker, by this Bill that we are continuing to consider this evening, we are seeking to better achieve that noble mandate.

The Honourable Members on the Other Side have waffled between support, ridicule, disregard, and non participation as far as this particular item is concerned. I recall in earlier discussions around March last year, hearing Honourable Members on That Side on the corridors commenting on the benefits they could see derived from putting their hands on the money that would have been made available to the Constituency Councils. That is when the moneys were allocated in the Estimates debate and there was discussion elsewhere.

Of course today, the public out-cry which they have attempted to fuel has backfired on them, because the people of Barbados are saying to us in the Democratic Labour Party that they have given us a job to do, and they expect us to carry it out to the best of our ability. Sir, likewise, they are saying to the Honourable Members on the Other Side that they should get the message of the people of Barbados and allow the Government of the day to carry out its work.

Mr. Speaker, we made it clear from the onset that this is not an attempt to usurp democracy. On the contrary, it is a model which has been tried and tested elsewhere. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has been at pains in his presentation, to give this Chamber access to examples of where models of this sort have worked.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the people of Barbados are saying what manner of people are we dealing with and what threat to democracy when you are actually spreading the veil of contact and contribution.

We are saying, Mr. Speaker, to the non-governmental organisations, the churches, the neighbourhood watches and in the case of my Constituency, the Boat Owners Association, both the large boats which venture far afield sometimes coming into contact with other territorial waters, even at risk sometimes of their own safety, and the small boat owners to get together in their traditional groups, elect their leadership, make their recommendations and the Ministry of Social Care would look after establishing a Council, which in consultation with the Member of Parliament, will be fully reflective of the kinds of activities that predominate in the Constituency.

Sir, on Sunday past, I had the pleasure of attending a church service at Christ Church Parish Church with the Small Boat Owners' Association. At that church service they invested their new executive. Sir, this is a demonstration of the organisation that exists and the ability, therefore, for these small boat owners to send forward a representative, their leader, it may not be the Chairman or the President, to take part in the decision-making in the Constituency so as to better fulfil the overall

objectives that we are seeking to gain. Sir, what are we hearing from the Honourable Members on the Other Side and why are we hearing what we are hearing from them? Sir, I believe it is simply because of their conditioning, the way they have been socialised in terms of providing assistance to constituents and Constituencies. In the 14 years that they formed the Government of Barbados, they consulted with no one. They neither elected nor selected, they included. That is the term they used. You had to be included. You had to join the politics of inclusion.

Mr. Speaker, I heard references less than 48 hours ago of this great sociological find called the politics of inclusion. If you were a card-carrying Member of the Barbados Labour Party, you were entitled to all the benefits, you got a million dollars today and another million dollars next week: the Israel Foundation, the Pinelands Creative Workshop and the St. Peter Development Council.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: They did not say let us look at the whole of Barbados and make sure that all constituents in every sector were equally satisfied and represented. They now want to come in here and preach to us and they want to go into the streets of Barbados and create havoc. Mr. Speaker, that seems to have fizzled down now because in Oistins on Sunday night they could only raise the cars that they locked in the car park before the place closed. That was the extent of the attendance. Those vehicles had to wait. I think mine was one of them. We had to wait until the meeting was finished to get back our cars to go home.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: You park during the day to go shopping.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: He does not provide natural gas for any of the residents in Maxwell. He provides natural gas for his business places on the main road in Maxwell. He would not provide for Maxwell Park and the farther reaches of Maxwell. During his tenure of leadership at the National Petroleum Corporation, he could not find the time, the energy or the will to provide these services, but it is typical.

Asides.

2.30 p.m.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this

Honourable House. Sir, not only is the Honourable Member imputing improper motives to another Honourable Member, but further, I do not provide natural gas anywhere. Sir, any area to which the Honourable Member refers would already have had natural gas.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: The Honourable Member said the Honourable Member for Christ Church West. I heard him said that.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, in the Constituency Council's arrangement that we are putting in place, the residents of Maxwell Park and other areas will have representation and access to the services that they so very urgently desire, and that is the point.

Mr. Chairman, I have said it in here before and it bears repetition, but the Barbados Labour Party is accustomed to standing in the way of any progressive legislation or any progressive attempt to provide for the broader masses of this country.

Sir, we go back to the question of free secondary education. We go back to their opposition to school meals. I know the Honourable Member is going to hold their heads - but that would be more in shame than anything else - to think that is the way they operate, but they are doing the same thing today.

Sir, in the 1960s when we introduced free school meals, they recommended that the pots and pans should be taken out to sea, holes punched in them and thrown overboard. I would not wish though that the boat which they captained to take them out, that they would punch holes in that too. I would not wish that on the Honourable Members, but that is the kind of approach from Honourable Members on that side.

Mr. Speaker, they are now resisting the idea that we should purchase back the shares of Barbados National Bank. They are shouting all over the streets of Barbados, trying to create momentum for this kind of facile approach to leadership, when we have said and the people of Barbados have recognised the kind of pressures in the world today., They have also recognised that at this stage, one should be looking at constructive cooperation. Sir, there is nothing wrong with constructive cooperation, not the kind of unobjective opposition and boycotting that we are seeing.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West made the point when we held the meeting, to allow the others on This Side to have a say as to how the Constituency Council Bill should take shape and unfold. They came in, mumbled something and walked

out. That is the way they operate and now they would come here and try to preach to Barbadians that they are serious about representing them. They have not taken the opportunity, they have not spared a moment to think of the greater benefits to the Constituencies. They are not prepared, although they promised Constituency representation, they never delivered it. We are now delivering it today, that is what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at an example of the benefits, and I have looked at two specific opportunities. In the Ministry of Public Works some years ago, there was an experiment to look at the involvement of the private sector in the achievement of the road maintenance programme, i.e. cleaning the sides of the road and debushing generally. This experiment was based upon measurements which would have been conducted and managed by officers in the Ministry of Public Works, who knew what they were dealing with, and then a farming out of this exercise to private sector companies. Sir, we got an opportunity to create micro-enterprises within our communities to employ people.

Mr. Speaker, I get approaches daily of young men with equipment who want to assist us in achieving these objectives. We can develop micro-enterprises where these young entrepreneurs could participate with the Ministry of Transport and Works, in an environment where a measured area of work is allocated on a quarterly or annual basis and is completed and paid for. It lightens the load of the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport, but better than that, it creates opportunities for young men and women in their Constituencies. Sir, I would want to say too, this is a project that can be ably led by our Constituency Councils.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: We are not talking about man rats, because there are no man rats in my Constituency. There are man rats in the Constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, she said so, she said she has man rats, so she does not want two more. The Honourable Member said she does not want two man rats in the same hole, so I do not know if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is a man rat or not. The point is that the Honourable Member made that comment herself.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, last Thursday I had a very interesting visit to a facility in St. Lawrence, the retired telephone exchange building which was once used for training. It has been acquired by the Government of Barbados and has been vested in the Ministry of Labour, under the National Training Board. Sir, they have not been

using the facility and we are already talking to them about establishing a cooperative arrangement where we can continue to use their services and to develop in a win/win situation.

Mr. Speaker, when I say win/win, the person in charge of the National Training Board said, "you mean, win/win/win, because here you have an opportunity to spend some money and develop these facilities, as they intend to anyhow, to offer training and retraining for young men and women in the Constituencies, to offer opportunities for experiments in sale of goods, in preparation of craft and in preparation of items for sale, because here we are in the start of the tourism sector of Barbados. Sir, this is an opportunity we are giving to these young men and women, who I have found - and I believe every Honourable Member who is in this Honourable Chamber would have found - are desperately in need, including those young persons who may have missed the boat on the first round. Sir, this happens. It is the society in which we live and there are young men and women out there, who may have missed that first opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I envisage that the Constituency Council in Christ Church South can go into a cooperative arrangement with the Ministry of Labour, under the National Training Board, and make sure that we effectively provide for this kind of retraining and this kind of experiment, to bring about the kind of goals that we anticipate. Mr. Speaker, the cost to the national purse would be considerably reduced, as we make sure we spread it over the two areas of interest.

Mr. Speaker, the beautiful thing about it is, that my information is, that the people of Christ Church South and people of all Constituencies in Barbados, have responded in their numbers to our advertisement for participation in this great experiment. If it is a challenge to a Member of Parliament to have a Constituency Council, it can only make that Member of Parliament a better Member of Parliament, because if you are not meeting the demands, if you are not able to satisfy the demands of your Council, or even to give your Council a hearing and understand what directions they want to go in, then who are you working for? Who are you representing?

2.50 p.m.

Do you believe that because you have been elected to this Chamber, any of us should be of the opinion that there is no one out there that can shed light or be of a different view? Is that the approach that the Barbados Labour Party's Members are preaching to this country when they talk about threats to democracy?

Mr. Speaker, we are not interfering with the Parliament of this country. We are not touching the

Constitution of Barbados in any way. We are establishing a fair and equitable distribution of our social resources, to ensure a wider participation of the people of Barbados and a greater benefit to them all.

Mr. Speaker, we are steadfast in our resolve to remove from the politics of this country, the kind of stigma that was implanted by the Barbados Labour Party's approach of selective benefit, to those who join the organisation. Sir, there are examples all over Barbados and there are persons who should stand up and be counted, because they

M -- 2 know what it took to be awarded assistance under the Barbados Labour Party Administration. We saw how that damaged the culture of our communities and we are about enhancing those communities.

Sir, they talk about elections. They talk about what they would do. The only example that I can think of is in the establishment of the Parish Community Councils. They called it the Independence Community Councils and what has happened. Sir, ten people attended, if you are lucky. They paraded themselves under the Barbados Labour Party as being the mouthpiece of the people of the Constituency, largely at Independence time but then some timid attempts to fulfill mainly roles that are not necessarily about total development, but are very sectorial in their approach.

Sir, another example is the Youth Commissioners, which they established. They did not consult anyone and when we talked about it, in 1999, they made it clear that it was their thing and they would work for them. The Youth Commissioners went about and did what they were told to

M -- 3 do and we have seen the kind of projects they came up with. Sir, this Chamber has seen the kind of projects they came up with and none of us on This Side had any kind of contribution to make, as to what programmes would have been recommended to the Government of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, certainly, I did not. I heard from my colleagues, on This Side, that they did not have anything to say about what these Youth Commissioners presented to the Government of Barbados of the day, under Owen Arthur and Mia Mottley.

Asides.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: I am sorry, Sir. The Honourable Member for St. Peter and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East - I apologise for calling names in here, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to a different approach. We have taken the people of Barbados into our confidence. We are determined to deliver a fair and equitable system of improved governance, which would see

a wider community representation in the activities that are carried out in

M -- 4 our Constituencies and our communities. We are not going to bring the Constituency Council to Parliament. They are not coming in here to speak to you because we, the Honourable Members of Parliament, will continue to do that job as long as the people of the Constituency elect us so to do. Sir, it is as simple as that. Mr. Speaker, we will work with these Constituency Councils to ensure that those noble objectives, which I have been able to spell out this afternoon are achieved.

Mr. Chairman, this Honourable Member wants on behalf of the people of Christ Church South, to express appreciation to the Government of Barbados for allowing us to be one of the first model Constituency Councils. We are well prepared. We are already ready, if you pardon the repetition, Sir, to take advantage of the opportunities, which will unfold.

Sir, I unreservedly lend my support to this Bill and recommend it highly to this Honourable Chamber.

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

M -- 5 Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give fully and unreserved support to this Bill before us today. During the last Elections, the Democratic Labour Party campaigned on a platform that included the need for good governance. We took to every nook and cranny in Barbados to tell the people of Barbados about the kind of governance that existed at that point in time, the kind of governance they had been saddled with for 14 years and, clearly, both verbally as well as in black and white, we enunciated our vision for Barbados and what we envisaged good governance would include, including the establishment of Constituency Councils.

Mr. Speaker, even before we get there, we need to reflect clearly on the challenges we have had in Barbados in recent times, in respect of issues such as the widening gap between those who are mandated to establish policies and to manage programmes and those who we seek to represent in Parliament and uplift in the wider society. We also reflect on the kind of Barbados that has developed in recent times. Sir, on that point we could all agree

M -- 6 that Barbados has moved far beyond those good fundamentals of Barbadian life, what we call in parlance, the village life to what is considered a modern-day society, but one which is void of true community spirit.

Mr. Speaker, we have reached the stage in Barbados where we have become very individualistic and certainly, we lack that homogenous community spirit, that we have

so much been accustomed to and, Sir, the Government, at the point in time, could not be without blame.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a debate to spend a lot of time on the Barbados Labour Party but, certainly, we have to be cognisant of where we are coming from in order to plan adequately for where we wish to go as well.

Sir, we were saddled in Barbados with a kind of Government; a kind of leadership and a style of governance, where it was accepted that you ought to seek to control individuals, rather than have them truly participating in the development of their own society. Hence, it was no surprise that for 14 years, this society was known to be one where you have to be a card-carrying

M -- 7 Member of the Barbados Labour Party in order to get jobs, in order to get key positions and in order to get even assistance from some Government agencies.

Mr. Speaker, it was one where we knew there was great amounts of victimisation, particularly in the public sector and its tentacles spread far and deep into the private sector as well. It was one where citizens were bombarded with phone calls in the dead of the night with the greatest degree of profanity and, Sir, that was not the kind of society and leadership that we expected or wanted in this society, that kind of drunken stupor behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, commensurate with that, we had what I consider to be deliberate attempts to destroy agencies such as the Community Development Division.

We, in Barbados, over the years, have boasted well of excellent community workers, people who came from the people, who understood the need of the people and worked without fear or favour in terms of community upliftment. Sir, instead, we saw a situation where the former

M -- 8 Government sought to destroy that Community Development Division, and its spirit, by basically placing square pegs in round holes.

3.00 p.m.

Sir, I believe that if we, as politicians, are serious about our jobs, we would recognise the importance of staying in touch with young people, listening to them and working with them and helping them to plan a good future. Instead, under the former Administration, we saw a regime where, even issues regarding young people were heavily politicalised.

Hence, for example, you have youth workers generally speaking, who seem to have been recruited, based solely on political affiliation, to carry out the work of their

political masters. Sir, that has done untold damage to the psyche of the young people and youth work within this community.

This Democratic Labour Party is up to the task of rebuilding a good spirit of togetherness among our young people in this society. It is a task we have to work on and with. Therefore, undoubtedly, we clearly recognise that for just over a decade, Barbados was going in the wrong direction, in terms of governance. Hence, this is but one part of our master plan to restore a level of decent governance in our society. Sir, good governance includes listening to the people, ensuring that we do not just talk to them, but with them, and we listen to them. It includes what I consider to be a bottom up approach to Government and governance, where ideas also must flow from those at the bottom rung of the ladder. It involves people having a say in the kinds of policies and programmes that govern their affairs and that bring benefits to all of them. In short, it includes bringing governance and Government back to the people. This whole notion, as the Barbados Labour Party likes to portray all the time, about MPs and Ministers being holier than thou and the sole reservoir or depositor of knowledge needs to be brought to an abrupt end.

Sir, we need to get back to the stage in Barbados where community development and empowerment of people transcends Party politics, and the kind of political tribalism that existed before. We as a Government made that commitment in 2007/2008 to establish Constituency Councils, and you did not hear much about it from the Barbados Labour Party during the campaign, but once we won the Government, there is all of this hue and cry and threat to democracy. When people were being lambasted and victimised throughout this country for 14 years, nobody talked about the threat to democracy. When as an Opposition, we could not get air play on CBC, nobody talked about threat to democracy, so let us be fair. All of a sudden there are all of these threats to democracy.

Sir, I have always said that Barbadians are much smarter than a lot of us may think. That is why you have not seen any clamouring of support for the fear and pronouncements of the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, on That Side, they have a tendency to operate by trying to inject fear into everything. They want to now inject fear in Barbadians in respect of the financial challenges that some institutions may be experiencing. I know that, from what has been reported to me in their recent political meetings, that once again there is nothing but a lot of cussing and personal attacks on individuals on This Side, because they cannot deal with the fundamental issues, as we are doing. That is why it is instructive that we continue to ensure, rather than the fear of democracy, that true democracy exists in Barbados. That is why we are saying these Constituency Councils are about empowering

people, about getting people to understand the function and the manner in which they recognise they have power. It is not about us lording over individuals saying, fix this road and build this community centre. It is about people coming together and saying to the Representatives this is what we need in our community, whether they are BLP, DLP or PEP. The individuals who exist in the physical space have come together to help chart their future. I believe that is commendable. In any mature society we would have received an A+ for that novelty, but instead we are being vilified by the Opposition Bench.

I am hearing issues about whether people are being selected or elected. We are abundantly clear in terms of the process. Once again, in a feeble attempt to muddle the waters and ideas, we are hearing all this talk about people being selected and elected.

Let me make it abundantly clear, as the Parliamentary Representative for the Constituency of St. James South, I have no fear of Constituency Councils. As far as I am concerned, they can only assist me in my work as a Parliamentary Representative. If the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has a fear, then it tells me that she is not serious about her work as a Parliamentary Representative. We need to be abundantly clear that Constituency Councils are not entities that we have to be fearful of.

I am of the view that these Constituency Councils will bring tremendous benefits to the Constituencies. As a Parliamentary Representative, sometimes you are challenged in respect of identifying all of the problems in your Constituency and bringing them to bear.

Let us face it. The reality is, today as a Parliamentary Representative, as a Minister you have a Personal Assistant, an office in your Constituency, but invariably you do not often have the time to walk, understand and to hear each concern. That is why it is instructive and imperative that we have avenues like these where individuals can come together in the community, sit down and say, this year we should get the roads in Wanstead fixed, increased street lighting in Crystal Heights and we need an adequate recreational facility in West Terrace. These are the kind of facilities, as far as I am concerned that can only benefit our society.

Sir, people feel that they are now doing something that benefits them. They are helping to shape ideas, policies and programmes. They are being part now of a Government structure and system that truly relates to their concerns.

Therefore, I cannot understand why this Constituency Council Bill would engage, or endure the wrath of the Opposition. Certainly it is about raising their

own Constituencies to a level that we consider beneficial to all and sundry.

For example, in many Constituencies, we have issues relating to community centres. Government often goes in and build structures and, sad to say, they sit there idly, they are not well used, or there are no real programmes organised within them. That needs to come to an end. We believe that Constituency Councils certainly would play a meaningful role in respect of design and management of community programmes.

We also have issues, for example, in relation to public health. Every day, as Minister of Health, I am bombarded by individuals needing to have lots cleared up in their communities and garbage disposal. I am of the view that Constituency Councils can play a meaningful role in not only identifying these particular challenges, but also bring solutions to bear to them.

Sir, I have heard the talk about cost. The reality is Constituency Councils at the end of the day, when you look in terms of the value, would not cost any much more than what we currently are spending in respect of these things. The truth of the matter is, instead you now get a better gage of what are the priorities and the benefits flow to more than what would have transpired before.

Sir, therefore, I really wish that at the end of the day to take away the partisan politics from this issue. This is a very serious issue. It is about taking Barbados to the next level. It is about ensuring that the people of this society have a greater say in their future. It is about ensuring that our young people are empowered and enlightened and can be truly participators in their own destiny. It is about ensuring that the resources of the State are deployed and managed in such manner that the wider society benefits from it.

3.10 p.m.

Sir, it is about ensuring that we leave behind a Barbados, rich in a custom, and with value systems that can sustain the times. It is about, once again, ensuring that Barbados has the best possible level of governance that becomes the envy of the region and the world over.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I give my full support to the Bill before Parliament today.

Asides.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that I could, in no way support this Bill. It is, Mr.

Speaker, the most stinking piece of legislation that I have seen come to this Honourable House.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, it could only have come from a stinkler's mind. I want to start there.

Mr. Speaker, let us first think about democracy. What is democracy? Democracy is representation, governance by the people or their elected representatives. That is democracy. Mr. Speaker, where in this Bill will these 450 Councillors who are to represent the people's interests, elected. Sir, at nowhere and at no point in this Bill are the people, who are to represent the people's interest, elected. Could that be democracy?

Mr. Speaker, whenever we get up to speak in this Honourable Chamber, we pay reverence to the people who put us here, the people of Christ Church West, in my instance, and the people for St. John for the Honourable Member for St. John. When I get up and get dressed and come here to this Honourable House I come here to represent the interests of the people who put me here, the people who went out in their numbers and voted for the Honourable Member to be here.

Sir, when a Councillor in the Constituency of Christ Church West gets ready and goes to that Council meeting, who is he going to be representing? Is he going to be representing the people who put him there? There is only one person who put him there. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, but that is whom he would then be representing.

I heard very clearly, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, in his first words in this debate got up and said again, "I thank the people for St. Michael North West for putting me here." Do you know what he did? He paid reverence to who put him there. Therefore, if he is to pay reverence to who put him there, who then are these 450 people going to pay reverence to? It is only obvious. They are going to pay reverence to who put them there, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. Sir, if that is not the most stinking piece of legislation ever seen in this Honourable House, what is it? It could only have come from a stinkler mind.

Mr. Speaker, if these walls could talk, they would cry. They would cry to see what Barbados has now come to, where a Minister would now be circumventing the democratic process and appointing people to be Counsellors in this country. This could never be right and this Barbados Labour Party will not support it and could not support it, because it would be flying in the face of the ideals that our forefathers fought for, like the late Right Excellent Grantley H. Adams, who formed the Barbados

Labour Party. Those people fought for the right to vote, irrespective of colour, class or creed. Sir, let us be realistic.

Mr. Speaker, the Members on the Other Side have the numbers, but having the numbers to push through a Bill, does not mean it should run rough shod over the people of Barbados. It means that the people of Barbados have given you an opportunity, a little pick, a chance to see what you can do and, instead of accepting it gracefully, and working hard to protect the interest of the Barbadian people - not about protecting the interest of CLICO, but we are going to get to that - who put you there, you want to come and run rough shod over the Parliament because you have the numbers.

Sir, if that is not the most stinking piece of legislation that has ever come to this country, that could have come from nothing less than from a stinkler mind, then, what is?

Mr. Speaker, we understand well, because that is no longer the DLP - Democratic Labour Party that is David and Leroy Party. Wherever we go and whatever we see, the people of Barbados are crying out about cost of living. We did not know he meant to increase it threefold and that is what has happened. Sir, instead of this Democratic Labour Party coming to do the people's business, they have come to entrench themselves in power.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados are not fooled. The people of Barbados are not stupid. This is not about giving governance or voices to the people. They cannot give voices to the people, because of what is within the Bill, and I am going to relate to the Bill quite clearly. There are no voices to the people. Voices to the people, what?

In the Bill, it says here that the Minister shall give the department directions of a general nature, in respect of the policy and procedure to be followed by each Council and each Council, shall comply with those directions.

Is that a voice to the people or making minions for the Minister? Sir, that is all it is.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, making millions for the Minister?

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Minions.

Mr. SPEAKER: Minions, oh I am sorry.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: We know it might be millions too. I know that you heard millions, but I would never suggest that the Minister needed to make millions from the

Constituency Councils. He may have other ways to make millions, but I would never say that, Sir.

There is no way, Mr. Speaker, that this could be considered giving voices to the people when, clearly within the legislation, the Council must act under directions of the Minister, and the Minister alone. It is in the Bill, so how could that be giving voices to the people? This Bill purports to do all sorts of rubbish.

3.20 p.m.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, like you, I listened patiently to the Honourable Member's presentation and I rise to object to the word 'stinking' which the Honourable Member has used repeatedly in this Chamber. I was very careful to look for the definition of the word 'stinking' and it says "anything that smells foul or offensive, disgusting, contemptible, extremely disgusting, rich or drunk and over supply with something especially money."

Mr. Speaker, to describe a piece of legislation or any measure brought to this House by a Minister of Government as 'stinking' is to my mind offensive in itself. It is unparliamentary, it reflects on this Parliament and on the Chair, because it means that you would be allowing a disgusting and contemptible piece of legislation to be brought before this Chamber.

Sir, I could not sit in silence especially as this is being beamed into the houses of thousands of Barbadians, young people, upon whom we should be making a positive reflection that a word like that would be constantly repeated in this Chamber. We have school teachers in here who one would think would object to words like that. They would not want people to use them in description of others or their actions, condoning it and heckling and supporting that kind of behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, it is wrong and it would be a gross stain on your Chairmanship if I did not object. I know you may not want of your own volition to rule it as unparliamentary, but it would be a stain on this Parliament if a measure before this Parliament could be so described in the year 2009, and nobody stood up to object to the word being used.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have heard the submission. When I first heard the word, it did seem not the most flattering of terms. I think it is one of those borderline words, in my view, and I cannot say that I rule it unparliamentary, although the Honourable Member may choose to desist from using it, because as I keep saying, what you say here, no matter when you say it, is a reflection, not only on the people who you are aiming it at, but on this House and yourselves.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I will change the word. Mr. Speaker, this is the most disastrous piece of legislation that has ever come before this House. It aims to turn back the hands of time. (Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West were ordered expunged from the records by Mr. Speaker.)

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I am guided by you because I will always respect the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear to all and sundry that if you are to sit to choose and nominate people after certain nominations have come before you as Minister, the criteria for nomination would simply be the Democratic Labour Party Membership's role. That is the only criterion he would have.

Mr. Speaker, the intent of this Bill to feather and fill Constituency Councils with Democratic Labour Party partisans is not lost on the people of Barbados. The people of Barbados know it well.

Mr. Speaker, in the report on the National Commission on Law and Order, there was a suggestion that there be an advisory body made up of similar types of organisations, non-governmental organisations, community practitioners and so on.

Mr. Speaker, within that Report was the recommendation that persons currently active in politics or public Administration should be ineligible for appointment.

Mr. Speaker, why could we not have that in this Bill? Mr. Speaker, I will give you an example. Suppose the Honourable Member for St. Michael West appointed a losing candidate to be Chairman of a Constituency Council, he would be totally within his rights to do it, because in this Bill, there is nothing that stops him from doing that, there is no restriction that says that a person who is currently active in politics or public Administration should be excluded from being on these Constituency Councils.

Mr. Speaker, I will show you how it is a challenge to democracy. Sir, when it comes to the Constituency of St. Joseph, you appoint the losing candidate as the Chairman for the Constituency Council and you put at his disposal X amount of dollars to be spent in the Constituency. When you come to the Constituency for Christ Church West, you appoint the losing candidate as the Chairman for the Constituency Council, because there is no requirement that it cannot be done and he gets money at his disposal to use in the Constituency.

When it comes to the Constituency of St. Andrew, you appoint the losing candidate from the Democratic Labour Party again to be the Chairman and it goes right

down the line. Mr. Speaker, what could that be if not a challenge to democracy.

Mr. Speaker, the people went out in their numbers and voted for the Members on This Side, that was a democratic action. For the Government to come and circumvent the will of the people by appointing losing candidates to head Constituency Councils and give them money to spend on top of it, if that is not a challenge to democracy, then what could be? That is a challenge to the will of the people. The people of Barbados understand it well.

I am hearing the Honourable Member for Christ Church South talk about the Urban Development Commission. Mr. Speaker, I will give you the quote and then I will tell you where it is from.

Mr. SPEAKER: If you are going to quote a document, you need to identify it, please.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: House of Assembly debates, First Session, 1994-1999.

3.30 p.m.

"Ministers can have access to confidential information about individuals in distress. Barbados has reached a sad point in our affairs. I have been Minister of Welfare before, Minister responsible for the National Assistance Board, and other than those names I have submitted, I have never asked to see a list of persons who have benefitted from welfare, or from national assistance under my jurisdiction because I do not think that is the way Barbados should move ahead."

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Who said this? The Honourable Member for St. John said that. Sir, in that debate the Honourable Member did not think that Members should have a list about individuals in distress, but instead of even just a Minister having a list of individuals in distress, now a whole Constituency Council must have names of individuals in distress. It talks about building databases, so a whole Constituency Council must now have information about people in distress, people who need their houses repaired, people who need assistance to make ends meet. Sir, now a whole Constituency Council, not just a Minister must have a list. Sir, the Honourable Member knew it is wrong before, how come he does not know it is wrong now?

Mr. Speaker, it is very instructive to read old debates, and you must bear with me on this one. It continues:

"If the Honourable Member for St. Peter wishes to lead a Government which has, as the singular focus the desire to remove from the hands of independently-appointed public officials accountable to the Minister, who is then accountable to Parliament, and put it in the hands of people chosen at the whim and fancy of the Minister on the basis of political affiliation, on the basis of friendships and on the basis of a whole set of other irrelevant considerations, to determine how rural development should take place in this country, to determine how urban development should take place in this country and to determine who of the poor should receive assistance from the Poverty Alleviation Fund."

Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John knew it then. The Honourable Member knew then that people should not be appointed on the whim and fancy of a Minister, but he does not know it now. Instead, he now heads a Government that brings legislation to appoint people. The Honourable Member said then that you should not be doing it, but now he is in Government he is saying all is well. We are in Government and we should do it now.

Mr. Speaker, what sort of hypocrisy is that? That is what this Bill is about. This Bill is exactly what the Honourable Member was arguing against then. Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South brought it to my attention when he talked about the Urban Development Commission. Well, this is the Urban Development Commission debate. Sir, if the Honourable Member knew it then, why is it that he does not know it now?

Mr. Speaker, I go further because it is the most instructive debate I have read for this Honourable House in a long time because it relates so much to this current debate. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member went on to say:

"Mr. Speaker, we cannot even support the Government on its short record. If they had a record which to this point had pointed to us that the establishment of these commissions and committees were advanced in the interest of people, rather than narrow partisan interest, we would understand."

Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados have recognised that these Constituency Council are again narrow, partisan interests, and that is why the Honourable Member now changes his mouth, comes with a different side of his tongue and asks this Parliament to support.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed that the Honourable Member would try to mislead this Honourable House. Sir, the Honourable Member having said that he read the debate, he obviously did not understand what I was saying. Every other country

that set up social investment funds in the Caribbean, in the Law stipulated that non-governmental organisations such as the Red Cross, Kiwanis, etcetera, could nominate somebody to sit on those organisations as of right - not elect - and so you became the representative of the non-governmental organisation, the Minister would then have a few appointments. But the people were not, therefore, lackeys of the Minister or would not be so described, and those were national organisations.

Mr. Speaker, I have not addressed my mind to the Constituency Councils. Barbados is one of the only countries in the Caribbean in which entities like that were established, and people handpicked by a Minister with a political mandate, were placed on the Boards to dispense the funds and to carry out the programmes under the Social Investment Fund. Sir, that was the essential point I was making. It had nothing to do with Constituency Councils or community-based activities. These are national organisations or national funds to dispense for national causes and which should be removed from the sad hand - I nearly used another word beginning with "s" but it would be considered unparliamentary - of partisanship in an exercise such as this.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you for the elucidation.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, obviously it was not a point of order, just a point of interruption by the Honourable Member for St. John, and I understand that you would give way to his point of interruption. Sir, anyway, I will go back to this speech and give you one more, which is the most instructive. He said:

"What you have in Barbados today, Mr. Speaker, is money walking around without an owner and the Government now wants to set up commissions to corral that money and to direct it into areas most beneficial to the Government, to the exclusion of other taxpayers who are making their contributions to the development of this country. Mr. Speaker, we cannot support it."

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, by the same token, we cannot support it. We cannot support a piece of legislation that comes to this Honourable House and tries to legislate the employment of experts. That is what this piece of legislation now tried to do.

Sir, the Honourable Member, in an article of Nation Newspaper on January 31, made it clear that he is going to set out for the country the extent to which the use of this so-called consultant in Government really became abused.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, these are my notes. I am referring to my notes.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I would not waste time. You know the Rules of this Honourable House. The Rules are very clear. On one occasion before you would have reMembered I said, in my view, there is nothing wrong in making a reference to it. From then on, Honourable Member, you have insisted that you will go into details about your newspaper clippings and so on. I believe you have made the point. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, in a Nation Newspaper of January 31, 2008, it was said by the Honourable Member for St. John that consultants were abused. Sir, having said that, now the Honourable Members on that side come to legislate the appointment of experts, which is another name for consultants. It said:

“Each Council may engage persons having special or technical knowledge to assist in carrying out its functions with prior approval of the department.”

Mr. Speaker, if that is not now legislating the appointment of consultants, what is?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have two minutes more.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I say shame on you, the Members of the Democratic Labour Party, for bringing such a disastrous piece of legislation to this Honourable House.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when I hear the Honourable Member for Christ Church East speaks, he alluded to my hair cut and Sir, you know what? My hair grew back, but his head is still as smooth as a baby's bottom.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what is the relevance? Honourable Member, go ahead, I am sure you will make the point.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Sir, it is still as smooth as a baby's bottom and the only resemblance to the contribution he made is the stuff that comes out a baby's bottom.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member...

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Yes, Sir, hot air. The Honourable Member brought out hot air. Is that unparliamentary?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, it is unparliamentary.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your time has expired. You should be winding up now, Honourable Member.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Sir, I am winding up. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West got up in here and talked about a \$100 million slush fund. Sir, he said “a \$100 million slush fund” several times and I am sorry that the Honourable Member is not in his seat now but he said that the Members on This Side had a \$100 million slush fund.

Sir, the Urban Development Commission provided 2 000 with housing solutions. Sir, I am talking about real houses, thousands of house repairs, 250 roads and, Sir, they only spend \$100 million in 14 years. Essentially, this means that \$7 million a year was spent but this Government is not going to spend \$7 million. They will spend \$4.5 million on Constituency Councils, \$10 million in poverty alleviation and \$12 million for the Urban Development Commission. Sir, that is \$26 million in one year and it is a triple slush fund.

Mr. Speaker, not \$100 million over 14 years or \$7 million a year. Instead, the Honourable Members on the Other Side brought a triple slush fund.

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

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Sir, if that could not be hypocrisy and the most arrogance, I do not know what it is.

Mr. Speaker, we will have more time, not necessarily in here. I thank you.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is rather interesting to hear politicians in this Parliament. It is also interesting, when you have been in here for 14 years to hear people who have changed every system to suit themselves now lamenting systems that are in place to represent their interest. Sir, as far as I know, these are not 30 youth commissioners. These are now 30 Constituency Councils and, as far as I know, there are 21 on This Side and 10 elsewhere.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, one would have thought that the Opposition would have been arguing in this House and supporting the Government to give them nine Councils. One would have thought this was the argument. They should have been saying that they want fairness, that they want to represent the

Constituencies they were elected to. Mr. Speaker, they are saying they will not support this, that they want them to be elected. In other words, we just had an Election, but they are hoping by some stroke of luck to come back and capture the 30 Councils. They do not want the Party in Government to get a fair share, they want a system that they could revoke what occurred on January 15 and strengthen their arms because they regard it as Local Government and, Sir, they would have control of the Local Government, while they have control of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, there is no way that an enlightened Government could have election of Councils. Sir, if you want that, you have to go through the proper channel. If it is another tier of Government and they must be elected, a Law governs that, and until that Law is passed, we cannot do that.

Mr. Speaker, you know what is most interesting? The closest thing I could think about when it comes to Councils would have been the youth commissioners. Sir, I was in here and there was a youth commissioner working in St. Lucy and the only time I knew what the youth commissioner was doing is when I got a letter from the Ministry of Education outlining the programme. The only time I saw the youth commissioner, was when there was a short-fall of funds and the LPO did not turn up in time, then the youth commissioner would come to me for the money. Sir, after that, I would not see the youth commissioner again.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand what the grandstanding is about. I am hearing in this Parliament, based on the argument coming from the Other Side, that they are giving the impression that we are replacing the youth commissioners with Constituency Councils. Sir, if that is so, at least there are 15 persons on the Council but the youth commissioner was one person and well directed.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke out against the youth commissioners, and I have always said that I see the Constituency Councils as a prerequisite for Parliamentarians representing the Constituencies. Sir, I will not be like the Barbados Labour Party and allow them to believe they could come in here, run everything for 14 years, and then come and call for Elections for them to run over here for another 14 years.

Mr. Speaker, if they had asked to represent their Constituencies, I could support them but, Sir, not once did I hear them ask for the right to represent the Constituencies to which they were elected. They came in here with a bogus programme, hoping that somebody would agree to elect the Councils, when they had the opportunity to elect the commissioners, but they did not do it. Sir, they are talking about the PICs, but the PICs had on people who were hoping to be candidates, but after they were still on

the PICs. Sir, I never interfered with them and the best example could be found in St. Lucy. The Chairman of the PIC was a man who wanted to be a candidate and when he was defeated, he was still on the Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I attended one meeting of the PIC in 14 years. Sir, that was after the change of Government and I told them that once they were doing their work that they should not expect me to interfere, but if they played politics on the Committee that they could expect me to attend. Sir, this is the same thing I will tell the Constituency Council, because I see it as my prerequisite. If the Councils are operating, they need not worry about me.

Mr. Speaker, the belief that we will install all Democratic Labour Party's supporters is utter foolishness. Sir, nobody could recommend to me, a Constituency Council in St. Lucy, where the Members are Democratic Labour Party supporters because I expect to find in St. Lucy, people who are prepared to work for the Constituency. Sir, a lot of people do not understand what they request, because sometimes, Sir, you call for these things, you get them and, Sir, they choke you.

Mr. Speaker, my prerequisite must be set up in such a way that I feel comfortable. Sir, when I put people there, they should not say they were sent by the Member of Parliament, because I want to know that people there will do the work for the people of St. Lucy.

3.50 p.m.

The reasons will be clear. We have very simple reasons. We felt that the Constituencies were not fairly treated. For years in this Parliament, I asked the Government to divide the social Heads among the Constituencies. Now we have an opportunity for the social Heads to be administered by the Constituency Councils and the Opposition is complaining. I thought they would have been happy. If that had been done when we were in Opposition, I could not see the Honourable Member for St. John or myself complaining. At least we would have been able to go into our Constituencies and pick up some document which says we have X millions being spent in the Constituency this year.

Sir, any good Prime Minister would have set up this and also split the social Heads. For 14 years I watched Ministers abusing the social Heads in this Parliament. That is why I called for a change of guard. Sir, you could come into this Honourable House and vote \$50 million on a particular Head, and some Ministers could spend \$45 million in their own Constituency. History has shown that those Ministers who abused Heads do not even get back into this Honourable House. So, Ministers who believe that they could use power in their interest, the record is there to show that the majority of those Ministers, especially the

ones who held the Ministry of Public Works, do not even save their seats.

Sir, we have to be very careful of how we come in here and give the public the impression that things that are good are so bad. The Opposition failed because they have not made out a case for their constituents. Up to now they have not given a reason for placing Councils in their Constituencies. Furthermore, they are arguing that they should be elected. In other words they are putting a better case for the NDP or PEP to get representation in this country.

Under the two Party system, they should be in here arguing for us to keep 21 or 20 seats and they keep 9. They are saying that they should be elected.

Asides.

His Excellency D. ST.E. KELLMAN: That is what Dale Marshall said.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please refrain from calling names.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I am sorry, Sir. That is not my normal behaviour. I apologise to the Honourable Member for calling him Dale Marshall. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph. Sir, in the heat of the debate that occurs sometimes. Sir, you know that when it comes to procedure I am very good at it.

Sir, we have to understand, unlike the Barbados Labour Party that sees everything as a Board, we see it as a Council. There is a difference between a Board and a Council. The Board is the purview of the Minister.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: The Minister never said that he is going to appoint. The Minister is inviting people, nothing is stopping you from your duty. If you do not submit names, you have neglected your duty.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: You do not even know the Law about voting. I have told you already that if...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot argue with another Honourable Member when you are on your feet. Please, address this Honourable Chamber.

His Excellency D.St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am debating and I am debating the rights of a Member to vote due to his constitutional rights.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is not before the House at this time, in any event - Honourable Member, you know what I am saying. Move on Honourable Member.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am saying that these Honourable Members cannot put a case to their constituents, because I have heard nothing coming from them to convince me that they are serious about representing the nine Constituencies allocated to them. Furthermore, I am under the impression that they are still angry with the electorate of Barbados, and are now blaming the electorate through the Democratic Labour Part.

Sir, had they come in here and argued a case for their nine Constituencies, I would have supported them. I am still going to beg the Minister, even though they have not done that, to put a case on their behalf. I am going to beg the Minister to have a heart, as he has, because I know they have neglected their duty.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I do not have to beg him because he already understands what is prerequisite. I am saying that because they treated us badly under the Independence Committee and the Youth Commissioners, they now fear their shadow. They are now scared of their former policies.

I was in here when the former Honourable Member said that as long as she is a Minister, no work will be done in St. Lucy. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South, the Lord rest him in his grave, said to her that she could not do that. He said that the Honourable Member was elected in here and once a Honourable Member is elected, no Minister can tell an Honourable Member that they would not do any work in any particular Constituency.

Sir, so far I have not heard that. I heard that a Government is setting up 30 Councils and all 30 Councils will be represented by a Constituency, and there will be money in the vote for every Constituency in this country. You cannot want anything fairer than that. I cannot believe that after a situation where fairness is now being demonstrated by a Government and a Minister, the Opposition is complaining. They are complaining about their shadow.

Sir, the talk about what the Minister can do, but it is quite obvious that they set up the Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission to do it, but it failed. They figured that if the Democratic Labour Party used this and show fairness, they are scared about the fairness of the Democratic Labour Party. It would be the first time in the history of the country that every Constituency will get a fair share and a fair ear. That is what they are scared of.

Sir, they did not have to beg us. They have a Bill that states 30 Constituencies, not only the Government's Constituencies, but also the Opposition's. That is what is worrying them. They feel that after treating us so badly we would come in here and do exactly what they did to us. They have now seen the reverse. I hope that all other speakers will recognise that they now have a territory to defend and not give up their constitutional rights to the PEP.

Sir, on this matter, I heard more substance from the PEP than I have heard from the Barbados Labour Party. At least the PEP put out a document and spoke as if they knew what Constituency Councils will be about. All we heard from the Barbados Labour Party on this matter is, 'we want to vote', as if they are frustrated. They just finished voting. The problem is, they have not accepted the defeat at the Polls and they are looking for another excuse to get through the back door, but that time has past. The people have given the Democratic Labour Party a mandate and we canvassed on fairness, the people responded to the fairness and that is why we said that there will be 30 Constituencies, 30 Councils and every MP Will have a say.

The Barbados Labour Party is now telling us, through their nine MPs, that they do not want their nine.

16.00 p.m.

If it is so bad, do not accept yours. Tell the House that you do not want your share of the 30, because we could find somebody to use it.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: The former Attorney-General does not even understand his constitutional rights to this House. He is talking about somebody who does not even have a share in this Parliament.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you know you should not have your phones on in here.

His Excellency Denis St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the phone is off, but it is the alarm. Modern technology.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that if they do not want their three-tenths of these Councils, we are asking them to tell the public of Barbados that they do not want their three-tenths. Sir, we can find other people to give them to because they must be represented.

Sir, we are not going to allow the Barbados Labour Party to decide that they do not want their three-tenths and leave them out there, not represented, because the Bill

states that all 30 must be represented by the parliamentarians. Therefore, if they do not want them, just tell the public that they have refused to do their job, and they have refused the obligation passed to them, when they voted for this Bill at Election time, because it was put out there. It was canvassed and it was voted for by the people of Barbados.

I have not heard one person different from the Barbados Labour Party saying that they do not support the Constituency Councils. Furthermore, wherever you go in Barbados, people are lining up to serve on the Councils. I am saying, Sir, if they do not want theirs, we can find people to put on them.

Mr. Speaker, I heard this thing about the Minister. Everybody knows that a Bill must be controlled by a Minister. Look and see that for every Bill, it is the Minister all the time. What worries me is to see the former Attorney-General supporting this, when the Honourable Member knows that every Bill refers to the Minister or his appointee or somebody else. I cannot understand what is so magical that this Bill says, a Minister. There must be some point of reference and some person must be responsible. Therefore, what is so magical about this?

The Harrison Cave talks about the Minister. The National Assistance Board Bill that we did last week, spoke to the Minister. Do you want this Bill to be different now?

Sir, we have to stop playing politics in this country and let me say something. Even though they tried hard to cut us out of the loop, we still were able to tell people the things that we fought for, while in Opposition. I hope that if they do not support this, when the projects are done in their Constituencies, I do not see a newsletter coming anywhere in St. Thomas, for example, stating that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, under the Constituency Councils got X, Y or Z done, because that would have been a wrong claim, and she should put a disclaimer that it was done, but she had no hand in it.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I want to lend my support to this Bill being debated today. I want, like other Honourable Members on This Side, to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West for his contribution. I thought, Sir, that the importance of this type of debate, made it necessary for me to intervene.

What is important, Mr. Speaker, is that this debate essentially tests the virility and agility of the intellect. It

sets the stage for presenters to demonstrate whether they had the capacity to interpret and understand a construct - that is all it is - called, a Constituency Council or a construct called, a form of local Government.

Sir, what is also important, it brings into question, whether the construct, called a local Government, is one that should be appropriately applied to a small developing country of a few hundred thousand persons, as opposed to a 50 million people.

Sir, what I have heard from the Other Side has numbed my brain. The level of incoherent thought has aged me somewhat, and quite rapidly. What I find to be highly incredible was the ease with which the Members on the Other Side confused the underlying philosophical premises of the democracy and democratic socialism. Sir, what is even more incredible, is that none of them were able to bring a clear, dialectical analysis to the debate being brought under discourse.

Mr. Speaker, let me explain to Barbadians why they should not engage in the folly of Members on the Other Side. Mr. Speaker, the question of this whole notion of selection versus election, operates under a Monarchical Parliamentary democracy. The Governor-General, Mr. Speaker, is selected by a Prime Minister. The Head of the State that chooses Members of the Senate, Mr. Speaker, is selected by one man, a Prime Minister, not by the people of Barbados, and he is the Head of the State.

Asides.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Senate, not elected by the people.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please refer to the Head of State properly.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, I therefore take your lead and I apologise. The point remains the same, that is, His Excellency was not elected by the people and he is Head of the State of this country. His Excellency, even though he has not been elected by the people, determines a number of Senators to sit in the Other Place.

Mr. Speaker, what is even more incredible is that within the Constitution of this country, elements within the judiciary are selected, even the Tenants of the Separation of Powers, with respect to the Legislation and the Judiciary, all in both of those elements are selection processes. Sir, that has nothing to do with the democratic principle of one man, one vote that occurs at General Election time.

Sir, what is important here, is that the Members on that side have confused the two elements under discussion. That is, if one goes back to the underlying philosophy of

democracy and participation, the premise - and the Honourable Member for St. James North would understand what I am saying quite well - of the moral thermometer of the great Jeremy Bentham, that determines what it is that the people want, would usually come by giving them the right to vote. Each individual vote, when you have a majority, that determines what it is that the society would want. Sir, that is the underlying premise.

4.10 p.m.

The Democratic Labour Party is not abolishing Elections. Every five years, you are going to have Elections in Barbados. That is not being affected at all in this manner. Mr. Speaker, I do not understand the statements being made by the Honourable Members on the Other Side.

Mr. Speaker, let me get specifically to some Constituency issues. Mr. Speaker, politics at the Constituency level could be very divisive. My own personal experience from way back in 1999, suggests to me that because politics is such a dividing force at the community level, that it is critically important to have a unifying force that the people themselves can become part of to help determine and prioritise their own needs. What the Constituency Council does is harmonises the needs of the people with respect to the services delivered by the State.

Mr. Speaker, as a Member in St. Philip West, I remember quite clearly, and the Honourable Member for St. Philip North can tell you of this as well, seeing old people homes falling down and we would request that the houses be repaired, but two young women next door that are smiling up in one of those fellows face would get a whole new house and the old ladies and the men with their homes falling down around their heads...

I remember going through neighbourhoods and seeing well-paved roads stop right here above Mr. X or Mr. Y house because he is supposed to be a BLP. I know the number of areas where street-lights were put in front of those homes because of their political affiliation under the Administration on the Other Side.

Mr. Speaker, what happens now is that you have a situation where a Constituency Council is now comprised of the constituents, whether you happen to be from a basketball team, a church delegate or you represent any of the community-oriented organisations in that Constituency. Even individuals can become part of a Council. Sir, that gives people greater opportunity to interface with the political electorate.

The whole notion, Mr. Speaker, of having the Constituency prioritise what is to be done in the whole Constituency will make the whole political process of the

delivery of services to people much more efficient and accessible. What nonsense am I hearing on the Other Side?

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed unfortunate that this debate would have been brought down to the level of a threat to democracy. Mr. Speaker, what the threat to democracy really was, is when the Haynesville Development Council got \$250 000 right before the last Election. I know about the \$212 000 that was given to the Israel Lovell Foundation right before the last election. You want more threat than that? The St. Peter Development Council was given money right before an Election to be spent in a Constituency to give people services. You want more threat than that?

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I heard mention of youth commissioners in here. Sir, you have political representatives. Projects are being planned in your Constituency and you do not have a clue about the projects. They are engaging with your constituents that you are the political representative of. You were given that authority by a General Election and you do not have a clue what they are doing in your Constituency, all determined by a particular Minister some place, and they are now challenging the Democratic Labour Party about what is democratic. They have no moral authority to do this. Mr. Speaker, what is even more distressing in this whole thing is that when it is all said and done - Why I welcome the Constituency Councils, is that I now have to speak practically to the number of services to be delivered in the Constituency, that politicians should stay out of them. My own personal experience is that politicians corrupt Constituencies. My own personal position is that they attempt to divide Constituencies. Mr. Speaker, I could speak wholly about many of the so-called football games. I could also speak about situations where, because of politics, you had areas like Neighbourhood Watches in the various communities that were prostituted and fractured because of politics and politicians. You had situations because of the way politics is practised at the community level, where you had one neighbour not speaking to the other neighbour.

Sir, now that we have come with a position where we create a structure, to allow all of the constituents to work in unison with respect to the provision of prioritised services in a Constituency, they have a problem with that.

Mr. Speaker, it is quite unfortunate. There is no wonder the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East had to become independent.

Sir, if they believe that the selection process is a threat to democracy, they could go and amend the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, I only want to say to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West to proceed, that he has the support of the Honourable Members on This Side. I believe that in time the vision of the Democratic Labour Party will be realised. We appreciate that there would be amendments from time to time, as we become much more aware of the areas of weaknesses that we need to tidy up and strengthen, but the concept is the right concept. We are not going to throw out the baby with the bath water. We are going to correct it and make it right.

Mr. Speaker, I will sit because I am still numbed by the presentation by the last Honourable Member from That Side because it was such a foetal presentation. It should not be heard.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch one last issue as to why there is a danger with respect to the whole notion of elected Councillors in a small... Mr. Speaker, you have a representative that is elected by the people representing by extension the people. In order to have that designation, the principle of one man, one vote is fulfilled. Therefore, you have underlying this, its moral and just position.

Mr. Speaker, if you go to the position where you have the same constituents moving to elect Councillors, you might very well create the type of conflict that you do not expect to have, because he now has the same authority by the people as the Parliamentary representative now have. Individuals cannot think.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it would be a calamity, knowing the culture of Barbados. Sir, I am going to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West for understanding why it is that in a small State, you would not move to an elected principle like local Government, but to the old type of a selected Council's programme would be a better programme under the circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, history has accorded us the progeny of generations and generations of yore to trace democratic Governments to the Ancient Greeks to the States, where the concept of the most participation and such like originated. One of the characteristics of the ancient Greek to the City States was the concept of direct democracy, where eligible adults were given the opportunity in a small setting, not only to air and to ventilate their views, but to make plans and to implement policies.

Mr. Speaker, direct democracy will thrive in a situation where populations are small, in a situation where the eligible voters are not excessively high in number and

such like. Therefore, with the increase of global populations and with the increase different approaches to the question of governance, we are into an era that is largely characterised by what is called indirect democracy.

Mr. Speaker, what is the concept of indirect democracy? Indirect democracy, first of all, does not embrace all and sundry, so it is unlike what pertains in the ancient Greek City States. Indirect democracy is said to be representative-styled democracy. This means that there is a core of representatives or a representative who is or are responsible and answerable to a group of people. In our setting one Member of Parliament normally has to service in excess of 7 000 people. First of all, that is a very big challenge.

Secondly, it is not impossible for that one person, by not being in constant contact, to go to his Parliament and to reflect a position that is his own, having not consulted his constituents. That is not impossible in a system of indirect democracy, so what do we have before us, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, we have before us a debate that is looking fundamentally at a number of things. Sir, permit me to read from page 46 of the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto. It says that "the Democratic Labour Party envisages a Barbados in which the word 'democracy' is given a life beyond the partisan electoral structures."

Sir, there is some emphasis on page 46 on the notion of democracy. Now, if the emphasis is on democracy, then we must find the formula by which that democracy finds proper expression and is not left to the whim and caprices of a narrow and small minority. That is one of the things that obviously is engaging this Parliament at this time.

Mr. Speaker, of note, the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto says that democracy, well practised, transcends partisan electoral structures. Sir, I hold the Democratic Labour Party to its word, from the point of view that if the policies as enunciated, do indeed transcend partisan politics, that equity should prevail in the allocation of resources. Sir, such equity could only be achieved through a system of democracy that is fuller and wider than is being said in here.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue. The Barbados Labour Party at page 76 of its Manifesto of 2008, said:

"A Barbados Labour Party Administration had hoped to widen the participation of the people and their communities by the establishment of community-based organisations, to work with Government Departments and Statutory Boards on the delivery of service at the local level..."

and it goes on to talk about social partnership, civil society and such like.

Mr. Speaker, our anxiety over here is that there be no abuse of the process. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy said that he had been victimised in making applications for services to his Constituency. Sir, I will give him his credit. I am not going to be unfair to his credit. The Honourable Member has been saying for years that the Estimates exercise should always demonstrate and manifest a particular allocation of resources to particular Constituencies on an individual basis. Sir, the Honourable Member has been saying so and he makes me feel proud today that I have the pleasure of teaching, knowing him when he was a quiet 12-year-old sitting in the back of the classroom.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, we here on This Side have to raise a number of matters that are pertinent to this debate. One of those matters that is neither philosophical, transcendental or metaphysical. The question is: Is the Member of Parliament a tier or layer of Government?. Is the Member of Parliament a tier, a layer or a stratum of governance? That question has to be asked and answered.

In our system of indirect democracy the Member of Parliament is normally seen as a facilitator - sometimes an agitator - and has a wide range of responsibilities based on the fact that in our system of personalised representation, brought on by house-to-house canvassing, there are expectation of the people that we can meet their needs at the individual level. Therefore, from a functionalist and an interactionalist perspective, the Member of Parliament cannot be excluded as a tier or layer of governance, if governance means what I see it as.

Mr. Chairman, I want us to picture a Barbados of years ago. A Barbados with no television, video nor computer. Sir, we had a Barbados then where the people banded together, where the people met in youth groups, Church groups, social groups, to a very high degree. Sir, even though some community groups, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations still exists, the hassling days are very much over. We are under pressure now to strengthen and rebuild communities with the community spirit to which I will refer at the end of my presentation.

Mr. Speaker, among the things the Member of Parliament, whether Government or Opposition, is expected to do, is to advise constituents - and that is part of the interactionism I spoke about. The Member of Parliament is supposed to provide references and testimonials for constituents.

4.30 p.m.

He is supposed to provide references and testimonials to constituents. He is supposed to assist with applications, not only for jobs, but for housing, health related matters and such like. In our political culture, a lot of people want roads and, in many respects, a lot of our tenantry roads have to be done. I trust that resources could be found in time to put the tenantry roads in Barbados in good order and, of course, to put the tenantry system in such a good order that the aims and aspiration of Cap. 2:39(b) are properly fulfilled.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to live to see the day when every tenant who qualifies, whether through a plantation tenantry or non-plantation tenantry, as a qualified tenant, gets title deeds. Sir, I would love to see that day come in my life-time.

Mr. Speaker, is the Member of Parliament going to be given as wide or broad a role as he or she may think is deserving, based on the fact that a Member of Parliament faces the people, was elected by the people, goes to Constituency clinics and get to know the people and is expected to perform? Sir, we have then to come to a system of balancing Constituency Councils with the role of the Members of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, our Party does not go for Constituency Councils and our Manifesto says so. Our Manifesto talks about the concept of community Councils, democratically elected. I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Joseph and the Honourable Member for Christ Church West went about trying to explain this.

Mr. Speaker, in all this, it would grieve my heart if the Constituency Councils become part of a slow-moving bureaucracy. It would grieve me, if the Constituency Councils, as proposed, become part of a slow moving bureaucracy. Sir, time has passed for bureaucracy to stand in the way, based on legalism and procedures of true development.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that the Democratic Labour Party is going to use its numbers to pass this legislation when the vote comes, but I trust that when the Rules, which are enabled by the current legislation here are passed, that those Rules are crystal clear. The Interpretation Section of the Act, as proposed, refers to a department and that department seems to be supervisory in its role in respect of how the Councils are to function. The Rules would have to address the role of the department and, to some extent, the roles of the Council.

Mr. Chairman, one of my worries is that, in a situation where limited funding is provided, you could get a situation arise, where the Member of Parliament has

identified three projects, which come to much more money than has been allocated to the Constituency Council. Sir that is not impossible. Sir, for example, supposed there were three tenantry roads that would take \$1.5 million to build, but the Member of Parliament wants them, but the Constituency Council feels that through, what they might call budgetary constraints, to use the language of bureaucracy, they cannot meet that figure, then conflict between the elected representative, as Member of Parliament and the Constituency Council, could evolved.

One aspect then, which has to be carefully looked at is the whole question of the financing and funding of the Constituency Councils. We are told that for a start, each Council is going to be allocated \$100 000. Sir, in my own Constituency where I have listed at least 40 things that should be done between now and the year 2012, I cannot see how, in the short term, \$100 000 could meet even one quarter of them.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be very careful in terms of the Administration of finance. The reason being that as the finances come to the Councils, the Councils must be prudent and wise enough never to allow administrative expenses to stand in the way of the development and evolution of projects. I do not want a system where projects cannot take place simply because of the fact that the funding is all sucked up through administrative procedural cost and such like this.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Barbados Labour Party want to know this. In a situation where the Minister has wide discretion - Minister here I am using in a generic sense. I am not pointing a finger at the current distinct holder of the post, who from time immemorial has proven himself to be a young man of ... commensurate. Sir, I am not pointing at him. I am picturing a situation of a generic Minister, who might be tempted to see discretion as being unfettered.

We, therefore, have to find a system of checks and balances on the Minister, and a system of checks and balances too on the Department supervising the Councils. Sir, Councils of 15 persons should be able to do some work, but in all of it, even though in some measure, local people are getting an opportunity for years to take part in governance, yet we must be sure that ultimately we come to a scenario where justice and equity prevail.

We know, those of us in politics for a long time, and those of us in politics for years that Ministries are not weighted equally. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade cannot wield on its own as much power as a Minister of Education or a Minister of Health. There are, indeed, golden Ministries in Barbados and people have been known to occupy Ministries for years and years, and rather than share resources, have kept all for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I speak fully cognisant of what I am talking about, that there have been instances upon instances where, in some Constituencies, particular politicians, holding golden Ministries, deliver services on top of services, sometime naively thinking that the delivery of services, ipso facto, would be enough and then go on to lose their seats because they had lost connection with the people. Whereas, there are those of us, who never had golden Ministries who, somehow, managed to ease in, notwithstanding the fact that we feel deprived.

Sir, this is one of the realities of Barbadian politics, that over time, persons have used golden Ministries to prop up themselves, hoping that a project delivered is expressed in a certain number of votes.

Mr. Speaker, I fear that what I am hearing on the streets may happen, unless the checks and balances I mentioned are allowed to materialise. Sir, the fears that Barbadians are expressing are based on this. The people are saying that given its own way, the Democratic Labour Party is a super-clever organisation and that a super-clever organisation would be able to out-fox and out-manoeuvre its opponents. Sir, some of the people are saying that the Democratic Labour Party, through being street wise, is going to be able to set up the Councils to

4.40 p.m.

strengthen the Democratic Labour Party people to the detriment of Barbados Labour Party, Parliamentarians, and Barbados Labour Party candidates. I am hearing that and I cannot say that I am deaf.

Sir, I have taken part in this debate, not only as a public duty, but I have taken part in this debate to caution that we should try to heighten the process of democracy, in a more meaningful and a more concerted way. We should ensure that Ministerial power is not abused and we should be aware of certain underpinning philosophies.

Sir, Rosco Pound spoke to the concept of social engineering and with it, the balancing of interest. There was a Philosopher little known called Salvigny, and Salvigny, in addressing the concept of social solidarity make bold to say that any system of governance should be influenced by the spirit of the people, and so social solidarity seems to me to have as its under-pinning platform, the concept of the spirit of the people.

Sir, as I conclude this modest and carefully crafted presentation, I want to say let not this Parliament endorse undemocratic structures. Let not posterity judge us harshly.

I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate very mindful of the historic importance of the structures, which this Democratic Labour Party Government is about to implement. Sir, I speak perhaps as one of the youngest Honourable Members of this House. I want to pitch my address also to the historic under-pinnings of this debate.

I have spent an inordinate length of time listening very carefully, to the contributions of Honourable Members on the Other Side of this House. I have found nothing in their contributions to derail the initiative which is being piloted by this Bill. In fact, in listening to them, I hear tremendous fear and anxiety.

Sir, one of the things we must be mindful of is, never to allow fear to retard the pathway to progress. This Bill, which we are debating in this House, is exactly the pathway to progress.

Sir, 43 years ago, when I was most likely a babe still in arms, a very historic debate occurred in these hollowed walls. Indeed, what was then before this Chamber was whether Barbados should enter into nationhood.

The esteemed voice of the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow echoes again through the years as a wind of fresh air, which I would like to repeat. I believe it symbolises what we have heard from the Opposition. In those debates, which are already documents of this House, the Right Excellent said in defence of that Resolution, I am trying to illustrate that 300 years after the establishment of this ancient legislature, you still have people in Barbados thinking rightly, either for themselves, or for the persons they unfortunately represent. It sounds very familiar.

I am the leader of a Party which is the first Party in the history of this island, which has ever published and made clear its programme before an Election, that the Party sought independence for the people of this island.

Sir, we can recall that before the last Election, the Democratic Labour Party espoused a system of Constituency Councils. In fact, it sought a mandate from the people of Barbados for those Councils, which we are now debating. If ever you wanted to see demonstrated the epitome of democracy, it is this very debate which is before this Chamber. The fact that we have brought this Bill to the Chamber, right out in the open where all can participate, is an indicator of the fact that democracy is alive and well in this country.

Sir, my support for this Bill stems from a number of realities, particularly as a young politician. The reality of

functioning as a Member of Parliament, I believe, perhaps, this is one of the first occasions that we have had the opportunity of debating what representation is or ought to be, an opportunity of debating the role and function of a Member of Parliament.

Sir, we have had to prepare this legislation from a perspective of the reality of elective politics. I believe some years ago when I raised the question of Constituency Councils, and I was met with the response of some persons, what will be the role of the Member of Parliament? I responded then the role of the Member of Parliament must be one that evolves. It is not static. There are so many things that we have to become more frank with the people on. I believe that it must start in this debate.

I believe that the role and function of a Constituency Council does not conflict and ought not to conflict with the role and function of a Member of Parliament, if the Member of Parliament is realistic and recognises we need to have systems in place to support our mandate and support what we have to do as elected Members of Parliament.

I believe that the people of Christ Church West Central would want me to say what we have already done. On being elected, one of the first things I knew that I had to do was to create systems within the Constituency to assist me in functioning and delivering the many services that are required in a Constituency. The first thing we did was to put in place a Sports and Cultural Committee with its mandate to assist the Member of Parliament in devising and creating avenues for the outlet of sports and culture.

4.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, by extension, we also look at creating tenants associations within the districts of Silver Hill and Gall Hill to better represent the views of constituents. Mr. Speaker, by creating Constituency Councils, all we are doing is to provide a mechanism by which the Member of Parliament can better gauge and better be assisted in delivering the services in a Constituency.

Mr. Speaker, what pains me a bit in this debate and in conducting my research, is that the very Barbados Labour Party that stands in here as critical of an initiative of this Government, has itself expounded systems designed to ensure community participation.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer to the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto of 1986, in which they boldly acclaimed the importance of more community participation. I wish to read from page 1:

“The Barbados Labour Party is committed to the development of greater community involvement in the

making and determination of the policies and programmes of Government, both within and across the areas of departmental responsibility. It will, as recommended by the Cox Commission, encourage greater regionalism as a means of decentralising power, and bringing the services closer to the people.”

Mr. Speaker, they went on further and said that among the measures planned to achieve these goals are the early publication of a Green Paper, and public discussion on the establishment of neighbourhood Councils in communities across the island. Sir, this is what they said, and there was no mention in this Manifesto of electing anyone. Mr. Speaker, it said too, that the aim of wider public participation is ultimately to improve the standards of living and the quality of life of all Barbadians. Mr. Speaker, these are essentially the same goals that we have espoused.

Mr. Speaker, the only difference that I have to rebut in this debate is what I call, “the hypocrisy of the Barbados Labour Party”, because, Sir, in several respects, they have sought to utilise the public purse for partisan purposes, without any reflection on the need to have democratic principles respected. Mr. Speaker, when you hear them, you will begin to wonder if you are really listening to the same people.

Mr. Speaker, I would wish to challenge the others on the Other Side, particularly those who are mellowing in the later afternoon of this debate and reflecting different perspectives, perhaps, of where we ought to stand in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I would have wished - as someone who would have stood outside this Chamber, when as much as \$3.5 million was given to a candidate in the City to contest virtually an Election - to hear voices of protest coming from Members on the Other Side, to repair houses for World Cup, about \$3.5 million - and there was no talk of ensuring that the person who would be given that should be elected. The person was not even at the point of being electable, but he was given that large amount of money to dispense and to use for World Cup. Mr. Speaker, we need to get serious.

Mr. Speaker, when I reflect in this debate and the St. Peter By-Election as well, almost in every aspect, we have had, I think, \$2 million in flood relief in St. Peter. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, their fears are well founded on their own fears.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that if Members on the Other Side were true students of politics and political history, they would have recognised by their diligent research that what they are doing today, will even further denigrate their Party. They will be recommitting the Cardinal error of their

predecessors, when they (themselves) fought progressive programmes of the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer to a few of them, because it echoes very hollow that as we are, again, moving as a Government to create innovative systems of enabling democracy, that the only voice of protest comes from the Barbados Labour Party. Mr. Speaker, they are true to form.

Mr. Speaker, in October of 1967, when Barbados was accepted as a Member of the Organisation of American States (OECS), under late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, Sir, at the Barbados Labour Party Annual Conference, they passed a Resolution to stage demonstrations and to have protest meetings against that initiative. The late Right Excellent Sir Grantley H. Adams argued that the Government had no mandate from the people to become a Member of the OAS. Mr. Speaker, he signaled that the Government could not afford to pay the Membership dues of the OAS.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow in trying to convince them to go along with the Government, argued that membership of the OAS was a pre-condition of being a Member of the IADB, and they never listened to that.

Mr. Speaker, by March of the following year, of OAS Membership, Barbados was able to obtain funding of \$12 million to develop the Seawell Airport.

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, that is what they opposed, and they never retracted.

Mr. Speaker, once again, the great constitutional changes of 1974, where we had the appointment of Puisne Judges by the Prime Minister, and we have the Constitutional amendment, where the Attorney-General could give directions of a certain nature to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and that the Prime Minister could transfer certain senior civil servants and foreign service officers, we had the Barbados Labour Party retching against that as well. Again, they acted against the will of the people. They organised marches all across Barbados. They spoke of democracy under threat, just like we have it here being said.

Mr. Speaker, since those amendments, the Barbados Labour Party has formed the Government, 24 of the last 33 years, and never once changed a single of those amendments. Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about personalities here, but if ever there was a single abuse of those constitutional amendments, we saw that abuse under the watch of the Barbados Labour Party, when with patent haste, a former Attorney-General, without consultation,

was swiftly elevated to the hallowed office of Chief Justice in this country. Mr. Speaker, if there were any abuses of those amendments, it came from the Barbados Labour Party Government.

5.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, they really have no moral foundation or authority to come into this House and lecture to the Democratic Labour Party on anything about democracy and democratic institutions. Mr. Speaker, that is why they patently cannot understand this Bill before the House. They are 'cuffuffled', wobbling and incoherent. They are really out of their depths on this one. That is why I have to speak with such passion.

Mr. Speaker, that is why history, as I speak to you in this historic debate, would not forgive the Barbados Labour Party for the stance they are taking in denying the kind of democratic structures as we have enshrined in this Bill to the people of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, they are not denying themselves. They are denying the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the Bill that they have declared to be undemocratic and the use of other language, which I believe should never be used in this House. That kind of language that has come from at least one Honourable Member on that side should never come from the lips of any respectable Honourable Member in this House.

Mr. Speaker, on my own behalf, as a Member of this House, I want to apologise to all the young people who would have heard that kind of language. I certainly would want to apologise to the listening audience for that language coming from this Chamber, and to say that This Side would like to totally reject that out of hand and to dissociate ourselves from that kind of language.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill has in checks and balances. The Bill, Mr. Speaker, like any other Bill, is not a perfect Bill. It will go through the trials of time. It would be perfected just as ore is perfected through the furnace to become the finest steel, but that is not an excuse to stand up and say that you are not supporting something because they ain't got no voting, that nobody is being elected and that the Minister got too much power.

This sterile debate about appointing Councillors versus elected Councillors should really have no basis for a serious political debate. The political practice of old of trying to fool people that you have all the answers, does not have any place in the modern politics of Barbados. We have to find a way, as elected officials, to reach across to our constituents, to be honest with them and to invite them to participate with us in finding solutions for the problems that they have.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be bold enough at times to say to them: What do you think? How can we help? How can we put our heads together and solve the so many problems that afflict communities in Barbados? This is what I believe this Bill is about.

Mr. Speaker, we need not get distracted. We have to understand and reconnect with history in order to really put a true perspective on this debate.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of issues to address in this country. When this Government was elected to office, we were elected on a mandate of change. We were not elected on talking about change, we were elected to effect change. This Bill is one and will be one of the fundamental changes that would have occurred in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, as the debate unfolded, I honestly know and believe that some of the Honourable Members on That Side who have spoken, if they were not ashamed, would probably want to get up and recant. I know they are feeling the pressure from their constituents. I believe that they would want to stand up and say they only said what they said, because they were told to say it, but deep within their hearts, they want to be involved in this process. It is not too late for that, Mr. Speaker.

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, in listening to the Honourable Member on the Other Side I became confused as to where they stood. Mr. Speaker, it is not too late for them to recant and to get on the path of progress which this Government has outlined.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other areas of change. I hope at some point that we would get to even have a debate on the role and function of Members of Parliament.

Sir, when I go through the various Manifestoes of the Barbados Labour Party, Sir, why we have had to bring these issues in this term of the Democratic Labour Party Government is because we need to signal that we are serious about effecting real change in how we function as a Government and how we involve and empower people.

I wish, Mr. Speaker, to share a few of my own thoughts, because I have gone past where the Barbados Labour Party is at. We should be debating how we will configure the Constituency empowerment centres which will be across the 30 Constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage the Honourable Minister to structure a system and a model of Constituency empowerment centres that embrace what is happening at the community level. I want to see Constituency

empowerment centres that have within them satellite offices that can accommodate persons who seek welfare assistance, that can accommodate persons who wish to utilise the postal services, that can accommodate persons who can walk from their homes and get their pensions and that can accommodate in some measure, those entrepreneurs who have to find a living in their communities. Mr. Speaker, I really feel that we should be tipping this debate at the level of moving forward.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to signal to the young persons in Barbados, particularly in my Constituency, and the persons who I have discussed the concept of Constituency Councils with, that we as a Government would not betray their trust. In fact, we were elected on a mandate of accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill provides for accountability of the funds that would be placed at the disposal of the Constituency Councils. We have provision whereby the Constituency Councils have to set up systems of accounts to be audited by the Auditor-General, so there is no fear of the kind of hanky-panky that would have obtained under the Barbados Labour Party operating under this system. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if that is what have them a bit concerned.

Sir, the use of public funds is a very serious issue for us, therefore, any system that is set up by the Democratic Labour Party Government will be very mindful of the need to ensure that we set up systems of accountability.

5.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, my support for this Bill is of a very practical nature, and perhaps as someone who is seeing the political issues from fresh eyes, and someone who spends time on the ground in the Constituency and who perhaps has to be charged with looking at the wider picture and assisting the process of governance, not for the next five years, but far beyond that,

I am happy, Mr. Speaker, that we are able to structure a system that will empower people at the local level, and that the many issues we have in the Constituencies, whether those issues be de-bushing, fixing playing-fields, street lighting, that we could have communities coming together to find solutions to those issues.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know there is any basis for the Opposition to oppose this, but the allocation of funding in a manner that is fair and equal across Constituencies, is perhaps one of the most powerful tools of democratic enfranchisement. It is a signal that no community in Barbados will be left behind, under this Democratic Labour Party. Sir, furthermore, we have so many areas of

community and cultural activities that are crying out for support, both in relation to the need to organise culture in our communities in a structured manner.

Mr. Speaker, I have been working with groups in my Constituency in that regard, but in many respects, we need to have the correct type of local funding to support those ventures.

Sir, I would want to say too that every one of us in here knows of the challenges with which our sports persons are faced, for example, the football, volleyball, netball and road tennis teams.

Sir, if we approach these areas in the correct manner through the Constituency Council, it could redound to the benefit of solving the various issues and problems in our families. If our young people are engaged in well-structured cultural and sporting activities and entrepreneurial activities fueled by community empowerment programmes, then I believe that 99 per cent of the issues and challenges facing our families today would be proactively resolved.

Mr. Speaker, this issue of setting up Constituency Councils should not be taken lightly. It is part of a parcel of initiatives, if you read the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto, which together, in my view, will help to transform the social political and economic life of Barbados.

Sir, at this last hour, I would like to invite the Opposition Members to have a heart for what they are called on to do, to put Barbados first, to put Barbados above their own partisan interest and to recognise that history will not judge them lightly in this. I have cited a number of examples where they have erred in the past. I hope that they would be big enough, at this late hour, not to err again.

Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks and with my support for this innovative and excellent initiative, I am obliged to you.

His Honour K. ST.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Bill before this Honourable House. Sir, before I get into the meat of things, I want to say that it is amazing how much could be achieved when there is a community spirit, that should be the principle thing that should be debated in here today.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to build greater participation by constituents which form the communities. The question of volunteering is important. This Bill seeks to get people who have the knowledge, the know-how and the expertise of community life, by their achievements from free secondary education, to bring to

bear, to put back something into the community. How much better off would we all be if one more place had the spirit to create community and encouraged people to give more for the good of others? That is the principle behind this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, when you hear the voices of the Barbados Labour Party crying in the wilderness, crying in despair, failing to understand that the wind of change came on January 15, the people of Barbados have voted for change. The Barbados Labour Party is always saying that the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto is a social contract and I will refer to that Manifesto of 2003, already a document of this Honourable House. At page 38 under the heading of Community Development:

"We view community as an extension of the family. Defined its broadest terms, our objective of community development is to identify and mobilise the resources (financial, labour, experts, ideas and time) of the community, to enable the community to improve its quality of life and achieve its goal."

Mr. Speaker, this Bill speaks of that social contract. It went on to say:

"We will:

"Encourage the development of Constituency Councils which will be concerned with the management and implementation of programmes in:

1. Environment protection;
2. Consumerism;
3. Building relationship between the youth and the elderly.

Mr. Speaker, I will repeat, building relationship between the youth and the elderly. Sir, under the Barbados Labour Party, that never existed.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto continues:

4. Small business development;
5. The establishment of cooperatives;
6. Crime Watch;
7. Culture and sports development."

Mr. Speaker, what the Barbados Labour Party said is a social contract and we will never be found wanting for breaches of contract. We will not be called to account to pay damages to the people of Barbados for any breaches of contract. The people of Barbados have given us the mandate and we will continue to rule until the people see it fit.

Mr. Speaker, changes must come and this is what we are all about, but the same people who the Barbados Labour Party knocked on their doors and asked them for their votes to place them in the Honourable House, are the same people that the Barbados Labour Party is saying are not good enough now to assist in managing their own affairs.

Sir, we do not want any selection, neither do we want Election. They knocked on the people's doors and ask the people to vote for them on their promises and performance.

5.20 p.m.

The people recognised that they were promises, but no performance. Sir, that is why they are on That Side and we are on This Side to preach the gospel according to the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church West got up in here today and bastardise a great Party. He spoke and said this Party is the David Leroy Parris Party but I want him to understand...

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member Christ Church West never called anybody Christian names. Therefore, the Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: He said the David Leroy Party. Go ahead Honourable Member.

His Honour K. St. C. Best: The Honourable Member for St. Thomas was too busy picking on her nails and was also trying to determine how much powder she has on her face.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

His Honour K. St. C. Best: When people leave their homes on Tuesday and come to the House of Assembly, they should pay attention to what happens in here. The people of Barbados and your constituents, who placed you in here, pay you to come here to defend them, not to come in here to manicure and beautify yourself, because there are places for that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

His Honour K. St. C. Best: Mr. Speaker, these things really pain. The Honourable Member went on to call some colourful language in respect of this legislation in the living rooms of Barbadians, whose doors he knocked on and never once said that any legislation they brought was

legislation that was so dirty and so filthy. Sir, it is amazing that the Urban Development Commission Act, Cap 241 was passed under the Barbados Labour Party and they were pushing forward two notions. The first was that they wanted elections and the second was that the Minister had too much power.

Sir, Section 13 of the Urban Development Commission Act and Section 13 of this Bill, has the same identical terms. It really pains me to see how people on the Other Side, when it matters to them, could give their Ministers so much power....

Asides.

His Honour K. St. C. Best: Sir, I am saying in these Chambers that persons must read and understand and, if they do not have any knowledge of the Law of legislation, they should ask somebody who has the knowledge, so that they could be guided.

Mr. Speaker, one must really try to understand where the Barbados Labour Party is going, where they want to oppose and just for the sake of opposing. Sir, one must ask the question: Where do we experience the spirit of the community? We will experience the spirit of the community? by this very Bill, Sir, because the people of the community would be looking after themselves. You must ask yourself what is it that you value about your community. Sir, those are the questions you must ask yourself. Do not just get up and talk for the sake of speaking. What do we contribute to our communities? Sir, those are the questions that must be asked.

Mr. Speaker, what do we contribute to our communities? We contribute participation to our communities. We contribute to our communities by giving them a mandate to assist them in managing their own affairs. How could we build more communities in our lives? This Act would provide that we would be able to build better communities in our lives and empower people.

Mr. Speaker, it is really amazing that such a fine piece of legislation, so couched in such lovely language, that people on the Other Side could see it as the worse piece of legislation in this House.

Sir, I want to send them a message, a message that should be clearly sent to one and all of us in this House of Assembly, that we should respect the position we hold in this society. If we want to build a better society, we must not be caught in the dollars and figure signs, as portrayed on the Other Side.

Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing the Opposition say that there must be equity. Sir, there are 20 Members on This Side and this Act speaks to 30 Constituencies. Sir, that is

where democracy lies and that is where equity lies and, Sir, we say in the first instance it would be \$100 000. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James North couched his language philosophically and he is not among the Other Members on the Other Side, who do not understand. He said he would tow the Party's line, but in towing the Party's line, he referred back to the days when Ministers had Ministries that provide all the resources to carry their Constituencies forward, but they left him out in the cold. Sir, it is amazing. He understands now that this Bill will create equity in the 30 Constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, change does not happen until the desire for something new is greater than the fear of change and, Sir, that is what has happened on the Other Side. Sir, changes are coming and they are fearful. They are fearful of the changes that would come upon Barbados. They say it is a slush fund to keep the Barbados Labour Party out of Government, but Sir, when the people in the Constituency recognise that something good is being done, they will cling to the people that are being good to them.

Mr. Speaker, when I read the Urban Development Commission Act, and the Rural Development Commission Act, my Constituency spreads to both, and Sir, I am wondering where St. Michael East was on the map of Barbados under the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, yesterday afternoon, I was in the Constituency with Members from the Rural Development Commission, and a lady told me that for 10 years, before the death of her mother, they were trying to get a house repaired. Sir, in one year and months, under my stewardship as the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, I was there but she told me that she had never seen the parliamentary representative for St. Michael East, under the Barbados Labour Party, so concerned about their concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I have indicated and written to the residents in St. Michael East to let them know that we will be forming associations or neighbourhood watches, whatever they call it, for the betterment of them, because the life and touch of the community are gone. Sir, they have been greatly eroded within the past 14 years under the Barbados Labour Party.

5.30 p.m.

Sir, those persons who were Dems, the persons who live in those communities do not want to be part and parcel of any organisation. The Democratic Labour Party is all embracing. We will provide a fair share for all. That is why this speaks of \$100 000 for all 30 Constituencies and not \$2 million for St. John. These are the things that are going to be happening as a result of this Bill. I am urging the Minister to go full steam ahead and to ensure that

transparency, as is said in the Bill, is paramount, because the eyes of the evil will be on him.

Sir, we came to Parliament on the question of accountability and transparency. This legislation is couched in the language of our Manifesto. I am sure that at the end of the day we will have 30 Constituencies with communities closely knitted. There is no question that the people in Barbados are in favour of this Bill. There is no question at all. The only persons you hear speaking negative about it are 8 Honourable Members on That Side.

I saw the Honourable Member for St. George North at the consultation getting up reluctantly from his seat. I said to him, sometime after, Mr. MP, you look so distraught and dismayed. He said, "Mr. Best, this is a wonderful idea. How could somebody oppose this just for the sake of opposing."

Sir, one wonders, do I blindly follow my leader, or do I stand up as a man and say, enough is enough. When something is good, I will support it. I believe the Honourable Member for St. James North has done a wonderful job in supporting it, in his language.

Sir, I must reiterate the social contract that the Barbados Labour Party continues to speak about in the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto is being fulfilled. This is one piece of legislation that provides and engineers the catalyst for other pieces of legislation to be brought for the development of Barbados. I want to close by saying that it is amazing how much can be achieved when there is a spirit of community.

I thank you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTINGS

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 6.00 p.m.

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

The question that the sitting do now suspend until 6.00 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

5.55 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Honourable Members when the suspension was taken, we were in Order No. 3 and to that we shall return.

The Honourable Member for the City.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Bill before this Honourable House and say that I am surprised at the stance taken by the Opposition Barbados Labour Party, in not supporting this very important legislative initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we must put Barbados first and not seek to narrow political mileage, to oppose for opposing sake.

Mr. Speaker, it is my view that the Opposition Barbados Labour Party has been caught napping, with regard to national debate on this important initiative. I say so, Mr. Speaker, having served the first few months of this Democratic Labour Party's Administration, as the Minister of State, within the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, and Urban Development, which has oversight for the introduction of the Constituency Councils, within our island.

Mr. Speaker, you would know that there were 13 Town Hall Meetings held throughout all 11 parishes of our beloved country, where the Consulting Team and Members of the staff of the Ministry, including the substantive Minister, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East and myself were present. I was present at 12 of these 13 Town Hall Meetings, where the Members of the public were invited, regardless of political persuasion, to engage in meaningful constructive discourse, in terms of charting the way forward in the implementation of this brilliant initiative.

Mr. Speaker, this Democratic Labour Party Government sought to be bi-partisan in the vein in which the Honourable Member for St. James North has urged us to put politics aside. Therefore, we were very accommodating to the Barbados Labour Party to the extent that all Members of Parliament, in whose Constituency the Town Hall Meetings were held, were invited to actually make a presentation to the audience at the Town Hall Meeting, regardless of whether it was a Constituency held by the Barbados Labour Party or one held by the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I can say without fear of contradiction - as I said this Honourable Member attended 12 out of those 13 Town Hall Meetings - that no occasion, did I see a single Member of Parliament from the Barbados Labour Party Opposition benches present, showing interest in these Constituency Councils.

Mr. Speaker, let me be specific. We had a Town Hall Meeting at Princess Margaret Secondary School, I saw Members from of the Democratic Labour Party, the

Honourable Member for St. Philip North and the Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Mr. Speaker, I went to St. George Secondary School, I did not see the Honourable Member for St. George North there.

Mr. Speaker, I went to Grantley Adams Secondary School and I did not see the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who was the main spokesperson for the Barbados Labour Party on this matter, and went on national radio, but when we had a Town Hall Meeting in the heart of his Constituency, he had no time for the people of St. Joseph. He did not mingle with them to hear their perspectives on the implementation of Constituency Councils.

6:00.p.m.

Mr. Speaker, let it be clear to the public that the Barbados Labour Party, as I said, has been caught napping in this regard. Mr. Speaker, it reminds me of that 10 seconds delay which you have for the call-in programme where you do not go live.

Mr. Speaker, I think it was a ten-months delay in terms of the response of the Barbados Labour Party to this initiative. They are 10-months too late. This rear guard action that they are taking is for mere political survival, as day in and day out they become less relevant to the people of Barbados who rejected them massively at the polls on January 15, 2008.

Mr. Speaker, we went on to the Alleyne School. I was not at that one, but all reports are that no Barbados Labour Party Member of Parliament was there. I did not see the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter at Alexandra School there. Of course, the Honourable Member may have considered that 'poorakey' too, as the Honourable Member for St. Peter has publicly said about this August Chamber, including all Honourable Members on the Opposition benches.

Mr. Speaker, there is a clear leadership crisis within the Barbados Labour Party, where the former Prime Minister is publicly showing a lack of confidence in the Leader of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is going around mobilising some of those 15 people that ran for the Barbados Labour Party in the last Election. The Opposition Leader has said that she is looking for 15 new candidates for the next Election. Those Barbados Labour Party rejects are being raked up by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter. They are being mobilised at branch meetings to publicly mount his resurgence, in terms of a bid to lead the Barbados Labour Party. Mr. Speaker, they are in turmoil.

They are like a sinking ship. They are like crabs in a barrel just pulling down each other, and trying to confuse the public of Barbados that there is any fundamental problem with this Constituency Council initiative.

Where were they 10 months ago when we were up and down the country speaking to the people? We went on to North Stars in the Constituency of St. Lucy and we saw the Honourable Member for St. Lucy there with his constituents hearing from them. We went on to Queen's College with town hall meetings talking about Constituency Councils, but not a Barbados Labour Party Member of Parliament was present. We saw the Honourable Member for St. James South, Parliamentary representative, not just there, but making inputs to the people, frank, open discussions, to advance this process in the interest of good governance in our native country Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, I have not forgotten her. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas had an opportunity when we went to Lester Vaughan School in the heart of her Constituency at a town hall meeting. I was there. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas did not had the decency to come and humble herself and meet with the people of St. Thomas. They have a lot to say, now that the people of Barbados have had their say on January 15, 2008. Elections were held and the Democratic Labour Party was given a clear mandate to lead this country forward.

We did not bring in the initiative of the Constituency Councils through the back door. It is in our Manifestoes, so all the Elections that the Barbados Labour Party are talking about were held on January 15, 2008. Let them wake up and smell the coffee. The people of Barbados have spoken resoundingly, in supporting the Democratic Labour Party to lead this country forward, and we will lead. We will not be distracted or deterred by any negative, reactionary, conservative, right-wing, opportunistic propaganda by the Barbados Labour Party, to gain relevance in our political realities in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we went on to the St. Michael School. We saw the Honourable Member for the Constituency of St. Michael South Central there. We went on to the Deighton Griffith Secondary School and we saw the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central on This Side there, speaking to the people of his Constituency. We started at the Lodge School. We saw the Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, there taking the lead speaking to his people. He did not say he is the Prime Minister, he does not have to go. The Honourable Member for St. John was there leading by example. Where was the Leader of the Opposition at any of these town hall meetings? The Leader of the Opposition had no time for that.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party ratings are going down the drain as we speak. All of a sudden, they are up and down the country trying to upset people's night-time sleep and entertainment talking irrelevant matters that really, as I said, is a ten-months delay.

Mr. Speaker, we went on to the St. Christopher Primary School in Christ Church East. We saw the Honourable Member for Christ Church East there taking the lead. We even saw visiting Members of Parliament like the Honourable Member for Christ Church South there. It was not his Constituency, but he had the interest of the people of Barbados and Christ Church at heart, so he made sure that he was there and indeed at several other venues.

At the Springer Memorial School, we saw the Honourable Member for St. Michael East within his Constituency speaking on behalf of his people. That was proper representation by the Democratic Labour Party team. It is not just hot air.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear to me that the Barbados Labour Party is in a naked, unadulterated, opportunistic mode, where they are seeking to destabilise the country for narrow political gain, but the people of Barbados will not be fooled by this rhetoric and propaganda. Not at all.

Mr. Speaker, we are now waiting to see if the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter will grace us with his presence, because he called all of us 'poorakey'. The Honourable Member for St. Peter is talking about this Honourable Member not having assets. If you do not have assets, he does not have any time for you.

Mr. Speaker, when the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter attacked me for not having assets, he is attacking the 50 per cent of Barbadians who are the working class. That is the attitude of the Barbados Labour Party at that high level.

Mr. Speaker, they are in a ten-month delay and the people of Barbados have tuned out of them. They could talk until the cows come home, the work of the people of Barbados will be carried forward full speed ahead by this Democratic Labour Party Government.

Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central mentioned, where was the Honourable Member for Christ Church West when he was a part of the Barbados Labour Party governing team when, on the eve of the General Election of 2008, the Barbados Labour Party Government of that day, gave my opponent, who was not a Member of this Chamber or the Other Place, but a declared Barbados Labour Party candidate, access to millions of taxpayers' dollars?

Where was the transparency there? He was not elected to any House. There was no election. He was handpicked by the Barbados Labour Party. That was a callous abuse of public funds and public power where you have a declared candidate having full access to millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to clean up the environs of Kensington Oval where he could handpick staff Members, be they contractors, persons repairing houses, painting pailings and so on.

Mr. Speaker, they flooded the Constituency with Barbados Labour Party supporters, an abuse of public power. We did not hear the Honourable Member for Christ Church West or any other Honourable Member on That Side for that matter, opposing that. None of them had anything to say because it was in the narrow political interest of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, they are afraid. They are judging us by their standards.

Mr. Speaker, the Urban Development Commission, under the Barbados Labour Party Government, operated to such an extent that the Democratic Labour Party Members of Parliament were excluded from the process of repairing homes.

6.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, when Members of Parliament within the ambit of the Urban Development Commission were called to meetings, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, as an Opposition Democratic Labour Party within the corridors of the Urban Development Commission, was not invited to attend. He was kept out, under the Barbados Labour Party regime. Sir, that is why they are afraid. They know that this initiative is a brilliant one that the people of Barbados have embraced. This will ensure that democracy flourishes, and that people would be able to ensure that their communities are properly serviced in a timely manner.

It is not in the political interest of the Barbados Labour Party to see this Democratic Labour Party Government succeeds, and let us be clear on that. Therefore, we cannot be fooled into thinking that there is something wrong with this initiative. It is for the same reason this initiative is so brilliant, that we are hearing so much opposition from the Barbados Labour Party, because they know this initiative is similar to those taken by previous Democratic Labour Party Governments, be it taxpayer funded education from primary to tertiary level, which they had opposed vehemently. They said it would break the Treasury.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party intrinsically and philosophically is a conservative right-wing party.

They want the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer. They did not want poor people to be able to sit at Harrison College or Queen's College along-side the planter-class and the beugoise, the people with assets who they think only support them.

This Democratic Labour Party is not bias, in anyway, we believe that all sectors of our societies, all races, all classes of our society, can live in a symbiotic way to uplift our country, where they are given equal rights and opportunities, but the Barbados Labour Party keeps down the masses and so, were opposed to public education funding that was supposed to transform the social landscape of Barbados, that allowed many working-class persons to become professionals, doctors, Lawyers, accountants, and to improve their standard of living for themselves and their families. They were also opposed to the free school meals system, the textbook loan scheme, the access to taxpayer-funded transportation for school children. They were even opposed to Independence, to such an extent that the Democratic Labour Party narrowly won the 1966 General Election, because of the political turmoil which the Barbados Labour Party and other reactionary forces initiated in our country.

Sir, they are trying to do that again, but they will not succeed. They failed then and they will fail now, because the people of Barbados are alert. The people have also become empowered by the brilliant initiatives of the Democratic Labour Party Governments over the years.

It can be seen in the high levels of articulations in terms of the call-in programmes and so on, where the people of Barbados, from the worker to the oldest person in Barbados are politically aware, they have access to the internet and the multi-media, the mass-media and they know that change under the Democratic Labour Party is here. It is sustainable and that we are going forward with the people of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, the Barbados Labour Party is trying to create what I would call red herring, a storm in a tea cup, because they want to distract the public from the internal turmoil within the Barbados Labour Party.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, it is the Barbados Labour Party that lost one of their Members of Parliament. He had had enough with them and now he is no longer associated with them. I am talking about the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East ran away. He did a clean break from the conservative Barbados Labour Party, who suppressed him whenever he had the courage, that political maturity to stand up here as a

Member of Parliament and as a man and say this new Democratic Labour Party is on the right track and that he supports the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, for that, the Honourable Member was ostracised by the Barbados Labour Party, he had enough and so he left them. Therefore, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East must ask if the Barbados Labour Party Parliamentary team had the opportunity to elect an Opposition Leader again, if she would win, because she narrowly won last time, from all reports. Sir, they are under pressure, so let not the public be fooled by all of this sensationalism that the Barbados Labour Party is pushing in the faces of the Barbadian electorate.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to Constituency Councils...

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas is trying to distract me. Sir, I do not rise on a point of order and do not know the difference between surname and Christian name. I do not do that.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party is trying to raise this issue of Elections, they want an Election. As I said, the public has already spoken. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party, as I said, is operating in their narrow political interest. They know very well the reality is that the history of local Government throughout the world is such that one challenge is wherever there are elections, there is political polarisation to the extent that there may have one political party in office holding the reins of Government and then by political manoeuvring, the opposing party is able to control the majority of seats in the local legislation.

Sir, what happens is that you get a stalemate, because the Opposition Party seeks often to use their political control of the local Government structures to frustrate, at every turn, the work and programmes of the national Government, because they are opposing parties. Therefore, with all this political stalemate, filibustering and grandstanding, who suffers? Sir, the people suffer because you get nothing being done because of the political maneuvering, because of the Opposition trying to upstage the governing party.

Sir, this is why this Democratic Labour Party is not interested in Elections for Local Government. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party, I understand, did not support Local Government when the Democratic Labour Party Government, under the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, abolished local Government. They supported the Democratic Labour Party Government at the time, so they are being hypocritical here today. Sir, there is a clear

difference between local Government and local governance. When you start talking about election of Council Members, you are talking about local Government, so if the Barbados Labour Party, from back in the 1960s, did not support local Government, it is inconsistent and illogical for them to come here as the same Party and talk about Elections.

Mr. Speaker, I am trained in mathematics, we are trained to think logically and the stance taken by the Barbados Labour Party is illogical. It is consistent with their traditional policy and they know that, but it seeks their narrow political interest to try to hoodwink the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, let me go further, I am saying that when you look at the issue of elections, this is more relevant in a local Government structure for large land masses where, because of the large land mass, you would have remote concentrations of populations in the form of villages, communities, towns, etcetera. Remote in that they are cut off from other parts of the country, so that they would need their own independent infrastructure such as electricity, telephone, gas, water, drainage, garbage collection, etcetera, and so they will need a local civil service. They may even need a local tax system.

6.20 p.m.

Sir, I understand that was one of the drawbacks of the local Government arrangement in Barbados because the City Council in Bridgetown was able to levy taxes on the merchants and, therefore, their tax intake was much heavier than in remote communities.

Sir, then you have this disparity in terms of access to resources and that is why the Democratic Labour Party is not going that route of levying taxes. That is why the Democratic Labour Party, when we abolished local Government, realised there was not efficient, effective, equitable distribution of Government resources.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, the Bridgetown City Council would have much more funding than other areas. Sir, this is what the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is talking about.

Mr. Speaker, within our Constituency Council arrangement, there is equity, where each Constituency Council would be given in the first instance \$100 000. Sir, this does not mean we are stopping there because this sum is merely a start. We are going to be fair, as Honourable Members mentioned before and there is going to be accountability, where the Auditor-General would have over-sight in terms of the funds being spent.

Mr. Speaker, we go further in our Manifesto to say on page 48, in this regard, that an initial budget of \$100 000 would be granted to each Council, but after a needs assessment is done, an annual budget would be provided. If there is a clear enunciated case put forward by a given Constituency Council to demonstrate that they need an additional amount of funding to execute laudable projects, then this could be feasible.

Mr. Speaker, we are being very far-reaching here. We are very clinical and we have brought the best brains of the region here. We have former Ministers of Government in other countries as consultants to assist us in the way forward. Sir, we are a responsible caring Government.

Mr. Speaker, in little 21 miles by a smile wide Barbados, where we are really one community, it is not necessary to have any Elections, because we are not going to have each Constituency Council having its separate tax system and its separate public service, because we have abolished all of that in the 1960s. We have moved away from the Park food day, when poor people had to line up in the park for food and soup or go to the Mayor's Office in the Old Town Hall for 25 cents each week. Sir, those humiliating approaches by the Barbados Labour Party and the other conservatives are gone.

This is a Democratic Labour Party Government. We care about people and we are not going back to those days. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party wants us to go back there but we are going forward ever, backwards never, under the caring Democratic Labour Party Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have one minute and a half.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I am now warming up but we will come on other occasions to say more.

Sir, as I conclude, let me in summary mention some of the wonderful ways in which these Constituency Councils could function to advance the people of Barbados, and Sir, it is clearly enunciated in our Manifesto, because we are putting power back in the hands of the people.

Mr. Speaker, there are Statutory Bodies, that traditionally by both Administration, have had Boards like the Urban Development Commission, the Rural Development Commission, Sanitation Services Authority, Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, National Petroleum Corporation and, Sir, the list goes on. Sir, they are selected by and large, by the Government in office, but we never heard the Barbados Labour Party, when they were in Government, opposing that and there were no Elections.

Mr. Speaker, these Constituency Councils are a further facility to enable the people to take charge of their destiny. Therefore, we do not want to marginalise the vulnerable groups, be they the disabled, the youth, the elderly, the sporting group or the religious groups, be they Christian, Muslim, Jewish or Islamic. Sir, they could be represented at the Constituency Council. But if you have full-scale partisan elections, many of these vulnerable groups would not have the funding, to stand a ghost of a chance to being elected to these Constituency Councils. Sir, with a caring Government, we could have broad-based representation of these vulnerable groups to empower these people to ensure their voice is heard and that they could play a tangible part in charting the way forward for our beautiful country.

Mr. Speaker, I could see the perennial problems of drainage, be it in Emmerton Lane, Chapman Lane or Murphy's Pasture, where the boys on the block would be able to, with the help of the Constituency Council, be empowered and given a stipend where they could go and continue what they have been doing, but with the help of Government in terms of machinery and tools to clear the drains, so that when there is any heavy rainfall, they and their families are not threatened.

Mr. Speaker, the problems that this Democratic Labour Party inherited with poor lighting in Tudor Street, in Dundo Lane, Sobers Lane, Mansion Place, Westbury Road, Fontabelle and so on, these niggling issues could be addressed by a Constituency Council.

Mr. Speaker, there are pot holes in areas like Mansion Place, New Orleans, Bayville, Ribbits Land and Hunte Street which were neglected by the Barbados Labour Party, although they held that seat for over 30 years. Sir, with a caring Democratic Labour Party Government, with Constituency Councils in the City and throughout Barbados, we could transform the landscape of Barbados, to empower the people to ensure that governance is effective, efficient and timely.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak in this debate today. Sir, I have represented the Constituency of St. George North for the last 14 years. I am sure that the type of representation we have given over the past 14 years and that once life and health is here that I would continue to represent the good people of St. George North.

Mr. Speaker, I have said openly on numerous occasions that I am out of the community and, therefore,

any measure to support Constituencies and communities, I will definitely support. Sir, I have always supported communities, because I have formed, in my time, the Progressive Volleyball Club and I have founded a number of other interesting bodies in Toronto, when I was serving the Barbados' overseas community. Therefore, I do not want the message to go forth that the Barbados Labour Party does not support Constituency Councils.

Mr. Speaker, we are saying that in any measure involving the community, that the community should elect their Members. Sir, even though the intention of this Bill is to provide some measure of relief to the community, I have a problem with the whole notion of a Constituency Council being appointed by the Minister.

Sir, the legislation, as it stands, should have contained something in it to say that, even if it is an interim measure, that the Council should be appointed or selected by the Member of Parliament for the Constituency and then appointed by the Minister on an interim basis and then, Sir, this would be a different matter.

Mr. Speaker, also, when you look at this Bill, a lot of work still needs to be done. I believe a Bill of this nature should go to the Committee stage. We have seen it happened before and there is a need to fine-tune a number of things in this Bill. For example, Clause 5 says:

“to identify the priority needs of the Constituency based on supporting data”.

6.25 p.m.

Sir, the function of the Constituency could have said: ‘to identify with the help of the community’. No such thing, to make recommendation to the Minister on projects on behalf of each Constituency.

Sir, I am saying that there are a number of small errors within this Bill that one cannot support. It goes on and on. That is why the Opposition is saying Constituency Councils, yes, but we need the representation from the Member of Parliament and from the Constituency.

I want to preface my remarks to look at a Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party. One of the first Manifestos written in 1950, because Honourable Members do not understand that this great political Party carried this country into adult suffrage.

The 1951 Manifesto is called ‘Labour Marches On.’ The introduction states that the Party has brought full adult suffrage, with the conviction that the right of the people to decide their own destiny can be no longer withheld. That is the year 1950. It says on Page 2: “The Party is convinced that much benefit will result to the people of the island,

particularly the poor and infirmed from the abolition of the present Vestry System. To this end, it will at an early date, implement the proposal of the Maughan Report on Local Government in the island. It especially urges the election of a City Council and a District Council on the basis of Universal Adult Suffrage.”

This is already a document of this House. I do not know how many Honourable Members have ever seen this. This is the first Manifesto of any political Party.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South speak about a 1951 Manifesto, and it sent me to the archives to look at a document that was printed by the Barbados Labour Party in 1951, that spoke to a number of constitutional changes for the upliftment of the masses of this country. So, we have a proud record. Honourable Members must not believe that we just came here. I heard Honourable Members say that the people rejected you. The facts are, the Barbados Labour Party has run this country's affairs more often than the present Government. What nonsense am I hearing? It is an older Party and even since Independence in 1966, we have been in office more often and have contributed to the development of this country more so than the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, I do not like to be partisan on these things, but I heard Honourable Members say that Barbados Labour Party did this and the Democratic Labour Party did that. That is not relevant for in a debate of this nature.

I believe that fundamental errors in this Bill could have been solved through the Committee stage. I have made this point over and over. I spoke to the Minister. I said that this should have been sent to Committee. In fact, I must say that there was a time in this country, for example, if you look at 1967 when Local Government was abolished, on a third reading, both sides almost passed this. It was only on a third reading that Honourable Members voted against the Bill, after it went through the Committee stage. It was agreed at the time there could have been changes within the Local Government structure. Sir, when they looked at that, they found some interesting points on the third reading. There is no third reading speech in here today. We have only second readings.

The point that was made and is interesting to Honourable Members, one Burton Hinds made the point at the time and asked the question: “Would a poor person seeking help in the middle of the night go to a civil servant?”

Sir, would a poor person who needs help in the middle of the night go to a civil servant? The answer is no. He must seek somebody he knows in the community. That is why, in 1966, the guys said that despite what you say, you need to have somebody representing your interest at

the community level. Even if the Minister appoints, it must come from the local community, because people in the community want to be represented.

I go on to ask the fundamental question, having abolished Local Government in 1967, what has gone wrong over the years? This is the fundamental question. What has gone wrong since 1967, the BLP/DLP forming a Government for 42 years? What has gone wrong that has caused us to want to revert to the Local Government structure?

As I said before, this Bill is neither a Statutory Board nor a department of Government. It is just legislation. I want to make this point again. It is not a department of Government. It is not a Statutory Board. The Government said that it is not local Government again, so it is neither fish nor foul. It only sets up 15 persons within the Constituency. That is why I say that if this Bill had been presented as establishing a Statutory Board for the Constituency, then the Minister has the right to appoint anybody, because it is a Statutory Board. This is only an Act where persons will be appointed and they will behave the same. We would not have the same bureaucracy as before, because all of the Clauses under Section 5 speak to this.

If you look at Section 5 (1), the functions speak to building relevant databases, identifying priority needs, speak to the Minister, assist with the delivery of service and nothing is asking or enquiring about what is happening in the Constituency. This is where I find there have been a number of proposals, but I wonder whether the Bill is being tried too quickly, or being pushed down the throats of Barbadians too quickly. Sir, that is why I asked the question, what really has gone wrong?

Sir, I am saying without fear that this country, Barbados, has progressed in the last 42 years by many folds. I am saying that from 1967 to 2009, this country has done well under central Government. We introduced a number of measures, the Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission, various statutory Boards and a lot has been done.

Sir, when the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown says that he needs street lighting, is this the work of the Council? I am hearing that the Council is going to do roads, street lighting and houses. How many organisations will be building houses? Are we going to have four Ministries of Housing? We are going to have the National Housing Corporation, the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission building houses? We have to get it clear.

Sir, I am of the view that Honourable Members just want to use this as a political football. Everybody wants a

gutter in their area and something new. I am also of the view that a Council should not be involved in building roads. Why should the Council be involved in building roads out of \$100 000? Sir, I am hearing about building roads and installing street lights when there is one Minister of Public Works who is responsible for street lighting, and he has done a good job.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. George North is misleading the Honourable House. He referred to this Honourable Member. Specifically in my presentation I made it pellucid that this Democratic Labour Party Government is not going back to Local Government with individual civil service structures within each Constituency Council. On the contrary, we are not seeking to duplicate existing Government Departments.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I listened carefully to what the Honourable Member said. Even though I support the concept of Constituency Council and community empowerment, I am saying that when you look at Central Government today, one has to ask the question, will these bodies replace Central Government?

6.40 p.m.

For example, lighting. The Ministry of Public Works is responsible for lighting, roads, highways, the Rural Development Commission, the Urban Development Commission, the National Housing Corporation and the various Corporations.

I know the origin of this, Sir, because when it was first discussed several years ago, this Party gave an allowance to Members of Parliament for Constituency allowances. It was felt then that there was a need to have more local resources at the Constituency level, to help with things like football clubs, funerals and to look at local problems within Constituencies. But when you hear Members of Parliament now asking for houses, roads, gutters and drainage problems, I think we are going too far.

Sir, a Council of this nature should represent the various Councils within the Constituency. Therefore, if you have 10 youth groups, the churches and so on, you pull all of them together and then you have a mirage of ideas, where people throw out these things.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I am sorry I have to interrupt the Honourable Member, who is having a major difficulty in understanding

what is before him. The very thing that he is saying that the Bill and the Councils...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, is this really a point of order or a point of elucidation.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Yes, because he is misleading the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: It seems like a point of elucidation. In which case the Honourable Member may choose whether or not he is willing to give way.

The Honourable Member for St. George North, are you prepared to give way to the Member at this point.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Yes, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, when I look at the function of the Constituency Councils at Sector 5, it is very clear. Therefore, I do not see any misrepresentation at all. I am of the view that we need to be clear in what we are asking this Council to do. This is why I made the point that there should have been a bipartisan approach to this whole thing, where we sit and discuss the whole function of the various Councils.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go further. Honourable Members get up in here and we speak, but what will happen years from now when Barbadians really read the speeches of Honourable Members, from 42 or 50 years before? What will happen when our great grandchildren come in here and read the speeches of what we are trying to put out today, that a Constituency Council should not be elected? What will they say? Are we still trying to empower the community? It is really a contradiction in itself? You are trying to empower the community on one hand, and on the other hand, you are appointing them, and that is where the contradiction lies.

I am saying that if there is any empowerment of a Constituency, empowerment of communities, empowerment of Barbadians, empowerment of the masses of people, then there must be some element of not only active representation, but the aim of the Bill should be to go towards Election, even if not in the first case, the Bill should state that we are going towards the ultimate goal of the election process, because it represents the Constituency. I am of the view that is where the ultimate goal should have been.

Mr. Speaker, I went to a primary school, a couple of days ago, and I saw this question written on the Board. Who in Barbados fought for the working class? One child asked this question: What is the working class? Then, at the

bottom of the statement read: "ir Frank Walcott was a trade unionist. He fought for the rights of the working class in Barbados."

Sir, what will happen to us? Who is fighting on behalf of the working class in this Parliament? Who is really fighting on behalf of the people of this country? The Democratic Labour Party?

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I heard one Honourable Member say that if they elect people, would the people of this country elect the best persons? I think it was the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, but I might be wrong. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy was trying to suggest that if there is an election, you may very well elect the wrong person to sit on the Constituency Council. Sir, that same thinking was also clearly put by the Conservatives, in 1950.

The Conservative and the Adult Suffrage Bill in 1950, the Honourable Members are free to read it. The Conservatives at the time were asking if we are going to give the illiterate people the right to vote. The right to vote by 1948, Mr. Speaker, was only based on property class, if you had an income of £20 or more.

The Conservatives voiced their opinion that when you give people the right to vote, everybody will vote, the person who is intelligent and the person who is not intelligent. Mr. Speaker, I am hearing this thinking coming out from the Government benches. Do not vote, because you give everybody the right to vote.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, the people have a right to vote for anybody. If the people did not vote for us, we would not be in here. There are people who are educated and uneducated that voted for us. Sir, from 1951, we had black Government, up to today. People elected us in here. People know who to elect. People have the right to elect the Party of their choice. People have elected you on this occasion. The next Election, they might elect us. Sir, they have elected black Government since 1950.

Mr. Speaker, the conservative element of the day is that Election is no good because they might elect the wrong person. This thinking is still very pervasive in this Parliament. I am saying that we have to get away from this thinking. There is nothing wrong with Election, because the will of the people will always speak. The people are always right and that is the fundamental point. Regardless of whatever happens, the people will elect whomever they want to elect and we do not have a choice. Therefore, I want to make it abundantly clear that at the ultimate goal of this legislation, must be the Election process, if not now, in the future.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of work has been done to uplift our Barbadian people and we have to agree to this. It is true that this is the first aspect, since 1967, the first really Government that has tried to put an arrangement in place that is not fish or fowl, as I said before, but it seems to be going towards Local Government.

Sir, there seems to be some aspect of Constitutional changes in here. It is being hinted, although it is not direct. We have to look at it from that point of view. Therefore, any attempt to empower people, must have as its goal, the representation of the people. You must represent people, and people must have the right to elect and to say whom they want to represent them, in the final analysis.

I am of the view that this Council cannot be all to everybody. It cannot do the things that all Members will want them to do.

6.50 p.m.

What have they done so far? We have elected a Government that has come and have done some work within the community over the past year or so. I am not sure that much had been done at the community level.

Mr. Speaker, I heard Honourable Members talking today about the Youth Commissioners. The Youth Commissioners are not the same thing as this. The Youth Commissioners were set up by the Government of the day.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Yes, it came to Parliament, but it was not through a Bill.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: We selected them. This Bill is suggesting that there are some changes, and we have to watch this. That is why I am saying that this Bill is not a statutory board or a department of Government. You still have to go through the Permanent Secretary. The Permanent Secretary still has to appoint and approve all funds and it goes on and on. There is still a high level of bureaucracy in this Bill.

When you look at it, Mr. Speaker, I am not sure, from what I have read so far, that the people in St. John or St. George would get the type of representation at the local level because in the final analysis, the Member of Parliament who represents his or her Constituency, has power to the extent that he or she could say that he or she comes from a Constituency. I have been elected by my people.

I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church South pontificating this afternoon. The people have elected me as Member of Parliament. What would the Council Member say? How is he drawing his power? That is why I am saying that it seems to me that this Bill should be appointing a statutory board rather than coming... It is not a wholesale Local Government, it is not a department of Government, it is just a Bill to appoint 15 Members per Constituency, that is the problem that I have.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to look carefully at this Bill again. I am not sure that it will do the things the Honourable Member for St. John was highlighting five or six years ago when he said that he needed systems where Members of Parliament would be assisted in their Constituencies with things like funerals, basketballs, playing facilities, paying for tours, etcetera, the various requests that we now get as Members of Parliament. Mr. Speaker, I think that is where the idea came from. We needed a system to assist the Members of Parliament to assist the Constituencies. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about doing all of these big things, there must be and will be further confusion because I see that there would be conflict between the Ministry of Drainage, the Ministry of Transport and Works and the Ministry of Housing and Lands where everybody wants to do the big works. I think that Government needs to really look carefully at the functions of this and whomever is elected to the body.

I must make the point that the Government has the numbers and most likely this Bill will be passed, but it will not affect Members of Parliament by saying that we are fearful. I am not fearful of what the Government does. I am not fearful of what happens in this thing, because no 15-Member Council can defeat any active Member of Parliament, so I do not have that fear at all. If there is a 15-Member Council in St. George North, I must have my say too.

I am the active Member of Parliament and I hope all Honourable Members are active, so I have no fear. I do not think that the Government should feel that we have a fear that they will put people on us, that is not the fear. The ultimate goal of empowerment is to allow people to elect the people, because I want to know who represents me. That is the ultimate goal.

Mr. Speaker, whenever we look across Barbados, we see a lot of needs. Sometimes the needs are real and sometimes they are imaginary. Mr. Speaker, in the country areas, we have situations where people want...

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: The country people do not want gifts. I have made the point over and over again, on That Side and on This Side, that all the country people need

is a slight upliftment. We could help ourselves. My grandmother used to grow pears to pay her taxes every year. We have too many young people in this country who feel that they want hand-outs.

Sir, I do not think that we should take taxpayers' money and just give it out willy-nilly to any and everybody. There must be justification. We need to spend money in the Constituency to uplift the various social services. That is why I asked myself what really has gone wrong. Over the last 42 years, we have done well as a country in our social services. We are still the number one country within the Caribbean, and in the developing world, I believe that we are number one.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want Honourable Members to feel that things have gone ever so wrong. The message I am hearing coming from the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is that things have gone so wrong, that he wants lights on every pole, a big high-rise building for everybody and that everybody must get everything free. The Government is sending the message that everybody must get everything free.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. George North is misleading the House. At no point in time during this debate did this Honourable Member say that the people of the City should get everything free.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well. Honourable Member, you have two minutes in which to wind up.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, it must be said that there is no such thing as a free ride. Somebody has to pay for it. Honourable Members come in here and say that you get everything free, I will give you bus fare and school meals free. They are pompasetting on these things as though the taxpayers of Barbados do not have to pay for them. The taxpayers of the United States of America are not paying for them. When you get a gift from America, that is free, but when you get a gift from Barbados I pay for it, and the people pay for it. We pay for them through the VAT, indirect taxation and direct taxation. Barbadians must understand this.

Mr. Speaker, we are supposed to be the most educated people in the world, but I am hearing from the Government benches that there is free ride. What free ride? We are paying for them.

The Minister of Transport and Works continues to say he gave free rides. There is no such thing as free. My mother paid for it. If my mother did not pay for it, my father paid for it. If my father did not pay for it, my grandmother paid for it.

Mr. Speaker, if these Constituency Councils are to be truly representative of the people, the ultimate goal is that the Councillors should be elected across the board. Mr. Speaker, if they are elected, the Minister can do his final appointment, but they must be elected.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. Michael Central.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to give my support to this Bill and to make a brief contribution to this debate as most of the aspects of the Bill were addressed adequately by This Side.

Mr. Speaker, the last Honourable Member that took his seat hinted that there is some constitutional change. It is a far stretch really to hint that there is some constitutional change. This is a Party that went ahead, without the public having a say on the matter, and changed the name of Trafalgar Square to Heroes Square, wrote and played a Republic song and also identified a President for this new Republic, and then he hints that there is some constitutional change in this Bill.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when I was asked by the good people of St. Michael Central to immerse myself fully in the electoral politics of this country, I made several pledges, but two of them that are paramount are that I pledged always to be honest in my affairs in Government, to practice integrity to the highest and never to involve myself in any infelicities or corruption. The second one was that when I demit office, either on my own volition or by the will of the people of St. Michael Central, that I will leave Barbados in general and St. Michael Central in particular, a better place.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill before us today in this Honourable House will help me realise one of those pledges. It will certainly answer several questions. Would these Councils make life better for Barbadians? Sir, I say a resounding yes. Would it create better neighbourhoods for our people? Would it give a hand-up to poor neighbourhood? Would it bring marginal young people into the mainstream, not like Project OASIS, which turned out to be a mirage? Would it establish a nexus between the leaders in this country and the voters themselves? Would it deliver services to the people, without making them feel like they are beggars? Would it address their needs in an efficient way? Mr. Speaker, I say a resounding yes to all these questions.

Mr. Speaker, it is against this background that I am saying to the Opposition Members, if they do not want that

for their constituents then, instead of walking about the lengths and breadths of Barbados, letting in cold air on people when the night come, breaking up their night rest and blocking their driveways, they should go into their nine individual Constituencies, mount platforms and tell their constituents that they do not want these things for them, that they do not want to make their lives better, that they do not want to create better neighbourhoods for them, that they do not want to make them feel marginalized, and that you do not want their needs to be addressed efficiently. Sir, they must tell their constituents that.

Mr. Speaker, these are all good things laid out before the people of Barbados and I can tell you that certainly the Opposition are woefully out of step with the people of Barbados. They do not understand what is happening. They are so consumed with Elections, they are saying we should elect this and we should elect that.

Sir, Stalin, in one of his famous calypsos, put it quite succinctly that “sufferers don’t care nothing ‘bout elections and that sort of thing. They want to have the goods delivered to them and delivered to them now.”

Mr. Speaker, how would these Constituency Councils work and how would we achieve these goals? Sir, these goals have been clearly set out in our Manifesto. Sir, I want to say that we went the lengths and breadths of Barbados with this Manifesto. We went from North Cumberland in the north, to South Point in the south, from Bathsheba to Bridgetown and in between. We spelt out clearly in our Manifesto that the Democratic Labour Party will establish State-funded Constituency Councils to execute community enhancement and development projects. These Constituency Councils will comprise representatives of the Church, civil society, the political Administration. In this way, perennial problems like street lighting, recreational facilities, drainage, poverty alleviation and the likes can be administered and resolved at the Constituency level and a budget of \$100 000 will be granted to each Council.

Mr. Speaker, the people are fully cognisant of this. They understood this. The good people of Barbados went out on January 15, 2008 and voted, overwhelmingly, for the Democratic Labour Party. Therefore, we do not need any more say so from the people of Barbados in going ahead with this programme. The good people of Barbados have already signed off on the Constituency Councils. They have already given us the say, so they have already given us the mandate to get on with the job.

Mr. Speaker, like I said, the Opposition is out of step with the people of Barbados. The initial six Constituency Councils that we are using as a pilot, so that we can tweak, adjust, and do any sort of administrative work to make the other 24 Constituency Councils ready.

Sir, we are asking for 90 Councillors and we have over 800 persons who have shown an interest and have come forward to sit on these Constituency Councils. Therefore, the people are eager, quite unlike their representatives. As a matter of fact, I believe some system should be put in place to address the nine Constituency Councils, because certainly St. Michael South East is way ahead of the game. It is the nine Constituencies headed by Honourable Members on That Side, that are woefully out of step and I do not believe that the good people of those nine Constituencies should be left out in the cold. Therefore, I do not know if it is too late that we should insert somewhere in the legislation, not only penalties but some way that we could have some representation for them. Sir, they are Barbadians after all.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is absent but I believe that something could be done.

Mr. Speaker, the question was asked, how are these Constituency Councils going to be selected? Sir, the persons are not only going to be selected by the Minister, as the Honourable Members on the Other Side are stating, these Councilors will be vetted by a Committee made up by unbiased civil servants.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Speaker, it is entirely up to the Other Side to lambaste the civil servants. We are saying civil servants are responsible, professional career civil servants, who will do their job in an unbiased manner in vetting the Councils.

Mr. Speaker, who will sit on the Constituency Councils? Sir, they are faith-based groups and organisations, political parties, youth, sports, senior citizen organisations, men and women organisations. We will run the gamut, a broad-based group of persons.

Sir, if the Opposition Members of Parliament do not report to their constituents, like I said before, then we should put some system where there are representatives of the people.

Mr. Speaker, certainly in my case and in certain cases of other Honourable Members on This Side, it is proven what exactly is a Member of Parliament. All a Member of Parliament is really, is a receiver of complaints. I sit in my Constituency Office every Thursday, listening and receiving complaints of which 95 per cent I cannot address, either because I do not have the resources or sometimes I do not know to whom I should send them,

despite the fact that I am the Member of Parliament on the Government side.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Speaker, how can this continue? Sir, I am saying that with the initiation of the Constituency Councils, that should come to a grinding halt and some solution will be found in addressing the problems of the many constituents.

Mr. Speaker, like I said at the beginning, most of the bases have been covered by the good speeches on This Side of this Honourable House regarding Constituency Councils and I commend it to this country.

7.10 p.m.

Sir, I urge the good people of Barbados to ignore the comments of the Barbados Labour Party and its spokespersons and listen to the word of wisdom from This Side.

Mr. Speaker, the Constituency Councils will certainly move Barbadians to the next level and deliver the goods that they are so often asking for, especially on an individual basis through the individual Members of Parliament. Mr. Speaker, I urge the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West to proceed and he has the assurance that we are solidly behind him and to deliver the good for Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to enter this debate and, like the former speaker, I intend to be very brief but to the point.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Honourable Member for St. George North and tried to understand some of the points he made.

Sir, in one breath the Honourable Member for St. James North said he supports the concept of the Constituency Councils and then he mentioned that he preferred a selection that he preferred an appointment and in another breathe he said that he preferred selection/election and, Sir, I was confused. Sir, then he went on to look at Section 5 of the Act and said that the Constituency should be consulted.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at Section 5, Clause (d), this speaks to the referral of residents requiring services. Sir, residents could only be referred if the community is involved, so again, I am confused. Sir, I could only

describe his whole presentation as a rather confusing one. Again, he mentioned that there are some aspects of underlying constitutional change.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in this Bill that has any underlying principles that would touch and concern the Constitution of Barbados or touches the section of fundamental rights or the rule of Law in this country. Sir, I do not understand it and I classify his presentation as confusing. Sir, I do not want to refer to the presentation made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West. I could only describe it a cartoon-like, Bud and Lou presentation and, Sir, I will move on from that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have to withdraw that remark.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the remark. Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West watches a lot of cartoons, he said to me, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, again I listened last week to the former Attorney-General and throughout his speech he was mentioning the threat to democracy. Sir, I was wondering where was the former Attorney-General when we were in Opposition and we were served with an Antiquities Bill. Sir, I remember we spent a whole evening going through clause by clause and the Bill interfered with every constitutional right in our Constitution, and Sir, the Bill was drafted by the former Attorney-General. Sir, they wanted to bring that Bill, but it died a sudden death and I have not seen it since.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, further to that they mentioned about a threat to democracy...

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. There are certain Bills that come to the House on occasion and they have to be withdrawn because some Bills go to Select Committee. Sir, I am saying that this present Bill should go to a Select Committee because it has too many errors.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Bill did not go to any Select Committee. Sir, under his watch, the Road Traffic Act to this Parliament - again, that was filled with provisions that touched and concerned the fundamental constitutional rights of Barbadians. Sir, I recall going through it and every clause was filled with errors and Sir, the Act gave certain powers to police officers.

Mr. Speaker, we actually came to the realisation that those powers were unconstitutional and a threat to democracy.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member cannot speak to a Bill that went to Select Committee in this Parliament and came back here corrected. Sir, he cannot speak to that because it was collected in this Parliament.

Sir, the system of Government that we have in the Standing Orders, justifies a Bill to go to Select Committee. Sir, the Government of the day was wise enough to send the Bill to a Select Committee of Parliament and the same thing should happen to this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is so stubborn that they refused to listen to wisdom.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, the Bill was moved by the Honourable Member for St. George North and certified quickly by the Attorney-General. The Honourable Member for St. George North moved the Bill and he begged all Honourable Members to support.

Mr. Speaker, we can also recall the sunset legislation. We warned them that turning the Commissioner of Police into a mere traffic cop would remove powers from him. Sir, do not talk about the Emergency Powers Bill that touched freedom of association, that sought by its provision to hinder the progress of trade unions in this country yet Sir, they talk about threats to democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I will go further. One candidate that ran against the Honourable Member for St. Philip West said she wanted all 30 seats and that she did not want Opposition. Sir, is that not a threat to democracy? Sir, not only that, a Member of Parliament, a senior Member of the Barbados Labour Party in this House said that if you are Douglas Leopold Phillips, that you should starve.

Mr. Speaker, I do not understand how they could speak about a threat to democracy. Sir, we go through the track record of the Barbados Labour Party...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please calm down and reduce the tone because we need to hear the Honourable Member making his presentation. Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, we go through all these events. I would respectfully submit that the Opposition has no moral authority to speak about any threat to democracy.

7.20 p.m.

Sir, they try to drive fear in the hearts of Barbadians, or the right to democracy is being threatened, when within our Constitution still lies the rule of Law, the fundamental rights and the principles of the separation of power. How

can a Constituency Council Bill impact on those constitutional provisions? I do not understand it.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West today again questioned Ministerial power. In fact, the Honourable Member referred to Section 10 of the Act and said that the Minister has too much power.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Honourable House. I never said that the Minister has too much power.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, he was questioning why the Minister is involved at the particular stage. He said that in a nutshell.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. I never questioned why the Minister would be at any particular stage. If the Honourable Member wants to quote me, he must quote me correctly.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West questioned the Minister's involvement in the Constituency Council. He questioned that, Sir.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. In my speech today, I never questioned the powers of the Minister or his involvement in the Bill. The Honourable Member continues to mislead the House. I would ask that those words be struck from the record. He is misleading the House and misquoting me.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please, continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, I know I gave a description to the speech. I also mentioned that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West questioned throughout his speech the procedure and the Minister's involvement. That is what he did. I am amazed that tonight the Honourable Member is now up and down like a "Jack in the Box" to respond to me.

Sir, I wonder whether the Other Side is Lawless or they do not read the provision of the legislation. They passed Section 13 of the Act, and it is identical. I will give them a lesson in the Law. Section 13 subsection (1) of the Urban Development Commission Act:

“The Minister may give directions of a general nature in respect of the policy to be followed by the Commission in the performance of its function under this Act and the Commission shall comply with those directions.”

Sir, Section 10 mentioned that the Minister shall give the department directions of a general nature in respect of policy and procedure to be followed by each Council and each Council shall comply with those directions. Sir, this is similar to the Urban Development Commission Act and throughout all the Laws mentioned the fact that the Minister has the right or discretion to give direction. I do not understand the argument that was put forward by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Sir, I sat and listened to my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, who had similar experiences. We had an officer at Urban Development Commission, months before elections, working and canvassing, fixing people's houses or a well and saying to them, if you can tell me you are going to vote for the Barbados Labour Party I am going to fix this well or house for you. That is a fact. That was the premise. Once you said that you are going to vote for the Barbados Labour Party, you would get the services.

Sir, there was Project OASIS. I was never contacted about any involvement in Project OASIS. I went to Church Village a Saturday where I saw the former Honourable Member for St. Philip South and a man called George Griffith. I am sorry to call his name, the candidate for St. Philip North, handing out weed wackers, rakes, forks, pan carts and shovels, without even consulting the Representative for St. Philip North, or the Representative for St. Philip West, and they were posing for pictures. Sir, do you know what happened, it did not help them at all. It did not help the former Honourable Member for St. Philip, or the other lost-cause candidate. That is what happened.

Sir, I can talk about a number of things that happened in the Constituency that we actually had to beg for. Sir, you are a Representative, a Member of Parliament in Opposition, and you had to be begging Honourable Members from the Other Side, when they were in Government, even to get a street light. They treated us with scant regard. They had no mercy for us. They had no interest in assisting Honourable Members of the Opposition, at the time.

Aside

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, the former Honourable Member for St. Philip North, after he was beaten, said he was treated like an outside child. He had to beg.

Sir, they spoke about slush funds, but built into the Bill is a system of checks and balances. You just have to go to Section 9 of the Bill states:

(1) Each Council shall, in respect of its functions under this Act, keep proper accounts and adequate financial and other records in relation thereto.

(2) The accounts, financial and other records referred to in subsection (1) shall be kept for a period of not less than 7 years.

(3) The Auditor-General may at any time and shall on the direction of the Ministers responsible for Finance carry out an investigation or audit of the accounts of each Council.”

Sir, that is governance. That was not done...

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: On a point of order.

Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. Section 9 (4):

“ The Auditor-General may at any time and shall on the direction of the Minister...”

In other words, the Auditor-General has to wait on the Minister. That is what it is saying. The Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Aside

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I find no point of order.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, it should have said, the Auditor-General shall.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, I will not respond to that intervention. I respond to lawyers. I will not respond to that, Sir.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, built into this Act, is a system of checks and balances. When they had the Israel Lovell Foundation and the Pinelands Workshop, we had no checks and balances like this, Sir. I want to see the financial statements and the statements of accounts for the Israel Lovell Foundation and the Pinelands Workshop, so that we can have transparency and integrity, which is built into this Bill. I must commend the Minister, because this is good governance.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Further, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West mentioned about legislating experts and legislating consultants. What is wrong with legislating consultants? They had about 50 million consultants, and I never saw a piece of Law saying that they are going to legislate it, Sir.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. There are not even 50 million people in Barbados so we could not have had 50 million consultants. This should be struck from the record, because he cannot come in here and mislead this Honourable House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue. Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, they had many consultants, and the Honourable Member for Christ Church West never raised his voice. He never said that the consultants are running about with all these large salaries, and we should put it into Law.

Sir, what is the problem with a Council seeking technical advice, engaging the services of a technocrat? The fact is that we were prudent enough and we believe in good governance, so we put it into the legislation, Sir, that is the point.

Sir, I am hearing a Spanish station. I am hearing a Spanish fly, and I will ignore the Spanish fly. The Honourable Member for St. George North like those words, Spanish fly.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: The Honourable Member for St. Philip North knows about Spanish very well. He tried to entice me into it.

Mr. SPEAKER: That was a point of elucidation.

Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, Section 5 of the Act sets out the functions of the Constituency Councils and it sets out the Council, to my mind, of a participatory democracy, because it speaks about referring to residents, assisting with the delivery of particular services to the respective residents of each Constituency. It sets out clearly the functions of the Councils.

Sir, I do not understand why would an Opposition at this time, oppose a Bill with that primary purpose, because

Section 4 sets out the purpose. It said that the purpose of each Council is to improve the delivery of social services to constituents. I cannot believe that a Member who was elected, could oppose such a Bill that has this purpose.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: The purpose of the Bill is to improve the delivery of social services to constituents, and effectively and efficiently assist in the management of resources, assigned for the development of each Constituency, within a framework of good governance.

Sir, can you imagine that an Opposition is opposing this Bill? Shame on them.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I said that I would not be long, but this is a revolutionary step. It involves different Members of the community, getting involved in the decision-making process and delivering, in an efficient way, services to the wider people in the Constituency.

Sir, that is my contribution to this debate. I only want to say to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West to keep up the good work and we will support him.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

The Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this Bill before this Honourable Chamber. Mr. Speaker, this Bill represents the fulfillment of one of the pledges and commitments that this Party made to the people of Barbados, when we canvassed the length and breadth of this country, during the course of the late 2007, and early 2008.

Mr. Speaker, those on the Other Side have made heavy weather of the fact that Members to the Council are going to be selected, as opposed to being elected by means of some form of election.

Mr. Speaker, I am a practical type person and when I consider the representation made in terms of whether we should have these Members of the Council elected, I have to take into consideration the cost of doing that election process.

Mr. Speaker, we have just come out of a General Election with a mandate to implement these Constituency Councils. This has been the mandate from the people of Barbados, to listen to their needs, to respond to their

concerns, in terms of the delivery of the social services in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, that General Election cost this country approximately \$3.6 million. Am I hearing on the Other Side that we are asking Barbados that every two years, because the appointments of the Members of the Constituency Councils - am I hearing to expend some \$3.6 million and factor the inflation component into that, every two years?

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. There is no way that you could equate electing Council Members to the General Election. Therefore, he is misleading the House to suggest that electing Constituency Council Members, would be the same cost as a General Election. It could not be, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, I will not respond to that particular intervention. The fact is that once we are going to have an election process, this gives you an idea as to where the cost is going to be, and it is a cost that will be repeated every two years, and to achieve what?

Asides.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, the basis of the selection is to try to involve all persons within the community. This is the basis of the selection process, so that we will have the Members of the disabled, Members of the church, Members of the various community groups, sporting groups, young people, old people. Again, Mr. Speaker, that is the basis upon the selection of the Constituency Council representatives.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Members on the Other Side always have a problem with the approach that the Democratic Labour Party takes to solving the social problems in this country. In addition to this election, we have heard Members on That Side, look at this Constituency Council as a substitute for Government. We are hearing about the cost of roads, housing and things like this.

8.21 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, that expenditure is not intended to be covered under the Constituency Councils. Our position has been clear. It has been set out inside the Manifesto and within the Throne Speech.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House again. If the

Constituency Councils are not to do roads and things like that, why would they need experts. The Honourable Member has said that they are not going to be doing roads and these and the likes, so why then would they need experts?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that any of the roads constructed in Barbados over the last 14 years have been done by any experts. In Layne's Gap in my Constituency, a barba green vehicle came and put down a surface. There are no gutters.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. The Honourable Member continues to mislead the House. The engineers that work at the Ministry of Transport and Works day in, day out, year in, year out, are experts in their field. For the Honourable Member to have the audacity to come into this House and say that those people are not experts, he needs to take that back and say sorry, like the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West had to do with the National Assistance Board.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, I have limited time. This is a short intervention and I do not want to be side-tracked by the noises on the Other Side.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I am requesting a ruling. The Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, if you wish me to say there is no point of order each time I will say that. I find no point of order.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: You find that he did not mislead the House?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the Throne Speech so that we can establish the purpose of the Constituency Councils and be able to marry that presentation in the Throne Speech at page 23 with the Act at section 4, and I quote.

"My Government will also establish State-funded Constituency Councils to execute community enhancement and developmental projects. These Councils will comprise representatives of the church, civil society and the political Administration. In this way, perennial problems like street-

lighting, sporting and recreational facilities, drainage, poverty alleviation and youth programmes will be administered and resolved at the Constituency level.”

Mr. Speaker, these have been the problems and the issues that the people in the various Constituencies have been complaining about over the past 14 years. Sir, even in light of the results of the last Election, they on That Side still have not got it. Mr. Speaker, it is about people. Their concentration is about the creation of wealth for certain people.

Mr. Speaker, we promised the people of Barbados good governance. I will quote again from the Throne Speech.

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

Mr. Speaker, this Bill before this Honourable House addresses the whole issue of accountability. As the last Speaker has indicated, proper books of accounts - that is how we refer to it within our profession - must be kept. Those accounts must be audited.

Sir, for a point of clarification, the Auditor-General may at any time and shall, on the direction of the Minister responsible for finance - not the Minister responsible for the Constituency Council, that is the key point - carry out an investigation or an audit of the accounts of each Constituency Council.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to this, that process has to be carried out within a six-month period. There will be proper accountability, which is unlike the projects that were initiated by the Other Side such as the Hardwood Housing Project and the GEMS Project where there is no accountability and where we do not know where the money gone, a project leaking in excess of \$240 million at last count.

Mr. Speaker, we could go on with all the different projects of which there is no accountability or transparency. There is also the ABC Highway - I am being prompted, and the funds that went to the Israel Lovell Foundation. Those are taxpayers' funds and the people of Barbados must understand that.

Mr. Speaker, in this particular legislation, we have ensured that those Constituency Councils must have proper books of accounts, the accounts will be audited and the audit reports will be made public.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue in terms of accountability, is the fact that we have to report to the

constituents on a bi-annual basis. The Constituency Councils have to report to Members of the Constituency. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary representative will be expected to be part of that report. He or she has to lay a report, if he or she wants to get funds the next year, as to what the Constituency Councils have been doing. That is accountability.

Mr. Speaker, we have to recognise that the basis of contract between us and the people of Barbados...

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I listened very carefully. The Honourable Member said that Members of Parliament have to report if they are to get funds for the next year. I want him to point to where in the legislation that is, because he is misleading the House again. That is not in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member can point to where in the legislation that is, I would stand corrected, otherwise he must withdraw the statement because it is untrue. The Honourable Member continues to mislead the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member needs to read the legislation. It is not my job to point out to the Honourable Member where in the legislation that is. It is his responsibility to read the legislation. If he reads the legislation, we would not have these points of order every two minutes.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, let me hear your point of order.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: The Honourable Member has not responded or pointed out where in the legislation that statement is. He is continuing to mislead the House. Nowhere in this legislation does it say that if a Member of Parliament does not come and report to the Constituency Councils, they would not get funds for that Member of Parliament or for that Constituency Council. It is not in this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it is a fundamental thing because there is a part in the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto, not this legislation, that says that if Members of Parliament want parliamentary support for their offices, they have to give reports to the Constituency Councils, but it is not in this legislation.

7.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member cannot come and put things in the legislation that are not there and mislead this Honourable House. The Honourable Member is has to be correct on this, and I would ask that it be struck from the record.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, the submission of misleading this Honourable House as a point of order is a very tenuous one I find. I find that the tendency is to use it to attempt to correct an Honourable Member on every minor thing. The Honourable Member has the Floor of this Honourable House and Honourable Members have already had their chance to address this Honourable House on the matter. I am not saying the Honourable Member should come here and deliberately mislead this Honourable House, but I am not also going to interrupt him and to ask him to withdraw every little thing that might not be necessarily correct, in accordance with some Honourable Members' interpretation. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, in the Second Schedule at section 15.(1):

"Each Council shall hold biannual public meetings at a time approved by the Minister, to update residents of each Constituency on the progress and agenda of the Council for the prescribed period."

(2) "Every recommendation made at a meeting referred to in sub-paragraph (1) shall be forwarded to the Minister."

(3) "The Member of Parliament for the Constituency shall be invited by the Council to make an address on any relevant issues deemed to be of interest to the Constituency at the public meetings referred to in sub-paragraph (1)."

Mr. Speaker, I lay my case and will move on.

Asides.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Sir, it was a question of how he interpreted.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please proceed. Do not bother with the cross-talk.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member cannot even interpret the legislation. The Honourable Member has to read it in order to be able to interpret it. Sir, the legislation is quite clear, and this is another aspect of good governance.

Sir, as one goes through this legislation, at every point a number of the provisions have been made to ensure proper governance and accountability.

Sir, whether the Members of the Constituency Councils are elected by a General Election or some other electoral process, or whether they are appointed, this check and balance is what would ensure the integrity of the whole system, the integrity of the Councils. This is important because that is what we have campaigned on, and the people of Barbados have entrusted us with their representation for the next five years. Therefore, we have to live up to those commitments that we have made. It is in the legislation and it is just a matter for those on the Other Side to read it.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we sat here today and listened to a lot of discussions about what the Constituency Councils will do. Sir, they talked about all these different fancy projects. Sir, when I think about my constituents and how this Council could ease the situation in St. James Central. Sir, there are several programmes.

Sir, during the course of canvassing, there were a number of young persons within the Constituency who were having problems, in terms of having bus fare to go to school, proper lunch and breakfast. These were some of the issues that were raised by persons at the bottom end of the economic scale, and given the cost of living challenges that we have encountered over the last year, these vulnerable groups have had to be addressed.

Sir, there are also seniors in my Constituency who are challenged on a daily basis to have a proper meal. We have to be able to put the systems and procedures in place, to ensure that those persons are not left outside of the net. Sir, that is why at Section 5(1) this legislation speaks to building relevant databases with respect to the Constituency in collaboration with other Government departments.

Mr. Speaker, only last week we heard the Honourable Member for St. James North addressing the issue of a needs assessment of the need of seniors and other vulnerable groups within the island generally. The Honourable Member spoke to that at length and that is an area within the legislation. This is why I say those on the Other Side have to read. If they do not read then we cannot effectively and constructively debate this legislation.

Asides.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, within this provision we have made provision for the Constituency Councils to undertake that initiative. Of course, any of the projects we are looking at, those projects that the Constituency Councils...

Mr. Speaker, these initiatives or recommendations within the Act, at 5(c) state that the Constituency Councils will:

“Make recommendations to the Minister for programmes and projects for the benefit of each Constituency.”

(f) “Carry out activities designated by the Department on behalf of the residents of the Constituency.”

Sir, within the Act, there is a long list of the functions of the Constituency Councils.

Mr. Speaker, if you are on the ground within the Constituency, there are certain challenges of which you would be aware. There are certain issues in relation to drainage that cannot be addressed at the level of the Constituency Council. Those issues have to be addressed by the Honourable Minister who has responsibility for Drainage. Mr. Speaker, I am thinking of areas in Sunset Crest where there are fundamental flooding issues. The Constituency Council does not have the resources and will not have the resources to fix that particular problem, we have a Ministry to which a problem like that would be referred. But there are other areas within the Constituency, in Bagatelle Terrace where the drainage, when there are heavy rains, debris flow into these wells. Sir, those wells can be fixed and those drains kept clean. Those are projects that can be done at the Constituency level.

Mr. Speaker, your own project that I know is close to your heart, where young children at school are unable to finance that additional homework exercise because of limited finances. In addition, your particular project, “Each One Teach One” is the name you like to refer to it as, where, as part of the Constituency Council, we could initiate programmes to develop and allow young persons at school, who cannot or whose parents are not in a position to afford the additional lessons that is so needed.

Sir, unless you are close to the ground, and this is why the Independent Member in this Honourable House is so passionate about this legislation, because the Honourable Member can relate to those issue because he is one of those persons who is on the ground within his Constituency.

8.00 p.m.

Sir, if Honourable Members on the Other Side were on the ground, they would realise that the writing was on the wall two years or so ago.

Mr. Speaker, this is why this piece of legislation, this piece of social engineering, to use the language that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East is so used to

using, that is why this piece of legislation is so important. Sir, one of the reasons they are afraid of it, is because they recognise this legislation puts people first and will address the issues that would be of importance to constituents across the length and breadth of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up, I want to let the public of Barbados be very aware that this Government will be practising good governance in all its aspects. They have nothing to worry about in respect of the selection of Members to these Constituency Councils. Sir, all they have to do, if they are interesting in representing their Constituency is to complete the forms, get those forms in, volunteer their services and we on This Side, will end this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Members on the Other Side could propose one of their Party people, and Sir, they would embrace it. Sir, none of us on This Side are afraid of that because we are comfortable in our own minds with this legislation and, therefore, we can embrace it.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to let the Honourable Minister know that I am 100 per cent in support of this piece of legislation and, certainly, we in St. James Central look forward to having the Constituency Council for St. James Central set up within the short weeks coming.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

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

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

The question that further consideration of the Bill be postponed was put and resolved in the affirmation without division.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, March 3, 2009, at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, March 3, 2009, at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

8.00 p.m.

|

CONTENTS

MINUTES

Hon. R. D. JONES.....	1
Hon. F. J. Stuart, 1; Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, 2.	

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R. D. JONES.....	2
Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, 2.	

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 12 – RESOLUTION TO MOVE THAT THE HOUSE RESOLVES ITSELF IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY TO CONSIDER THE GRANT OF SUMS OF MONEY FOR THE SERVICE OF THIS ISLAND.....	2
--	---

HEAD 19

TREASURY

Hon. R. D. JONES.....	2
Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, 2.	

HEAD 25

Hon. R. D. JONES.....	2
Hon. F. J. Stuart, 3, 16; Mr. R. C. Eastmond, 3, 5; His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14; Miss. C. Y. Forde, 7, 10; His Honour K. St.c. Best, 9; Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 10, 11; Mr. J. D. Paul, 11; Mr. G. A. Clarke, 12, 13, 14.	

HEAD 55

Hon. R. L. SEALY.....	16
Mr. R. St.C. Toppin, 20, 22, 23; His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman, 20, 22, 23, 24; His Honour K. St.c. Best, 22; Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 28.	

HEAD 61

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER.....	28
Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 28.	

RESUMPTION

ORDER NO. 12 (resumed)

ORDER NO. 3 (resumed).....	28
Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 28, 29, 30, 31; Dr. W. F. Duguid, 29, 30, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38; Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, 35, 37; His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman, 38, 40, 41; Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, 41, 42, 43; Mr. R. C. Eastmond, 43,	

44; Mr. S. A. Lashley, 46, 48, 49; His Honour K. St.c. Best, 50; Miss. C. Y. Forde, 51.

SUSPENSION OF SITTINGS

Hon. R. D. JONES.....	52
Hon. F. J. Stuart, 52.	

RESUMPTION

ORDER NO. 3 (resumed)

Hon. P. M. T. Todd, 53, 55, 56, 57, 59, 62; Mr. G. A. Clarke, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67; Hon. C. P. Sinckler, 59, 60; Hon. S. D. Blackett, 62, 63, 64; Hon. M. A. Lashley, 64, 65, 66, 67; Dr. W. F. Duguid, 65, 67, 68, 69; Hon. E. G. Hutson, 67, 68, 69, 70; Hon. R. D. Jones, 71; Hon. F. J. Stuart, 71.

SUSPENSION.....	28
-----------------	----

ADJOURNMENT.....	71
------------------	----

Hon. R. D. Jones, 71; Hon. F. J. Stuart, 71.

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

BEST, His Honour K. ST.C. (St. Michael East)
BLACKETT, Hon. S. D. (St. Michael Central)
BOYCE, Hon. J. D. E. (Christ Church South)
CLARKE, Mr. G. A. (St. George North)
DUGUID, Dr. W. F. (Christ Church West)
EASTMOND, Mr. R. C. (St. James North)
ESTWICK, Dr. the Hon. D. C. (St. Philip West)
FORDE, Miss. C. Y. (St. Thomas)
HUTSON, Hon. E. G. (St. James Central)
JONES, Hon. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)
KELLMAN, His Excellency D. St.E. (St. Lucy)
LASHLEY, Hon. M. A. (St. Philip North)
LASHLEY, Mr. S. A. (Christ Church West Central)
PAUL, Mr. J. D. (St. Michael West Central)
SEALY, Hon. R. L. (St. Michael South Central)
SINCKLER, Hon. C. P. (St. Michael North West)
STUART, Hon. F. J. (St. Michael South)
THOMPSON, Hon. D. J. H. (St. John)
TODD, Hon. P. M. T. (City of Bridgetown)
TOPPIN, Mr. R. St.C. (St. Michael North)

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

Q1. Committee of Supply, Head 19. The source carries two versions of Hon. R. D. Jones's short speech moving Head 19, either side of the take-slip at 10.20 a.m., each followed by a seconder and the question being put. The fuller first version is printed and the second (about 60 words) has been left out. The first version gives '\$30 000 for the purchase of vehicles'; the second gives '\$80 000', which agrees with the Head total of \$95 000. Please confirm.

Q2. Committee of Supply, Head 55. Mr. R. St.C. Toppin refers to 'this \$50 million package', but the Head before the Committee is for \$15 million. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Committee of Supply, Head 25; Order No. 3. The Chair's labels do not match the stage in two places: 'Mr. SPEAKER' calls Hon. R. D. Jones on Head 25 while the House is in Committee, and 'Mr. CHAIRMAN' asks Mr. D. St.E. Kellman to refrain from calling names during the second-reading debate with Mr. Speaker in the Chair. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 3, His Honour K. St.C. Best; Hon. M. A. Lashley. Some speeches run on under the Speaker's label. Three of His Honour K. St.C. Best's paragraphs begin 'His Honour K. St. C. Best:' after 'Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.', and one paragraph reads 'Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue. Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, they had many consultants ...'. In Committee, Mr. Toppin's label likewise contains 'Mr. CHAIRMAN: Not ten minutes, I have given you some extra time.' Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 3, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce and Hon. D. O'N. Inmiss. Several paragraphs begin with page markers such as 'M -- 2', 'M -- 3', 'M -- 4' and 'M -- 6' to 'M -- 8', and some of these paragraphs appear to begin mid-sentence. Printed as in the source; some words may be missing at these points.

Q6. PRESENT list. The entry for the Minister of International Business and International Transport reads 'Hon. E. G. F.C.C.A., C.A.', without the surname (Hon. E. G. Hutson speaks later in the Sitting). Printed as in the source.

Q7. Order No. 3, Mr. S. A. Lashley. Mr. S. A. Lashley refers to 'the Organisation of American States (OECS)'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Tuesday, 24th February, 2009 at 10.15 a.m., with Mr. Speaker, His Honour M. A. Carrington, in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood. The Minutes of 17th February and of Friday, 13th February, 2009 were confirmed, and Standing Orders were suspended for the rest of the Sitting. Under Order No. 12 the House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. S. A. Lashley in the Chair, on a Resolution to grant \$16 933 657 from the Consolidated Fund as shown in Supplementary Estimates No. 19, 2008-2009.

Hon. R. D. Jones moved Head 19, Treasury (\$95 000), for vehicles for a new Mission in the People's Republic of China and a soil sterilizer for the Ministry of Agriculture, and Head 25, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (\$1 455 000), of which \$1.3 million was for the operating costs of the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation, \$45 000 to refit the Quarantine Container Laboratory and \$110 000 for a consultant on the Giant African Snail Eradication Project and research by the University of the West Indies. Mr. R. C. Eastmond supported the Head and spoke on backyard farming, the export of flowers and the fall in sugar output from about 250 000 tonnes in 1960 to perhaps 33 000 tonnes. Mr. D. St.E. Kellman spoke on land lease, poultry prices and fishermen; Miss C. Y. Forde called for wider distribution of snail bait; His Honour K. St.C. Best, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, Mr. J. D. Paul and Mr. G. A. Clarke also spoke, and points of order were raised by Mr. Eastmond, Miss Forde and Mr. Kellman. Mr. Jones, replying, said one snail could produce between 800 and 1 000 eggs, called for a national effort against the pest and said 900 young people had been brought back into agriculture. Head 25 was agreed to.

On Head 55, Ministry of Tourism (\$15 million), the Minister of Tourism, Hon. R. L. Sealy, proposed a revolving Tourism Industry Relief Fund, to be administered by the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited, for businesses that could show greater losses in the first quarter of 2009 than in the same quarter of 2008, with a committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism. He distinguished it from the \$10 million hotel stabilisation fund of 2001. Mr. R. St.C. Toppin called the measure too little and too late, compared Barbados

unfavourably with Jamaica and St. Vincent, and criticised the conditions on jobs and losses; he was interrupted by points of order from Mr. Kellman, His Honour K. St.C. Best and Mr. Sealy, and withdrew one sentence at the Chairman's request. Mr. Kellman supported the Fund. Mr. Sealy replied that an additional \$20 million had already gone to the Barbados Tourism Authority for marketing and spoke on the losses of Air Jamaica and on airlift. Head 55 and Head 61, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business (\$383 657), moved by Hon. C. P. Sinckler, were agreed to, and the Resolution was reported, read a first and second time and passed.

After a suspension, the House resumed the second-reading debate on Order No. 3, the Constituency Councils Bill, 2009. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce and Hon. D. O'N. Inniss supported the Bill as a Manifesto pledge to bring representation closer to the people. Dr. W. F. Duguid opposed it, calling it 'the most stinking piece of legislation' and asking where in the Bill the 450 Councillors would be elected; on a point of order the Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, objected to the word, and Dr. Duguid changed it to 'disastrous'. Dr. Duguid read from House debates of 1994-1999 and from a newspaper report of the Honourable Member for St. John, drawing a further intervention from the Prime Minister, and withdrew the expression 'hot air' as unparliamentary.

Mr. D. St.E. Kellman, Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, Mr. S. A. Lashley and His Honour K. St.C. Best spoke for

the Bill; Mr. Lashley contrasted the Opposition's objections with its own record, and Mr. Best quoted the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto on Constituency Councils. Mr. R. C. Eastmond set out the Opposition's concern about indirect democracy, the role of the Member of Parliament and checks on the Minister, noting that each Council was to receive \$100 000 at the start. After a further suspension, Hon. P. M. T. Todd described the 13 Town Hall Meetings held on the Bill and argued that the Opposition was ten months too late.

Mr. G. A. Clarke argued that the Bill contained errors that should have been dealt with in Committee and that the Auditor-General should not have to wait on the Minister, and points of order were raised against him by Mr. Todd and Hon. C. P. Sinckler. Hon. S. D. Blackett said over 800 persons had come forward for 90 places on the Councils. Hon. M. A. Lashley read the accounting provisions of the Bill, amid repeated points of order from Dr. Duguid and Mr. Clarke, which the Speaker did not uphold. Hon. E. G. Hutson said the last General Election had cost about \$3.6 million and read the Second Schedule on biannual public meetings; the Speaker observed that claims of misleading the House were being used to correct statements in debate.

On the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones, further consideration of the Bill was postponed. The House was adjourned at 8.00 p.m. until Tuesday, 3rd March, 2009 at 10.00 a.m.