THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, June 30, 2009.

PRESENT

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

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

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR M.Sc. (Econ.)

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, Q.C., 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.) (Lond.), B.A. (Hons.), Dip.Ed.

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

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., (Minister of Tourism)

Hon. F. J. STUART, LL.M. B.A., (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. HUTSON, 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. A. D. BRATHWAITE, LL.B. (Hons.)

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

Hon. P. M. T. TODD, B.Sc. (Minister of State, Education and Human Resource Development)

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

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

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

Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is in Session.

Honourable Members, I have developed some flu-like symptoms overnight. The only travelling I have done recently is on the Harbour Master, so it is unlikely to be H1N1 and if you see me vacate the Chair some time later today, it is only for that reason. I will leave you in the capable hands of His Honour K. St. C. Best, Deputy Speaker.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, June 16, 2009. Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move

that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, June 16, 2009, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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 objections or observations, then let those Minutes stand confirmed.

H/A40/10.20 a.m. Sequence 2

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: I am in receipt of the Accounts and Statements for the months of December 2008, and January 2009, from the Accountant General.

PAPERS

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Duties, Taxes and Other payments (Exemption) Scotia Trust and Merchant Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited) Order, 2009.
2. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Marcia Jordan), Order, 2009.
3. Annual Report and Accounts of the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust Limited for the year ended June 30, 2008.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Sir, I am commanded to lay the following:

The Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Bill, 2009.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the first reading of the Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Bill, 2009.

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

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 4 – BARBADOS WATER AUTHORITY(VALIDATION OF WATER AND SEWERAGE RATES) BILL, 2009

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Sir, this Bill before this Honourable House to validate the Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Bill, 2009, is a simple Bill to give effect to increases in the rates of water and sewerage which were set, in effect from January 2005, by the previous Administration. Those rates, one will recall, were not debated in this Honourable House, but were made by the Minister with responsibility for Water at that particular time. Most of the increases, I think, were done in the form of a Press Statement of sorts.

Sir, we have, therefore, found ourselves over the past three-and-a-half years, paying rates that were more or less illegal, and we need to go through this exercise of validating those actions, that were taken by the previous Administration, in order to move forward, and that we do not find ourselves as a Government having to refund the taxpayers of Barbados. We need to have this Bill passed before this Honourable Chamber.

Sir, water, as you know, is a very scarce and valuable resource in Barbados, as well as globally. The environment has taken more prominence within our headlines. I think that Barbados is recorded as a country of scarce water supply, where we fall into that particular zone. We must ensure that our conservation efforts, as far as water is concerned, is kept at the forefront of our decision-making.

In 2005, when the rates increased, if my research is correct, the basis for the rates were determined, primarily, on the recommendation of a consultancy exercise that was done in 1995, by one of the larger professional accounting firms in this country, Price WaterhouseCoopers. At that time they were known as Coopers and Lybrand.

At that time the basis for determining the rates, was done on a four-block structure as far as domestic consumers were concerned, and a single rate for commercial entities and ships.

The domestic rate and I want to focus on that. The first block which tends to cover persons' water usage between zero and 8 cubic metres a month. This is the lowest rate that was set, and it was set at what was considered to be an affordable level. This rate block provides sufficient water to meet basic needs such as cooking, drinking water and personal hygiene. It was estimated in this block, that persons would be using approximately 50 litres or about 11 gallons per day, based on a five-person household. This is equivalent to 7 500 litres per month, converted to square metres.

Sir, it is expected that persons who would fall into that category, would have been low income householders without indoor plumbing. They would be expected to fall into this particular category, and would also cover single occupancies where their consumption was at a comparatively low level.

H A40 10.30 a.m. Sequence 3

Tuesday June 30, 2009

House A40, Sequence 04, 10.30 a.m.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, the second block covered households using between 9 and 20 cubic metres per month. This block, typically, would cover water for normal basic residential needs, such as sanitation and cleanliness, indoor plumbing and laundry. The upper limit of this block was rounded and established at some 20 cubic metres.

Mr. Speaker, the third block ranged between 21 and 40 cubic metres, and this block typically, is expected to include those households where you had Lawns being watered and cars washed. The commercial users also fell into that particular category, because it was felt at the time that certainly your commercial users, the farmers, the drink companies and so on, would not be penalised, if they were kept within that particular category.

The fourth category dealt with households using more than 40 cubic metres per month. This would be a very high end usage factor, using water over and above what is considered reasonable for their own domestic situation. These would typically include those people who had leaking pipes, faulty taps, sprinklers and swimming pools, like several Honourable Members on the Other Side.

Mr. Speaker, that particular block was determined for those persons using more than 40 cubic metres per month. Of course, as I said earlier, one of the issues was the whole question of encouraging householders to be conservative. Therefore, the rate of that fourth block was set at a comparatively high level.

Mr. Speaker, those rates in the first block were the rates established in January of 2005. In the first block, those persons using less than 8 cubic metres, the rate was $1.55. In the second block, the rate was $1.94. In the third block, the rate was $2.91. As I said, the commercial companies generally fell within that particular category. Those in the fourth block using more than 40 cubic metres were charged $4.86. The ships were charged at some $5.05. There was a minimum charge for those people who were not metered, or where there was no meter to actually establish what the usage was. That minimum rate was some $20. Mr. Speaker, the sewerage rate at that time, as well, was set to be one-third of the water bill, and in respect of commercial exercises at two-thirds of the water bill.

Mr. Speaker, we are being asked this morning in this Bill to be able to validate those charges over the last 3 to 3½ years. The fact of the matter is, that in spite of that increase, the Barbados Water Authority has continued to show substantial losses and it is projected over the next couple of years to show losses, if there is no change, in the vicinity of $40 million per year.

Mr. Speaker, the level of expenditure has continued to outstrip the level of revenue by the Barbados Water Authority. Therefore, the need to address that particular issue, that shortfall in the operating revenues of the Barbados Water Authority, has to be addressed. Why is that important?

Mr. Speaker, certainly in terms of providing an adequate service to consumers on a day-to-day basis, addressing the different issues of water pressure and so on in different areas of Barbados, and certainly as the Government pursues its housing programmes, those issues in terms of the profitability, if the Barbados Water Authority is going to be able to continue to provide the sort of service that Barbadians expect it to provide, that issue of profitability has to be addressed. Therefore, we have found ourselves at this juncture in our history and in terms of the history of the Barbados Water Authority, where we have to look at adjusting the rates.

Mr. Speaker, one would have heard the presentations from the Prime Minister during the course of the Budget.

Mr. Speaker, this morning, I want to recommend to this Honourable House, that we approve this Validation Order, entitled the Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Act, 2009.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, it appears as though we have several acting Ministers dealing with this particular issue. I believe that there have been recent stories carried in the media by one acting Minister talking about a 60 per cent increase across the board in water rates.

House A40, Sequence 04, 10.40 a.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, now this morning we have an acting Minister who does not seem to be aware that a decision has been made to increase water rates, when all the rest of Barbados have woken up to a clear understanding that water rates are being increased by 60 per cent across the board.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. This House was informed about a month ago about this procedure.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Sir, having listened with rapt attention to the last speaker, we heard him speak about the Validation Bill, about collecting rates illegally. In fact, he spoke about everything except to the Barbadian public about the increase in water rates.

A regulation has been laid today. It is subject to negative resolution and so, it is not debated, which seems to suggest that the rates have, in fact, been so increased, but the Acting Honourable Minister has chosen, like the proverbial ostrich, to bury his head in the sand no doubt, because he is completely unable to justify to the residents of his Constituency, an increase in water rates by the Government at this time. Sir, that is the simple message of the Barbados Labour Party today. We do not support the increase of water rates at this time.

Sir, on the matter of the validation, there is no doubt that the Validation Bill is required. Research would demonstrate clearly that Validation Bills of all kinds have been brought to this House. In fact, we are already aware that a Validation Bill may well have to come to this House in relation to the road tax pronouncements made last year by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, it happens in the course of Government, that while Cabinet and Ministers frequently make decisions, there are administrative elements that go along with it, that sometimes do not fall into place. Certainly, Sir, research shows that in 1997 when the Barbados Labour Party was in Government, we had to bring a Validation Bill in relation to a long outstanding matter in relation to the Barbados Water Authority that had been effected by the Democratic Labour Party during their terms, so Validation Bills are not unusual.

Sir, it does seem a bit prey-like to be suggesting that water rates and so on were, being collected illegally and for fear that we would have to make refunds and so on. Mr. Speaker, the pot must not call the kettle black, because in relation to the road tax, it is going to be necessary for the Democratic Labour Party Government to bring a validation in relation to certain decisions made last year.

Sir, we are more interested in the situation that presents Barbadians today going forward. The Acting Minister has not indicated the basis on which the water rates are being increased. We have been treated to statements by the Prime Minister and others, but there are realities that the Government seems not to have acknowledged, as they set about the decision to increase water rates and inflict an even harsher and pernicious burden on the backs of Barbadians.

Sir, it would be helpful if the Government would explain why 60 per cent. We understand that the Barbados Water Authority asked for 100 per cent, and the Government has chosen 60 per cent. It would have been at the very least courteous, if not to Parliament, to the Barbadian public, if the Acting Minister would have said exactly what caused them to settle on 60 per cent.

Sir, before we deal with that, I have to say that it appears, on the face of the Regulations, that there is likely to be something that I believe is incumbent on me and on us to consider, because I believe that the Regulation is certainly unclear and may need clarifying. Unless another Validation has to be brought, I believe it should be considered by Parliament. Therefore, Sir, with your leave, I will like to refer Parliament to the First Schedule of the Regulations just laid that says:

"The rates payable for the supply of water for domestic purposes shall, except where the supply is by meter, be calculated on the net annual value of the property, supplied as assessed by the Commissioner of Valuations or by some competent person appointed by the Authority and is, irrespective of the number of taps, as follows:

"(a) where the net annual value does not

exceed..."

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with the procedures in this House, and I am sure you are, Sir. We are not debating these Regulations. If the House is to debate these Regulations, a separate resolution must be brought before the House. That is standard basic procedure. I am not surprised at that former Attorney-General, because he could not even draft a regulation in 2005, to increase the water rates, but now he has come in here today to debate it, totally against the very basic tenets of Parliament.

When a Resolution like this is brought, the Rules say it must not be debated except by resolution. You learn that in Constitutional Law and Administrative Law, the basic principles. Here we have a former Attorney-General, a Queen's Counsel, a longstanding Member of this House, seeking to debate a regulation. The Honourable Member must bring a separate resolution, and I am objecting to it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I accept the position with respect to the fact that a resolution needs to be brought, but there is on the Floor a discussion on the validation of rates. I think the Resolution is of some relevance. However, I will not permit Honourable Members to go into any detailed debate on the Resolution although it is of some relevance.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am not objecting to anybody discussing the increase in water rates. We are discussing water rates in 2005. The validation is not in respect of the Order made today. If the Honourable Member wants to debate, what he should be debating is the fact that in 2005, no Resolution was brought. You can discuss what the Barbados Labour Party did in 2005 by imposing rates illegally and collecting rates illegally on the people of this country between 2005 and 2008.

Sir, with respect, I am not at all challenging your Ruling. I must ask how in this debate, which has nothing to do with the increase in water rates, but has something to do with the validation of the 2005 rates, can we be debating a matter that happens to be given notice of in yesterday's Official Gazette. That is all I am saying. I am saying, Sir, that there has to be a way to do it. This is not a market. In that regard, the Honourable Member has to debate the issue of the validation of rates that were illegally collected by the previous Administration. Mr. Speaker, we can get to this too.

I am not against the Honourable Member speaking generally about an increase in water rates, he has a right to do that. I am objecting to him taking up this document and quoting from it and talking a lot of legal mumbo jumbo which clearly he does not understand. I think I have my right to object to it, and it is an adequate longstanding precedent in that regard.

House A40 Sequence 5

10.50 a.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that does not affect my ruling. I think it supports my ruling. I am saying that we are not debating those Regulations and therefore, we will not be accepting any long and itemised debate on it. However, Honourable Members are not precluded from making reference to a rise in water rates. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the point I am making, therefore, is that in relation to the water rates, as they have now been increased, the very Regulation which has been laid in this Honourable House, appears to me that there is a patent error on the face of it. Sir, if this Honourable Chamber wishes to defer a discussion on it, fine, but certainly it is opened for me to comment on.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member is aware when the Road Traffic Act was brought to this Honourable House, that the Regulations could not have been debated the same time the Act was brought.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member knew at that point in time and the ruling was made at that point in time. Therefore, the Honourable Member knows the procedure as it relates to this matter.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I think the Honourable Member is aware and is trying his best, as crafty as he could, to get around the ruling, but we will see where he goes with it. I am sure the Honourable Member is aware of it.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I am not seeking to debate this Regulation, but it is a document that has been laid before this Parliament. It is my view that there is an error patent on the face of the document.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member was Attorney-General when the Regulations for the Road Traffic Act were laid, when that too could not have been debated. Therefore, the Honourable Member knows it cannot be one ruling yesterday and now something quite different today. Sir, I

want the Honourable Member to know that we are quite prepared to debate this whenever the Honourable Member is ready.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, let me make it clear, I am of the view that you cannot debate nor deal with whatever errors that you are seeking to deal with, until we are actually debating that Resolution, if it comes to that.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, in the new regime in relation to the increase of water rates, which clearly we have agreed we can talk about, I am concerned about the role of the Commissioner of Land Valuations, for example.

It is my understanding that in relation to properties of a certain size, the Commissioner of Land Valuations or some other body appointed by the Barbados Water Authority, will have an obligation to go out and value properties.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, how is that relevant to the validation of water rates from 2005? How is that relevant to the Validation Bill?

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, in this debate, we are dealing generally with an increase of water rates, both past and clearly future. Therefore, the mechanism whereby water rates are to be measured becomes open game for discussion. It is as simple as that.

Asides.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: I am not anticipating anything. Mr. Speaker, a new mechanism is being created. We have been told that water rates are being increased and therefore the manner of that increase, the metrology that is to be applied to the increase, are all matters which are and ought to be, the subject of discussion in this Honourable Chamber. If you are going to say we are increasing water rates by 60 per cent and that there is a mechanism for determining beyond that amount how they are to be increased, then I believe that it is fair game for discussion, and that is what I am speaking about.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am of the view that it is a fair game for discussion if we are doing a normal debate of the Regulation, which we are not doing. I will accept comments about the rise in water rates generally and about the position with respect to the validation, but we will not be going into a debate of the Regulation. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I am not even talking about the Regulations now. I want Government to tell us what role the Commissioner of Validations has to play in relation to an increase in water rates. I want Government to tell us what role the Commissioner of Land Valuations has to play.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are aware there is provision for questioning the Government on those matters. Are you saying you are going to submit a question?

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to submit a written question. I do not believe I need to do that. It is a debate and in a debate, as Opposition we are permitted to ask questions of the Government.

Mr. Speaker, it does not surprise me though, that this Government wants to so constrain the debate in Chambers today, so that they do not have to grapple with the severity of the burden that is being imposed on the backs of Barbadians. Therefore, the Honourable Members on That Side would want us to talk about nothing more than the validation, and they would hide behind wild allegations of the Barbados Labour Party Administration collecting water rates illegally.

Mr. Speaker, they would hide behind all those things, but they would not say to this Honourable Chamber that a former Minister, under the Democratic Labour Party, had made changes to the rate structure when they were the Government and that the Barbados Labour Party had to validate that rate structure some years later. Sir, do you know who on that occasion was talking about collecting rates illegally when that debate came on in l997? Sir, it was the very Democratic Labour Party Member of Parliament who was the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, Barbadians are suffering. They have been suffering more now than at any time in our history, and the increase in water rates today will inflict a tremendous burden on the average Barbadian, but the Democratic Labour Party Administration would not want to talk about that.

Mr. Speaker, the position of the Barbados Labour Party is, and has always been, that it is important to safeguard the integrity of the water supply of Barbados. We recognised that Barbados is a water-scarce country. We were responsible for initiating many of the studies which looked at the rate of leakage and things of that sort. Therefore, we understand the issue only too well, but we feel that at a time when Barbadians cannot bear to have another burden placed on their backs, that this is the time when Government should hold strain and stand in the breach for the average Barbadian, when it comes to matters of the increase.

Sir, that is what, as far as we on This Side are concerned, being a Government is about. Sir, being a Government is about standing in the breach for the people

whom they are sworn to serve, but Sir, at every step since January 2008, the Democratic Labour Party Administration has overseen, initiated and has seen to an onslaught against all Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, there is a long list and now it is Crop Over season, I am reminded of a Calypsonian called "PJ", who had a song about rice gone up. Sir, do you remember that song? Sir, since this Government has come to power, gas has gone up, electricity has gone up, unemployment has gone up, unemployment of men in relation to women has gone up, land tax has gone up, food has gone up by 16 per cent, liquor licence has gone up, hair dressers fees have gone up, motor mechanic fees have gone up, registration fees for a wide range of Barbadians, including shopkeepers have gone up, and now today Barbados the Water Authority rates have gone up as well. Sir, what is most concerning is the fact that businesses in Barbados cannot operate without water.

Mr. Speaker, I know this might sound like one of the usual anecdotes of the Honourable Member for St. John, but we have our experiences too. Sir, as I was driving along the road this morning, a man flagged me down. That man said to me that he is a pig farmer and that he uses a lot of water. Sir, his water bill is $2 000 a month. He said that in order for him to sustain this increase, he would now have to increase the cost of the commodity he supplies to the market. Sir, this man now has to pay

$1 200 more a month. Sir, who is going to face that cost? Sir, ultimately it is the consumer who has to face that cost.

11.00 a.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, ultimately, it is the consumer. The restaurant owner, who now has to face an increase in water rates. They can either send home people, or he or she could pass the cost on to the consumer, and this in every instance of the Barbadian economy, whether you are dealing with food, manufacturing, a humble shopkeeper or anybody.

Mr. Speaker, if you consider the situation with hotels, it is already known that hotels are already among the greatest defaulters, so that is a given. The Government has just said that in an effort to allow you to maintain your employment, we are going to allow you to defer National Insurance payments for a year.

Asides.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, after that illusory gift, with one hand, they have now come and increased the water rates by 60 per cent, which even further jeopardises the very businesses they say they want to protect. Sir, now by driving the water rates up, that business, which received that illusory benefit in the name of deferral of National Insurance payments for a year, is now compelled to send home people. I wonder if the Democratic Labour Party Administration understands clearly, what this increase in water rates will do to Barbadians. Sir, the average household now has to add this increase to a burden that is already much more than they can bear.

Mr. Speaker, we are convinced that this policy was not well thought out and, no doubt, Honourable Members on the Other Side would defend it, but I have to ask the question again, why now?

The Government of Barbados ought to have allowed water rates to remain stationary, so as not to increase the burden on the backs of Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the water authority needs a mains replacement programme. In fact, the Barbados Labour Party Administration started it, but it is a programme that we recognise will take time and it is wrong to try to raise the cost of this programme in one fell-swoop, because the Barbados Water Authority needs to put certain efficiencies in place.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you this. When we were in Government, we felt that the way to deal with any further increases for the water supply in Barbados was to go through the Fair Trading Commission. This Government, in April of last year, laid in this Chamber...

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House and the Honourable Member knows that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Sir, in April of 2008, an Amendment Bill was laid in this Chamber, precisely for the purpose of giving the Fair Trading Commission full responsibility for the setting of rates, as far as the Barbados Water Authority was concerned, and Sir, we support that. This Bill has not yet been passed, it has not been debated, but what we are seeing now is a total about face, on the part of the Government.

Sir, having laid a Bill saying we are going to do this, it would have been a reasonable thing for the Government to have pursued that role but, Sir, they have chosen to ignore their own legislative agenda for the purpose of bringing an amendment...

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is breaching a rule because he is anticipating the House. Sir, there has been no policy change and we are still going to proceed with the Bill. However, we have set the rate at an appropriate level to give the Barbados Water Authority the resources to develop the capability to do a proper application before the Fair Trading Commission and, Sir, I said so on two occasions.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to anticipate the House but I have every hope that it would be passed in due course. These are actions precedent to the introduction of that Bill. Sir, the Honourable Member is wrong again.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Bill has been laid. Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Fair Trading Commission should have been the agency that would deal with this matter at this time. Instead, Cabinet is determined, in its eternal wisdom, that it is going to increase water rates by 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, it is a clear and undisputed fact that 40 per cent of the cost of producing water in Barbados and delivering it to households, is the cost of electricity and we are already seeing that Barbadians are faced with higher costs for electricity supply and, Sir, what we are seeing now is an increase of water rates...

Asides.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Sir, I should tell you that our information tells us, I believe it is still true, that the Barbados Water Authority is the Barbados Light & Power Company's largest customer, so what we have is a multiplier effect. Sir, not only are the electricity rates increased, but you now have water rates increased, 40 per cent of which itself is attributable to electricity.

Mr. Speaker, they have not told us about the capital programme. This Chamber has not heard it from the Acting Minister, but what we have heard outside of Parliament is that it is to finance a mains replacement programme. Sir, I am not an accountant, but it is a fundamental tenet that if you are going to finance capital works, those costs must spread out across the life of the capital project itself.

Mr. Speaker, we started a main replacement programme about 10 or 15 years ago and the programme still continues. Therefore, in order to finance that programme, you should finance it incrementally or finance it as the capital is being expended, but to increase water rates by 60 per cent now suggests that they are trying to finance it in one fell-swoop.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to be done in the water situation in Barbados. While I had not planned to speak of my Constituency, the fact is that in St. Joseph, people are still getting water bills now increased by 60 per cent and hardly a day goes that there is not a water outage.

Sir, in St. Thomas, the same thing is happening. The fact is that people are now being asked to suck-up to the shortage of water, but at the same time, they must now allocate a larger percentage of their budget for that purpose.

H/A40/11.10 a.m. Sequence 7

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Sir, this, as far as we are aware, did not go to the Social Partners, and I invite the Honourable Members on That Side to say otherwise. Sir, when we increased water rates in 2005, there was public consultation. In fact, there is a statement to that effect in the Annual Report of the Barbados Water Authority covering that period.

The Minister went out and consulted with stakeholders before settling on a rate, but a rate is now being told to the Barbadian people, the pronouncement has been made, but no consultation with the Social Partnership.

The Social Partnership that is concerned to maintain high levels of employment, maintain low costs for its various members, the manufacturers and so on, the Social Partnership that is concerned in ensuring stability in the Barbadian economy and the Barbadian workplace, not consulted on this matter.

Sir, again, we have to tell our constituents how it is that at a time when they are reeling, and I cannot stress this enough, at a time when they are reeling, they are being asked to shoulder a burden, not of 10 per cent, not a 15 per cent, but to shoulder a burden of 60 per cent across the board.

Sir, it is clear to us that in the very near future, our all-inclusive, who are already suffering, because they are unable to fill their rooms, but who now have to increase the cost of laundry, who now have to increase the cost of practically everything that is done in the establishment, will now have to face an even sadder future.

Sir, we are told that this particular rate was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, I think it is called, chaired by an Honourable Member. Sir, rates have gone up, but yet the very Minister of Social Care has presided over a situation where the funding and the budgeting for welfare, welfare that is supposed to take care of the poor people, in relation to these rates, has been cut.

I do not understand how you ask a Minister of Social Care, chairing a Social Policy Committee, to preside over the onslaught of this particular act on Barbadians. It does not make any sense to me, maybe, the Minister of Economic Development, who may see things in a purely economic light.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Honourable House. The Honourable Member has been in this Honourable House long enough to know the use of something called a Supplementary. The Honourable Member knows that a figure included in the Budget at March, is not fixed. It can be changed.

I cannot teach That Side about Supplementaries. Even though Supplementaries were things of the past, they were able to bring many in here, and are now behaving as though they are the Lords of Supplementaries, but we cannot bring one to correct any problem which we have in any department.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Sir, Supplementary or no Supplementary, the budget of Welfare has been cut. It has been slashed, and the Minister of Social Policy, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, has presided over The Honourable Member who is supposed to soothe and ease the burdens, has presided over this increase. That is an irony of the most amazing kind, no heart, Sir.

Sir, the Honourable Members want to keep this debate closed. They want to talk about validated. It has to be validated. The Honourable Member for St. John in the past, talked about validation of Bills, and said that it is the path and the course of any Parliament. I can show him the reference in Hansard. Let us put that one side.

Sir, the issue facing Barbadians is not the rate increases from 2005 to now. It is what is going to happen to them when their next water bill comes out. Barbadians are now unemployed in larger numbers, households with two employed people now have one and in some cases none.

Sir, we have been told that the Welfare Department will deal with the people at the very bottom of the ladder, but what about those people who do not qualify for welfare? The so-called working poor, as the Honourable Member for St. John and others like to refer to them. What about those individuals?

Sir, not now, Barbadians cannot handle any more burdens on their backs. That is the simple message we want to make to the Government. The Government should be standing in breach for the people it has pledged to serve, and should not be seen as an agent whose major role, is to inflict greater pain on the average Barbadian. Sir, when you look at how Barbadian pay packets are being divided up at the end of the month, there are now fewer pay packets in their household, All of these things have gone up, land tax, everything, and now you have added to it in this way.

Sir, it is important that the Democratic Labour Party Administration owns up to the hardship Barbadians are facing. It is important as a Government that they recommit themselves to honouring the pledge that they made, but what we see in their action is a complete repudiation of the pledge to ease the burdens of Barbadians, Barbadians who were told, that the cost of living in Barbados is too high, and all of the suffering that was inflicted by the Barbados Labour Party when we were in Government, but in fact, they are now presiding over the very opposite.

Sir, we support the Validation Bill, but we cannot support increasing the burden of Barbadians. The Barbados Labour Party is of the view that the Government must hold strain. This is not the time to put another stripe on the tiger. This is not the time to inflict a greater burden on the Barbadian public.

I thank you.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I want to begin by correcting a myth that has been created in this Honourable House. It is a statement that electricity increased by 40 per cent and that water rates should not be increased. Sir, that statement alone justifies that water rates should be increased. If you are saying that the major cost of producing water is electricity, and that the electricity has increased, then logically water rates should increase. I am not going to base my argument on that.

Sir, the same Minister who would tell you that it is a crime to pay $2.48 for a cubic metre of water, will now argue that Bajans should not drink Zephryhills Water which cost them $1 993.33 for a cubic metre, but we are hearing in this Parliament that it is wrong to drink Bajan water at $2.48 a cubic metre, but it is good to drink Zephyrhills Water at $1 993.33 a cubic metre. If you decide not to drink Zephyrhills Water and you drink Avian Water, the cost per cubic metre is $4 659.95. I thought that any good citizen of this country would be telling Barbadians to stop drinking imported water at such high cost, and help their own Barbados Water Authority, but we are not hearing that in this Honourable House.

Sir, that is why we do not have a problem in justifying the rates that were set by the Barbados Water Authority in 2005, today, but I think it is wrong for anybody to come to this Honourable House, to tell

Barbadians that it is cheaper to drink Zephyrhills Water and Avian Water, but there is a crime in drinking our local water.

H A40 11.20 a.m. Sequence 8

Tuesday June 30, 2009

House A40, Sequence 09, 11.20 a.m.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I am the only person who has spoken on This Side and I certainly did not posit anything that the Honourable Member is saying. If he wishes to chastise the Honourable Member for St. James Central, he is free to do so, because I honestly think that is what the Honourable Member for St. James Central was saying. I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, if the Honourable Member for St. James said it, Sir.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am not speaking about the Honourable Member for St. James Central. I am speaking about the Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, to the extent that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is attributing that comment or any comments slanted in that direction to me, Sir, he is misleading the Chamber and that remark must be withdrawn.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, withdrawn? When you are comparing apples, you compare apples with apples. If you are going to make a comparison about the cost of water, it will be good, and the Honourable Member should, without my saying this, have brought it to the debate, because he should have given the comparison between the two different types of water that are being consumed in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I do not understand how we cannot justify anything we have something local. We heard it in the Budget because the Opposition told Barbadians not to eat dolphin or flying fish but to eat mackerel. Today we are hearing that do not pay the Barbados Water Authority $2.48 per cubic metre but go and buy Zephyrhills water, because if you do not drink the local water, you have to drink bottled water.

Sir, I am telling you, that if you look at the statistics of bottled water being consumed in this country, I cannot understand what is the argument about the cost of water.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to argue about the cost of water, we will have to argue about the cost of bottled water that is being consumed in this country. Sir, when one wants me to believe that I should stop drinking local water at $2.84 per cubic metre, and go and drink imported water at $1 993.33 if it is Zephyrhills, or $4 659.95 per cubic metre if it is Evian, then it tells me that clearly in this Parliament we have a bias against our own local product.

Mr. Speaker, let us hear the facts. The Barbados Labour Party was able to come to this House and they were able to justify that there is a major main problem in this country, that we have to replace mains all across the country.

We were told by the Barbados Labour Party that electricity is high and when we asked them if that is correct, why not get generators, they said to us that if we go the route of generators, it will impact on the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited. Now today, we are hearing the red herring being introduced in this debate, giving the impression that we should switch to generators and move away from the Barbados Light and Power Company, when in their reign, they never wanted us to even suggest it, Sir.

I am saying, if you are going to debate on these issues, you have to be consistent in your argument. Sir, we need to stop giving Barbadians the impression that the highest utility in this country is water. Sir, that is wrong. Water is not the highest utility to be paid in this country. When you look at their bill, unless the Members of the Opposition have different bills to myself, you will see that even though you are paying $200 per month for a water bill, you can pay more than $5 000 or $7 000 for an electricity bill. The water bill is even smaller sometimes than the telephone bill, if you are speaking about a commercial bill.

Sir, do not let anybody get in here and grand-stand and give the impression that the water that is giving us a shower, growing food for us and doing all of these things, and we do not bathe using bottled water, we get to shower using local water. Sir, we are just drinking a glass of Zephyrhills water and a cubic metre of that is nearly $2 000, and somebody wants you to believe that it is a crime to charge somebody, who is using water at nearly $2 000 per cubic metre only $2.48.

Let us face the facts. It is time that Bajans realise that the Barbados Water Authority belongs to them and Zephyrhills water belongs to somebody else. It is time that we understand that we have to support our own. Sir, that

Party has a problem of supporting local industry, but will always put a case to justify why people should stop drinking Barbados Water Authority water and go and drink expensive water because of their taste. I am telling Bajans, stick with what belongs to you, because if you did not have the Barbados Water Authority in this crisis, you would be bankrupt by now.

Sir, we have to understand that if we are to fix the mains, and if we are to get the money to ensure that the Barbados Water Authority is run correctly, we have to charge these rates at this time. Once we do it now, rather than later, and we correct the problems left to us by the Barbados Labour Party sooner, rather than later, we will be able to reduce the rates back to what they would like us to do.

Sir, let me say this to you. It was the Barbados Labour Party that brought the Fair Trading Commission and refused to put the Barbados Water Authority before the Fair Trading Commission. Why? They knew that had the Barbados Water Authority gone before the Fair Trading Commission, the rates would have been much higher. Ask them why they have not put it there, but they would now want us to believe that the best thing we can do to the consumers is to put it before the Fair Trading Commission. They know that the premise before the Fair Trading Commission, that you must give a fair return, the same thing that was done by the Telephone Company, the same thing that was done for the Electric Company.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, we established the Fair Trading Commission before correcting the problems at the Barbados Water Authority and this is what we are seeking to do. We are seeking to correct the problems at the Barbados Water Authority, before we put it before the Fair Trading Commission, because if we put it now, Sir, Barbadians would not be able to pay the rates that the Fair Trading Commission would give for water rates.

Sir, instead of doing that, what we have done, is come here to seek an increase to correct the problem, so that when it goes to the Fair Trading Commission, we will be able to ease the squeeze on the poor people in this country. Unlike the Barbados Labour Party who would like us to go and put it before the Fair Trading Commission, and for us to have high rates in this country. I am saying, Mr. Speaker, this is the Party that has the heart.

Mr. Speaker, this water thing has a history. In the 1970s the Barbados Labour Party argued the same way they are arguing today. They gave the impression that to increase water rates was unjustifiable. The Government changed in 1976 and by 1979, they had the same rates they were criticising, on the backs of the poor people. I do not want to hear anything about this poor people argument from the Barbados Labour Party. It is just grand-standing by them. They said that they would close down the sewerage plant, because it was the sewerage plant Sir, that would cause the high increases in rates. This is what was said in the 1970s. Sir, by the time the Government changed, you heard how you wanted the sewerage plant and had to get the high water rates. Sir, the same thing.

If by accident the Government was to change tomorrow, the people that would be in here, would be the fastest to put on their high rates, would be the Barbados Labour Party. They have that history. They say one thing and they do something quite different, but the public of Barbados knows them, because there is a history to them, when it comes to water rates. They walk around all over the country and give the impression they would not do this or they would not do that and, as soon as you give them the Government, they even increase it higher. They did it in the 1970s. There is a record there to prove that. Do not mind them

Mr. Speaker, they come in here all the time, trying to give poor people the impression that they are speaking about them. I heard the Honourable Member give an example about high water rates and when I thought the Honourable Member was going to give an example for poor people, it was for the rich people. Sir, you can go back and look at the records. What he said this morning, it was not for the poor. The Honourable Member spoke in his class.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that we have to understand that we have to change some things in this country and we will change them. The poor people know that in every crisis, in order for a life to get better for them, they too, must feel pain. Poor people have not been fooled and will never be fooled by politicians that a whole world can go through a crisis and they will not be touched.

House A40, Sequence 09, 11.30 a.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: One thing they would expect is that when the world comes out of the crisis, that the Government would look after their needs. We have been looking after their needs even before we came out of the crisis. That is why when countries of the world cut the civil servants wages and salaries, we gave salaries and wages increases.

Sir, persons must not behave as if we cut the salaries and wages of people, refuse to give increases and then come and increase water rates. That is what we were asked to do by the Other Side, but we said no, that the disposable income must be increased for the masses of people in this country, and that is exactly what we did.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member spoke about the welfare budget being cut. Sir, when you have an enlightened Government that decided that instead of paying welfare money to people, you will create gainful employment to those persons, do you not expect the budget to be reduced? Sir, do not give the impression that we just cut the budget and there was no logic to the cutting of the budget. It was a sensible reason that occurred and sensible action was implemented to ensure, that instead of people drawing money from the Welfare Department, that they draw the money from other Government Departments.

Sir, if I could reflect, or if I could see strangers, I might be able to see some of the beneficiaries of that enlightened policy, but in this Parliament you cannot see strangers or you cannot speak about strangers. Sir, you know that I would help you uphold the Rules of the House, and will not breach the Rules of the House. What I want to say is that I could see, if I were allowed, that enlightened policy at work.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that Barbados belongs to us and instead of grandstanding in these economic times, we should hold hands and do what is right to ensure that we build a base within Government. There are some who would like to see the Government become bankrupt, because they walk around telling people that they want the Government the next five years as if Barbadians are not thinking.

Sir, that is why this issue seems like a hot political issue for them to run with. Sir, may I remind them that I was around long enough to know the history and I could relate to the history of their mouthing and I know that they mean nothing good by it, that it is just empty words hoping to capture the imagination of the public of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I will use my political history to ensure that the public remembers them well because sometimes we keep forgetting that the public does not know them. Sir, that I why I keep telling my comrades to stop worrying about them and move forward the programmes, because the public have judged them, know them and do not want to hear about them.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to validate the increases brought by them in 2005 and I hope that if we have a validation too, that they would do likewise, because we cannot be validating for them and giving them support, and then they want to go in the public and behave as if they have never done anything similar.

Sir, I want to warn them that when the time comes and we have to validate too, that they do not open their mouths to give the impression as ususal that it is the first time around, because everything that is occurring in this country, you are getting the impression that it is for the first time even though there is a history. Apparently, when the Democratic Labour Party gets Government all the past history is written off.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something. How could a country that had economic growth for 14 years have all of these poor people now in less than a year? There were 14 years of growth and people still cannot pay a water bill. Mr. Speaker, tell me where the money went? The poor people did not get any of that money. I cannot believe that the Opposition, after serving 14 years will still come in here and talk about poor people.

Have a good day, Sir, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. Michael East.

His Honour K. St.C BEST: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Bill before this Honourable House. Sir, the work of Government must continue. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Joseph indicating that it is because of the bureaucracy and that Ministers would do what they have to do, but yet there are civil servants...

Mr. Speaker, if the Barbados Labour Party was vigilant and really serious about looking after the welfare of Barbadians in respect of the Barbados Water Authority, this matter would have been dealt with long before and would not have to be debated today. Sir, consumers were about to challenge the Barbados Water Authority through the court system against the water rates being collected.

Sir, people believe that Barbadians are not aware of their rights and they do not follow what is happening in this country. Sir, gone are the days when Barbadians accepted things on face value. They are going deeper and understanding their rights and they are going after them. Sir, I would hope that as time evolves we would do thorough searches, to ensure that anything that is to be validated or re-validated is done speedily.

Sir, it is necessary to validate this, so that the true meaning or the true feeling of what is happening, in relation to the collection of the water rates is felt.

Mr. Speaker, Barbadians are well aware that the world is going through an economic crisis which did not start on January 15, 2008 in Barbados. Whenever the Barbados Labour Party gets up in the House of Assembly, or whenever they get the opportunity to air their voices, they try to make the people of Barbados believe that all the hardship came out of the back pockets of the Democratic Labour Party on January 15, but that is not so. Sir, all of the writings were on the wall, but because of their deception of the people of Barbados decided enough is enough. That is why we are the Government today.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party promised much in relation to the water system in this country. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Joseph indicating that he is speaking reluctantly in respect of his constituents, because when they get up on mornings, they do not have any water.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto, 2003-2008, indicated at page 43, the feasibility of two additional desalination plants to serve the northern and southern sections of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, if the geography of Barbados is correct, St. Joseph falls in the northern section of Barbados. If the Barbados Labour Party had done what they were supposed to do, his constituents will not be suffering with water problems.

Sir, it does not stop there. They walk the length and breadth of Barbados indicating that they were going to improve the water network of Barbados and all we are hearing week after week, is that they had these particular programmes in place, but yet we have to go and take them off the shelves, dust the dust off and activate them, in order that the people of Barbados will benefit from a wonderful life.

Mr. Speaker, we are fully aware that the Barbados Water Authority has problems. We are fully aware that there are a number of leaks throughout Barbados in respect of water. I have said this before and I will say it again, that we need to have rapid response systems and we need to change the way how things are being done at the Barbados Water Authority, so that the ineffective use of water and wastage would be a thing of the past.

Sir, technology has increased so we should have equipment that could tell us exactly where a particular leak is, which means that we will be able to deal with the problems of the Barbados Water Authority.

House A40 Sequence 10

11.40 a.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that much has been promised to the people of St. Michael East in respect of a sewerage system. Sir, part of the St. Michael East falls on the Zone 1 water table, and much has been promised about a mini sewerage system and all sorts of sewerage systems.

Sir, I can say with certainty that within the next few years, before the term of this Administration, the residents of St. Michael East will have a mini sewerage system, and the fact that we are hearing about this high nitrate concentration level in our water system, would be a thing of the past.

Mr. Speaker, I will be calling on the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to look carefully at the type of fertilisers coming into this country that are used on our crops. Sir, a study has shown that those fertilisers contribute to the level of nitrate in our water system.

Sir, a study has also shown that illegal dumping in our gullies has also contributed to that high level of nitrate, particularly in our water table in the Belle. Sir, the Belle Gully is like a haven for garbage. Sir, I am calling on all Barbadians to stop and think how the illegal and indiscriminate disposal of garbage can affect our water system. Sir, we need to look at what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, people cannot talk about belonging to either the Democratic Labour Party or the Barbados Labour Party. People should not say now that the Democratic Labour Party is in power, they can dump their garbage all over Barbados and let the Democratic Labour Party solve that problem. Sir, at the end of the day, the illegal and indiscriminate dumping of garbage affects every Barbadian.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this issue in relation to the validation of water and sewerage rates for the Barbados Water Authority is not a simple matter. Sir, it is a complex one and it affects every strata of Barbadian society. Therefore, we must ensure that Barbados, being a water-scarce country, must be protected.

We must ensure that we do the things necessary to save our limited water supply. If we are going to save our limited water supply, we must also make sure that water is pure, which could only become pure when we put the necessary systems in place to make sure that water does not become contaminated. Mr. Speaker, how do we do that? We can do so by having mini sewerage systems or reverse osmosis plants. These systems can make our water supply safer for Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, having illegally collected these large sums of money between 2005 and 2009, it is amazing that the Barbados Labour Party did not even put their promises to work. They did not put a number of desalination plants in the north and south of Barbados. They did not solve the water problems of the people in the Belle, Belle View or in Ashton Hall.

Sir, the people in these areas are suffering. There are also problems with water in Shop Hill, Rock Hall, St. Philip and Sandford. These are the areas that the Barbados Labour Party should have addressed in respect of water problems in Barbados, but today people are hearing that we are putting this great burden on the backs of Barbadians, and that this validation exercise needs to be postponed.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain that we have gone through economic problems before and we came out, and that this would not be the first nor last time we are going to go through an economic crisis. Sir, I am sure that history would have shown that the Democratic Labour Party has guided this country through tough economic times and that it has ensured, at the end of the day, that Barbadians have a good life.

Mr. Speaker, we went through an oil crisis and the people of Barbados have survived. Sir, that is why we are now embarking on capital projects, so that when the economy picks up, we would have systems in place where there would be no reason for further rate increases. I am sure by then, because of the technology that would be available, that leakages would become a thing of the past, as far as the Barbados Water Authority is concerned. In that regard, we might be in a position to reduce rates. Sir, there is nothing which says that the increase in rates was cast in stones and that it cannot be reduced.

Mr. Speaker, I have constituents who, since a number of years ago, have paid money to the Barbados Water Authority for service who have not yet received that service. There is also the situation where people acting on behalf of those persons, have written the Barbados Water Authority. Sir, the Barbados Water Authority has not even responded acknowledging receipt of any of these correspondence.

Sir, the Barbados Water Authority has taken people's money on the promise that those persons would have been provided with a service, yet those persons have not received that service from the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Speaker, furthermore, the Barbados Water Authority is saying to persons that they are situated in water-zone areas. Sir, that should not happen. The Barbados Water Authority should know when somebody applies for service that they are residing in a particular area.

Sir, the Barbados Water Authority is charged with looking after the water table of Barbados and, therefore, knows where Zone 1, Zone 2 or Zone 3 lands are situated. They have a particular policy with respect to who are entitled to have water at their residence. Therefore, with all of those systems in place, the Barbados Water Authority should advise persons applying for service of any problems they are faced with and that they cannot supply them with that service. Sir, instead of doing so, they took people's money, which eventually goes into the Consolidated Fund. Sir, people then have problems getting those funds out of the Consolidated Fund, as that is a long process. Mr. Speaker, I have numerous constituents who have complained to that effect.

As I said at the very outset, Government evolves and revolves, and I would hope that this issue of validating Bills does not take three or four years, but that they would be done in the shortest possible time. I would hope that they should take at least six months, which would give the new Minister or the person in charge, the chance to learn his Ministry and to understand what is happening. I believe that is why we are so quick and on the ball to have this Bill validated, to ensure that what was happening in the past would become Law.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that workers of the Barbados Water Authority, with the limited resources they have, would ensure that we have a proper water system. Sir, I am calling on them to play their part in the development of a proper water system in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I support this Bill.

11.50 a.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to join in the discussion today on the validation of the Barbados Water Authority rates, which would apply to the period 2005 and today, and join with Honourable Members on This Side, who have spoken to the fact that this is a simple matter, in terms of the legislative responsibility, but recognising, at the same time, the importance of the message the Democratic Labour Party, as a political organisation, sends to the Barbadian people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member, on the Other Side, who has spoken, has been at pains to try to bring into this debate a long discussion about poverty in Barbados, the burden of water rates and all the doom and gloom that they could muster to bring to this debate, as is usual from the Other Side.

The facts are that we have sent, over the period of at least the last two months or so, the message to the Barbadian people that we intend to do something about the way in which the Barbados Water Authority does its business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is strange, that as I sat listening to Honourable Members on the Other Side, I was reflecting going through a similar debate of August 1997 in Hansard at page 56, the contribution of the former

Honourable Member for the Constituency of Christ Church South, the Constituency which I now have the honour to represent.

Sir, the point I want to make is that the Barbados Labour Party in 1997, was saying to the people of Barbados, that everything was wrong at the Barbados Water Authority and that Sir Harold St. John was at pains to point out the difficulties that the constituents encountered in terms of burst mains, in terms of brown water and in terms of all the other issues that related to bad service. Sir, he spoke at length to the management of the Authority and the need to do something to improve the way we respond to emergencies and things of that like in the organisation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, truth be told, what we are hearing today from the substantive Honourable Minister of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, what we are hearing from the Honourable Prime Minister, not only in his Budget presentation, but in his address to the workers at the Barbados Water Authority and the comments of the workers at the Barbados Water Authority, and what we heard today in the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. James Central, does not speak to significant improvement.

Sir, I must ask the question, which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy asked: Where has the Barbados Labour Party hand been since 1997, when the then Honourable Member for Christ Church South raised the issues of all the woes and the shortcomings of the Barbados Water Authority? Sir, where has the hand been of the Barbados Water Authority since then? As the Honourable Member for St. Lucy asked: Where is the Government of plenty and where is the Government of massive VAT collection, of economies of unforseen growth and expansion? What have they done, in terms of the improvement in the water service to the Barbadian public?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER, we get a submission from the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, which makes some fleeting reference to a mains replacement programme. Sir, the impact of their mains replacement programme is the proverbial splash in the ocean. Sir, this time, I mean the splash of a small pebble in the ocean, probably the size of the Pacific. Sir, in other words, they made no impact.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1997, the then Honourable Member for Christ Church South at the time was referring to water losses in the region of 40 per cent and 50 per cent and, as he said, in some areas 60 per cent. Sir, today, unfortunately, we are seeing the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sad reflection on the lack of commitment of the Barbados Labour Party during its period of Government, to try to improve anything at the Barbados Water Authority for the benefit of Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all speak about Barbados being a water scarce nation. We speak about the threat to our growth. We speak about the threat that water scarcity brings to the ability of the nation to continue to provide housing needs and we speak of the impact, of the way we treat our waste and its impact on our water resources, but Sir, that is another debate.

Sir, what have they done in the 14 years of Government? In the 14 years of plenty, what can they point to at the Barbados Water Authority, that has improved the delivery of service in that area? They have been scared, they have been “chicken” and all the terms that you refer to, that refers to someone who is not prepared to do anything, and Sir, this Government must be applauded.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to recommend to the people of Barbados that you stand hand in hand, with the people of the Democratic Labour Party on this policy. We have committed our resources, we have committed our negotiating skills and our management skills to the steadfast notion that we will improve the delivery of water services, because we are about improving the lives of Barbadians. We are about improving housing, and we are about giving greater opportunity to business places. Sir, there will be some effect in terms of the increases, but there are ways of handling these things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have tried to tell Honourable Members on the Other Side that although we set policies, which are aimed at improving the revenue of the Barbados Water Authority on this occasion, it does not mean that we cannot, at a later date in the future, look at policies, which would also mitigate difficult circumstances, which may befall one’s socio-economic group or the other.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a broad policy and it is a policy of Government. Sir, it is normal and good governance and I have no fear whatsoever, that this approach will see us come to the stage where the Barbados Water Authority is in a position to present its account to lending institutions, and in a position to borrow money, because that is basically what we are trying to achieve. Sir, we are trying to achieve solvency in an organisation that is technically insolvent, as I read it, so we have to take these basic steps.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hear this talk about the FTC this and the FTC that but, again, I have to ask the Barbados Labour Party this. They talked about the FTC as far back as 2000, but Sir, what did they do about it?

H/A40/12:00 noon Sequence 12

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: You cannot go to the FTC in this condition. You have to put on clothes. You cannot go to the FTC naked. You must have some kind of documentation, some kind of financial basis on which you can present the Barbados Water Authority to the FTC for consideration, and they know that as well as anybody else.

Sir, as has been said in here - I nearly said as you said, but we cannot say that. They know as well as anybody else that they have not lifted a finger. They have been scared and chicken, as I say, to lift a finger in support of improving the finances of the Barbados Water Authority.

They come in here with some petty argument about where we are now validating, and we should have validated a year ago, and this kind of thing, something that they did not even consider in 2005. They just put the rates out there and moved on. They put the rates out there, collected them freely and moved on. Now, today they want to engage in a long debate about the pros and cons of validation and rate increases, because they are now washed as they say, in the blood.

Sir, the Opposition knows the direction in which they are going. They are determined to ensure that this Democratic Labour Party does not stick to its programmes, but they are so wrong. They are so wrong, because we are equally determined to deliver on our promise to the people of Barbados, to bring about a robust economy in Barbados. Even in light of the reality of the present economic challenges, we are still daily discussing projects and looking at ways that Barbadians can get involved in working with us as a Government, towards making that goal an attainable target, a fact for Barbadians to experience.

Sir, we are about improving the lives of, as I said, all Barbadians. We should be moved by the calls on the radio programmes by residents, usually in the high areas, but sometimes surprisingly in low lying areas all across Barbados, about the kind of poor service of the Barbados Water Authority. They should be applauding the Democratic Labour Party Administration and its Minister of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage for bringing this Order today, and making sure that the Barbados Water Authority is in a better position to manage its business.

Sir, water rates have traditionally been low. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy was at pains to point out the impact of the water rates. We recognise it is an additional burden. Of course, any increase is an additional burden, but the larger good is what we want the Barbadian to focus on with us today. We must look at the larger good. We must correct a terrible wrong in Barbados. We have to have the courage to stand with the Barbadian public, as I said, and make sure that they understand where we are going.

The Honourable Prime Minister has already been on record sharing with the Barbados Water Authority where he sees this project going, where he sees their responsibility. This is where we have to be careful, but at the same time, resolute and strong. This Regulation goes hand in hand with the commitment to make sure that there is improvement.

The first step towards improvement is the recognition of our failures, or recognition of where we are going wrong. If we can get that language established, and if we can have the dialogue between the workers and management of the Authority and the Government of Barbados, as we set about this journey, I believe we will go a long way in achieving our objective.

Sir, we have to achieve. We will not have a second chance to achieve this objective. This is the only chance we have to achieve the objective of providing adequate water to Barbadians, to getting rid of the callousness that is attributable to the work of the organisation, to buying into the confidence of the Barbadian public in respect to the service, which the Barbados Water Authority renders, and the people of Barbados can rest assured that we will not renege from that.

It is an experience which we are sharing with each other on This Side, especially in our Works Ministries. You have to understand where the Barbados Labour Party left these Ministries. If we start to understand how the Barbados Labour Party treated public servants, we will start to understand where the battle of the Democratic Labour Party begins.

Sir, I have said in here before that they had established a method of Government, which was their Cabinet, nor nobody else at all. They have set a thing called a PPC. Do not ask me, Sir. Ask the public servants how they felt about it, how it used to operate, how it operated with the ABC Highway, and how it operated with all the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. projects. It essentially eliminated the contributions of the public servants to the furtherance of the Government of the Barbados Labour Party. The Honourable Members for St. Peter, St. Michael North East, St. Joseph and St. Thomas, as she sits there on her own this morning. That is how they operated.

Sir, we now have to take an emasculated Public Service and work with them in a programme which sees management as paramount. Like I say, in our case at the Ministry of Transport and Works, we cannot talk about road works in a vacuum. We cannot talk about water in a vacuum. As a matter of fact, the work of the Barbados

Water Authority impacts significantly on the work of the Ministry of Transport and Works, because nearly every water pipe in Barbados is in the road. So you cannot do a proper job at the Barbados Water Authority unless you have a degree of dialogue, communication and cooperation with the Ministry of Transport and Works. There are things like these that we have to achieve.

Sir, we heard over the 14 years, their leadership's constant reference to this computerisation and e-commerce. Sir, there were mere words, as they say...

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, there were mere words. It was not about what was going on on the ground. For instance, you come into a Transport Ministry, and no doubt the Barbados Water Authority is no different, and there is no effective computerisation. You still get men and ladies at a Depot signing a purchase order request in a book, the book then has to get into a car, drive to the Ministry of Transport and Works, and then hopefully get up the stairs in this day and year of Microsoft and Blackberry.

We have this solution in the palm of our hands, but we do not want to grasp it. When they had the opportunity to do these things, they did not do it. They were about themselves. They were not about delivering effective service and any kind of adequacy or satisfaction to the public of Barbados. They were about grandstanding around Barbados. So it is our turn now, and we have vowed to the people of Barbados that we are going to correct these ills. We are going to correct the ills that we have encountered, and we start here today with the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, as I pointed out at the beginning of my presentation, this has been a historic debate. Let me put it differently. This debate has occurred in history before. That is what I really mean - Sir, Harold St. John, in 1997, then the Barbados Labour Party in 2005, and now today. It has occurred before that.

Asides.

H A40 12.10 p.m. Sequence 13

Tuesday June 30, 2009

House A40, Sequence 14, 12.10 p.m.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I have not challenged my memory that far, Sir. The point is, we have come to a stage in Barbados where leadership has to take hold of the issue and we have to say to Barbadians that no longer are we going to accept second best, on your behalf, but you will ride with us through this situation. We will make sure that on the back of this arrangement for water rates, there is delivered to the Barbadian public, an improved level of service, adequate water supply, and effective arrangements for growth in all economic strata in Barbados.

I am grateful to your Honour.

Asides.

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

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise in support of this measure to validate the water rates that were increased in Barbados in 2005. I am a bit surprised and taken aback by the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. Joseph who, at this time, is the only person for the Barbados Labour Party that has spoken because, I believe that the validation of the water rates by this Administration is a clear indication of an attempt to tidy up some of the neglect of the past under the last Administration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that validation of increases of water rates, whether or not they have been done in the past, ought not to have been a feature of the present. This, smacks of perhaps one of the first measures that this Government took in relation to seeking to tidy up the books of the Government, where the last Administration sought, by a number of measures, of-balance sheet measures to portray a picture in Barbados that we were incurring economic growth in the vicinity of 4 per cent and 4½ per cent, when in fact, what we had was artificial growth.

I want to say in this debate that I can come to no other conclusion, in relation to the decisions by the last Government to increase water rates since 2005, and not bringing measures to the House to give legal effect to those increases. Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that it was obviously an attempt by the last Government to hide water rates from the public. The public should not have known about water rate increases. What we are doing is laying it bare to the public that water rates were increased since 2005, but they were done without proper legal action by the former Administration.

Sir, in this debate, what I think the public of Barbados would like to hear from the Opposition and indeed from other Honourable Members on This Side - I am not groping and casting blame - are well thought-out solutions and ideas, in relation to where we are going to take this issue of water provision in Barbados. It is scandalous that after 14 years in office, all you could hear from the former Government through its spokesperson, who has just spoken, are wild allegations and seeking to

create an environment, in which he is accusing the Government of doing something irresponsible. Sir, the record is there for all to see.

Sir, they have not been candid with the people of Barbados so far in this debate. I hope that as we move further in this debate, that they come clean and tell the public of Barbados, what were the factors in 2005, that informed the decision of the then Government to increase water rates by about 38 per cent, an interim increase. This interim increase of approximately 38 per cent across the board, was done in 2005. The reality was that it was interim because it was conceived that there will have to be further increases in water rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if they were in office, Barbadians would have probably had even a higher increase in water rates. Sir, you cannot preside over the Barbados Water Authority for 14 years, preside over the dereliction of its plant, preside over a management structure that was inappropriate to the operations of the Barbados Water Authority, preside over a very high debt situation at the Barbados Water Authority that rendered the Barbados Water Authority unable in its present shape, to approach any financial agency for funding of its operations.

Sir, you cannot preside over that with no kind of innovative ideas, in relation to how the Barbados Water Authority should be restructured and moved forward and then come in here - when we have no choice, but to face the reality in relation to how water should be managed and how the Barbados Water Authority should go forward - with no other ideas, but to say that you have gone and increased water rates at a time that you should not. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that is shameful behaviour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not the type of behaviour that one should expect from persons who have actually led this country for 14 years. You want to hear some more innovative ideas. Sir, that increase in 2005, was meant to be an increase in the short-term. What that meant is that the Barbados Water Authority was able, after that, to incur a very mild profit, only for one year. Therefore, the 38 per cent increase in 2005 created a profit situation for the Barbados Water Authority for one year only. Thereafter, its expenditure out-stripped its revenue. This is the reality in relation to the Barbados Water Authority. It has a precarious situation that has to be addressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last person who spoke for the Barbados Labour Party talked about the under-pinning policy of the Barbados Labour Party in terms of how they would approach the question of increases in water rates. He said they always felt that the increases in water rates should be through the Fair Trading Commission.

Sir, that did not inform the increase in 2005 because that 38 per cent was not done through the Fair Trading Commission. I feel that it is a bit shameful in 2009 for any Barbados Labour Party spokesperson to talk about their intention to see the increases in water through the Fair Trading Commission. It is not an honest representation, especially faced with the stark fact that it was not in 2000, that they talked about going towards a regulatory arrangement for water, but it was since 1994.

Sir, as far back as 1994, in the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party, they said that rates for electricity, telecommunications, including telephones, natural gas and water and the price of petroleum products sold by oil companies will, therefore, be the responsibility of a new regulatory body. I assume that was the Fair Trading Commission.

Sir, it so happened that after so many years, they forgot to include the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission legislation. Instead, they opted for an approach, which you could see by reviewing the reports and information, that had no kind of connection with prudent fiscal management of a statutory body. It did not connect with it. There was no forward planning.

House A40, Sequence 14, 12.20 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly in terms of dealing with the reality, I believe that we have to be bold enough to commend the Barbados Water Authority Board for seeking, in difficult circumstances, where you have a large burdening cost in relation to salaries, electricity and so on, to find measures to try to position the Barbados Water Authority on a sound financial footing. Mr. Deputy Speaker, even those measures have proven to be inadequate to steer the Barbados Water Authority into a green position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to look at the one measure that was taken by the last Administration to seek to restructure how water was provisioned in Barbados. They went to the whole question of desalination. I believe that the desalination plant, which was commissioned in 2000, provides about 12 per cent of the water needs across Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what boggles my mind, and I do not know why it happens, is that the Government entered into, a 15-year contractual arrangement with Ionics Freshwater Limited to purchase desalinated water. I wonder why this kind of contract was entered into because under that arrangement, the Barbados Water Authority was contracted to pay Ionics Freshwater Limited $10 million

annually for the water, and we have only now gone past nine years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while they were seeking a solution to ensure that the Barbados Water Authority functions more financially stable, they created a contractual arrangement over a 15-year period and saddled the Barbados Water Authority with a $10 million debt. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder about that, because when we discuss the Barbados Water Authority, we have to look at all the factors that have led to its current financial situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that in debates of this kind, once the heat is over, Barbadians are looking for innovative ideas and solutions to the way forward, not only heated discussions. I believe that in moving forward, we have to look at serious solutions to some of the problems faced by the Barbados Water Authority, and I want to look at a few of them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of our water-scarce nature, I believe that we probably need to explore the provisioning of desalinated water in the future, but it ought not to be based on a similar contractual arrangement, where you are saddling the Barbados Water Authority with a debt of such proportion, for the provision of a 12 per cent water supply. I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that cheaper desalination provisioning measures need to be explored to ensure that we are in a position to satisfy the requirements of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we are talking about the serious financial challenges facing the Barbados Water Authority, and while it is not the wish of any Government to impose any new burdens on Barbadians, I would certainly want to encourage my constituents to practise conservation. The reality, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we have to be more responsible in the use of our water. It is not that we want to impose any new burdens, but we have a responsibility as Lawmakers to urge our constituents to be wise.

As we move on past the global economic recession, it cannot be business as usual. We have to find new ways and we have to use our influence to take our constituents along with us in practising responsible measures. I hope that along with this would come a programme of conservation, how we could conserve water and how we can use it better, because it is getting more and more expensive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that one of the big issues facing the Barbados Water Authority is that of the cost of electricity. If you speak to anybody of the Barbados Water Authority management, they would tell you that they have had to face increasing costs of electricity in pumping water, in a situation where a large amount of the water is wasted through leaks and so on. Sir, that does not remove the fact that the Barbados Water Authority has a huge burden in relation to its electricity cost.

I want to make a suggestion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I believe that this debate must get suggestions and solutions. It must get to a standard in which we recognise the situation now and get a path in relation to the future, how we are going to turn it around. At the end of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we still have the Barbados Water Authority, we still have consumers and we still have an issue in relation to electricity cost, so how can we solve that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to propose that we have to get to the point of exploring a dedicated electricity supply for the Barbados Water Authority, whether it comes through a dedicated channel provided by the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited, whether it is done by the Barbados Water Authority itself, because that is the means that we use to pump water and we have to find innovative ways, to create a cheaper means of providing electricity, or whether it comes using solar, as my colleague is saying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us roll up our sleeves and get down to the task of seriously looking at how we are going to get the Barbados Water Authority on a sound financial footing. The reality is that on its present course, the Barbados Water Authority would not be able to even provide the standard of water that we have now, so we have to find ways of changing the whole structure of the Barbados Water Authority, by putting our heads together to come up with measures that were not determined, or that nobody bothered to come up with over the past 14 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I usually share some lashes on the Barbados Labour Party for the years of neglect, that is not going to help us going forward. Therefore, I hope that when they stand on their feet, they would come up with measures and ideas and stop pursuing a path at every opportunity of seeking to scare off Barbadians by seeking to raise red flags and putting in the heads of Barbadians, the mischievous approaches of the Barbados Labour Party, that is not what is needed now.

What we need to hear from them because they are the ones responsible for what we have now... All the Democratic Labour Party is seeking to do is to correct the mess of the Barbados Labour Party. They have a chance to redeem themselves now by standing up in the House and giving Barbadians some creditable alternatives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that what has happened in the past cannot be allowed to continue. I believe that there are measures which need to be pursued at the Barbados Water Authority to secure a better future for

it. I believe though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that while we are looking at increases in the water rates, that now is the time to create meaningful incentives to ensure that the Barbados Water Authority can become more efficient from the top down to the very bottom.

House A40 Sequence 15

12.30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a responsibility to ensure that the Barbados Water Authority gets the kind of incentives, not only to produce and to become more efficient, but to ensure that its cost is brought down. Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the end of the day, in the medium-term, we have to aim at bringing the cost of water down and I believe it can be done.

Sir, there are far too many economic inputs that are responsible for the engines of economic growth, which rely on cheap water in Barbados. Therefore, at the end of the day, once the Barbados Water Authority could become more efficient and could deal with some of the niggling issues we have, our goal must be to aim at providing cheaper water in Barbados.

Sir, our manufacturers and business sector require it, and certainly that class of businessman who operates from his home in Barbados, who accounts for a significant portion of the economic pie. We have to ensure these persons could have cheaper water in the provision of their services. Sir, cheaper water must be a goal that we must aim for, but we have to ensure that the measures we put in place, both in the short-term and long-term, are informed by meaningful efforts at ensuring that the Barbados Water Authority becomes more efficient.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with regard to the issue of over-time, I am appalled that over the years we have had a sizeable chunk of the Barbados Water Authority's wage bill being in over-time. That cannot be allowed to be a future management tool at the Barbados Water Authority. We have to grapple with the question of overtime and every worker, Members of Parliament included, have to understand that going forward in this global economic crunch, we can only have one buzz-word, which must be efficiency. There is no other answer in relation to moving forward in relation to how we restructure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talk a lot about restructuring the economy but how we restructure the economy must be based on how we restructure entities such as the Barbados Water Authority because it accounts for a very significant portion of where we are at, in relation to the management of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put this issue of the validation of water rates in its perspective and the whole question of the increase of water rates in its true perspective. Sir, validation on its own is only a tidying up job, because we have to validate to move forward, but I would hope that as we move forward, we do not have to do these kinds of validations, but that we take the Barbados Water Authority and ensure that as we move forward, we have restructured it in a meaningful way.

We know we cannot restructure by having its finances going through the chute, but that we have to find new ways to create incentives for that entity to function and to deliver, on the kind of economic goals that we have set for Barbados, not only in the five years that immediately face us, but in the next 10 to 15 years, in which we have to struggle in bringing the Barbados Water Authority to a sound financial footing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few remarks and with the calls I have made for a responsible approach, I would like to voice my support for the Validation Bill. I am obliged.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 1.40 p.m.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 1.40 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.35 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

RESUMPTION

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

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so happy today for the privilege to assist this new Government, that speaks about all this governance and accountability, to help them hold a quorum to resume this session.

It really gives me great pride to be able to look after the business of the people, because that is what the people of St. Thomas sent me here to do and I will do it with a measure of honour, respect and humility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to make my small intervention to this validation of water rates process and to say that the blaming of the Barbados Labour Party will not in any way change the outlook on the situation.

Sir, I believe that this new Government has its work cut out for it. It came to the people of Barbados making some grandiose plans and promises, and, Sir, I must say that it is unfortunate that it is unable to keep a lot of the plans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the years, the Democratic Labour Party has been boasting of the pioneers in this country seeking the rights of the small black man. Of course, a former Member of Parliament for St. Michael East, Dr. Don Blackman, was the major agent, who spoke about the poor black man, and I must ask the question: Where is he today? Because the poor black man is now in a worse plight under the Democratic Labour Party, than the poor black man has been under the 14 years of the management of the Barbados Labour Party, where we came to office indicating in 1994, that our major goal was jobs. Sir, our mandate was "Job No. 1 is jobs". We were able to fulfill that mandate and when we left office in January 2008, the unemployment rate was down to 6.7 per cent, and therefore, we achieved our goals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government came to the fore indicating to the public "Pathways to Progress" and that their mandate is to look after accountability, transparency, governance, to look after the needs of Barbadians, and Sir, they have failed in every respect, so far, in a 16-month period.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy speaks a lot about the "two-few" syndrome and he is now showing me clearly the "two-few" syndrome in this Democratic Labour Party and the focus that the Democratic Labour Party has, in looking after the "two-few" who are their supporters and their acolytes in the society, to the detriment of the ordinary people in Barbados, as well as the big business people that this Democratic Labour Party has accused the Barbados Labour Party of being in the pockets of the rich man.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to touch on that issue now, because this is not the forum for it, but I want to focus on this Barbados Water Authority business that is before this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party will support this issue but, of course, we have some concerns and I would wish to put my understanding of it to the fore, where I know they have been able to offer to the public, and these aspects of it were partially supported by the Barbados Labour Party. We had some reservations in some areas, but we lent support to the free bus fare to school children. We have our reservations in some areas, because we have heard Honourable Members on the Other Side talking to school children and parents, because some children are using the bus service for a joy ride. Sir, some of the buses are breaking down on the road, as you know, and there are some internal challenges that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South would know about, that the rest of the public would not know about, but it is not that I would know, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know about the free houses for those qualified tenants in the housing units. We have supported that partially as well, because our interest is in Barbadians receiving a quality of life that makes them happy, that helps them to be able to go to the next level. Sir, our concern for that is to do with those persons who have paid in already and are not being compensated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the camps are being done as well.

Asides.

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Sir, I will get to the water. The Honourable Member had his opportunity to speak. We have supported the camps, but with that too, we have our reservation. I know what they have done for sure that really provides me with a concern, and other Honourable Members on This Side, and most of the general public in relation to the raising of taxes - the land tax, the road, the increase in professional fees, energy cost - and the cost of living that in January 2008, this Democratic Labour Party said would be the first order of the day and that Job No. 1 would be cost of living, cost of living, cost of living. Sir, we have seen it multiplied by more than 3 under this current Administration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the water rates are to be increased by 60 per cent, it means that the working population of Barbados and those persons who are destitute, who are relying on the support of the Government in every sphere of life, would now be burdened with more challenges.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during 1986 and 1987, when a new Democratic Labour Party took up their responsibility in May 1986 with a 24 to 3 majority, there were savings in the Barbados Water Authority to the tune of approximately $30 million. The then Prime Minister, may he rest in his grave, determined that much money as revenue in an institution should go to the Consolidated Fund and this created a serious challenge for the Barbados Water Authority, where projects that were on paper, that were discussed and the programmes that the Barbados Water Authority should have pursued, had that process stymied. Sir, you spoke of your Constituency and I have some issues that are similar to yours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Mains Replacement Programme would have indicated that across the length and breadth of Barbados there were communities with pipe mains that were more than 50 years old.

H/A40/2.00 p.m. Sequence 17

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Whenever there was any surge of pressure, some of those old corroded pipes burst. We even had an estimate of perhaps 60 per cent of water leakage taking place underground, as a result of these old pipes that were in the system, and the poor quality of water that people were receiving, sometimes no water at all, because a lot of the pumping stations were also experiencing challenges.

Sir, it meant that the project between 1986 and 1994, had been stalled, and there were no replacement of pipes when the Democratic Labour Party was the Government. We understand that we were in a structural adjustment, therefore, the funds would have been left.

Sir, do not forget that people's salaries were cut, people went home in their thousands, there were proposals for increases in a number of areas, including house rent, land tax, road tax, and so on.

We can understand to a point why the Democratic Labour Party during 1986 and 1994, may not have been able to pursue the Mains Replacement Programme, but there was money for that project. It was removed by the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, the situation became worse over time, discoloured water, numerous outages, and poor service offered when pipes are burst. Sir, 10 years went by, from 1986 to 1994, with no projects in place for replacements, it meant that a bad situation became worse.

Sir, in 2003/2004, we had some very serious challenges, particularly in the North of the island, St. Andrew, St. Peter, St. Joseph, St. Thomas and St. James. To the credit of the Barbados Water Authority, and I want to commend them for giving a hearing to the plight and concern of Barbadians in the North of the island. There were numerous Town Hall Meetings. I can speak boldly of the ones in St. Joseph and St. Thomas, where the Authority came and walked through every phase of the challenges of the people in those communities, because they wanted to assist in some way to bring a measure of comfort.

There is nothing more annoying than to stand in your shower, any morning, with no water, when your body is already lathered with soap. There is nothing worse than having your washing machine full of clothing, with discoloured water destroying all your linen, white, colours and so on. There is nothing worse than your pipes being turned off, preventing you from pursuing your everyday duties, in a manner that is appropriate to your quality of life, which all Barbadians want to enjoy. Sir, the challenges became worse.

Sir, I can speak proudly of the outcome between 2004 and 2006 when the Barbados Water Authority on the instructions of the Planning and Priorities Committee and the Cabinet of Barbados, determined that a measure of ease would be instituted for the people of the North. Therefore, a 10-inch main, running from Apes Hill through Canefield, Bloomsbury and Sturges to Castle Grant, a major pipe replacement to bring water and amenities to the people in those communities, from St. James, St. Thomas and St. Joseph.

Sir, a 6-inch main was also installed in the Welchman Hall area, as well as a number of areas in the parish. I can make this a document of the Honourable House. This is the document from the Barbados Water Authority where Highland, Lion Castle, Carrington Village, parts of Bloomsberry, Sturges, Welchman Hall, Ashford, and so on. There was a three-phase project for those communities with mains replacement to bring a better water service to the people of St. Thomas.

The other Honourable Members would speak of the projects in their Constituencies that eased the situation. Sir, this has helped to improve the quality of life for the people of the parish.

Sir, I will not support an increase at this time in our history when we are going through some serious economic times. I will not support the increase of a 60 per cent for Barbadians at this time. Too many people are suffering. They are being pressured at this time by the high cost of living, and all the other activities that have taken place since January 2008, by this Government, that cause a lot of pain and suffering.

Sir, the loss of employment - when we left office, unemployment was approximately 6.7 per cent. We are now up in double figures. When we took up office in 1994, we were bordering on 23 per cent unemployment. There is a worst situation now when we talk about our men. Our men have their pride and we socialise them a certain way, they are heads of the households. They must look after their families, and at this time they are more females employed than males.

Sir, in this society we make males feel less than human beings, when they cannot look after their families, cannot buy a drink for the fellows, and cannot live the quality life that this Barbados Labour Party helped them to achieve.

Sir, we made sure in 2005, that people were working, received security of tenure through their appointments as permanent officers, instead of the casual workers category that they were in, where they were not sure of a pension, receiving correspondence they could take to the various lending institutions and so on.

The Barbados Labour Party made sure that those kinds of facilities were put in place, so that Barbadians can be empowered to take their letters of appointment to a business place and say, I have permanent employment, help me with a loan, help me with a visa, or help me with a mortgage to be able to continue to exist.

Sir, when our men are not working, we can look for trouble, because we have a saying in this society that the devil finds work for idle hands to do. Too many of our men have to face the court system, because they want to get quick money, at times, to look after their families. So the quick money syndrome, through drugs, crime, violence, and so on, would really impact on us.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Members, quiet please, so that I can hear the Honourable Member.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Sir, thank you for your intervention. They do not have a lot of manners, but I will continue to make my point.

Sir, I am speaking about men, and it is amazing that the men on the Other Side would choose to interrupt, when they know that they would have had a lot of men in January 2008, who went out in minibuses to solicit votes for them, and the poor men, who are not now working, they are making laugh and sport of a very critical and serious situation. I am ashamed of what they are saying right now, but I will move on, with your permission.

Sir, when these young men are attracted to negative activities for quick money, because there is nothing worse than that, and the Honourable Member for St. Philip West will tell you, when a child is ill and parents, especially men, cannot find the money to take the child to the doctor and has to run all over Barbados with it, it hurts. Sir, when Christmas, Mothers' Day and on other occasions when they cannot spend a dollar bill to help promote families, as is the saying over there, "Family First", it really makes those men feel less than men. Sir, at this time with less men employed, compared with women, it is a cause for concern in this society. Sir, I will move on. Sir, any increase at this time will have a deleterious impact on the quality of life of all Barbadians, not only men, women, children, senior citizens, persons who are employed and so on.

Sir, in St. Thomas, and that is a very arable area, there is a heavy concentration in agriculture, so people rear pigs, chickens, horses and, of course, there is a lot of planting of food in some areas.

H A40 2.10 p.m. Sequence 18

Tuesday June 30, 2009

House A40, Sequence 19, 2.10 p.m.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we increase the water rates, it means that the farmers and others in the agriculture belt will feel the pinch, because they have to pay higher rates to water the vegetables and fruits. Sir, the farmers have to pay higher rates to look after these animals that they are feeding.

Of course, there are manufacturing firms in the parish. There is a laundry in the area and laundries take quite a bit of water. There is construction going on in the parish and there are food processing agencies there. We do not have hotels in the parish, but a lot of the people in the parish are engaged at hotels, many of them now unemployed as a result of this structural adjustment and the poor management of the affairs of Barbados by the Democratic Labour Party, under the management of the Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. Speaker, I can speak of the schools in St. Thomas being closed, sometimes for two days, as a result of the pipes being off in the parish still, which is not to do now with the Mains Replacement Programme. It has a lot to do with the reservoir, or major mains that may be ruptured and, of course, the Barbados Water Authority not being able to effectively and efficiently work with them during a particular time-frame.

I have not yet mentioned, Sir, the domestic use. I spoke about people in the shower, but what about people with babies when the pipes in the area are off for two and three consecutive days? How will they be able to cook, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the pipe goes off in the middle of the meal they are preparing? Sir, I am just using these few examples to show how it will impact on almost everybody in the system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this present time, there are people whose pipes are off because their money has been limited, or it has been reduced as a result of some who were working five days a week, now working three days, so we can understand that. Sir, I can only speak for the rural people. The Honourable Member for the City will speak of the urban people.

Sir, rural people generally do not look for handouts. They hold their dignity intact. They do not want to be seen

going to any Welfare Department to ask for a water bill to be paid. There are senior citizens who will accept that, but generally, people in the rural communities have their pride, and they would not want to be seen at Warrens, because you know what happens in small communities. Somebody would say that I saw her down there, begging to get the water bill paid, or the light bill, but nobody wants to go through that, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party Government ensured that Barbadians were working and working for salaries so that they could maintain themselves, that they could spend and be able to raise the money in VAT, and pay their bills and so on. They were never reduced to that mendicant level at all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can speak of that with a measure of clarity because I know, woe betides them, when the increases in the water bills come. I am not only talking about senior citizens and people in the lower bracket like gas station attendants, because they too feel it hard. I am talking about janitors, school meal workers, teachers, police, nurses and so on. Whenever this water bill increase comes about, they too will be suffering as a result of the tremendous increase.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we in the Barbados Labour Party, through the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission, determined that over a period of time, water borne toilets will be instituted in people's houses that were receiving repairs and new houses being built. Can you imagine, Sir, when those pipes are cut off how people will suffer because they cannot flush the toilet?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the new culture that we have in our children, we have not told them from whence we have come, so that they understand what it was like in our day. Our children now can press a button, the toilet flushes, turn on a tap or even press a button too, water runs out. They do not understand it. You could imagine what will happen when there is no water for three and four and five days, or when the pipe is cut off indefinitely, because people do not have the money and the resources, and the Welfare Department will not be kicking in as quickly or adequately as possible to accommodate that agency paying those water bills for those poor people? Therefore, the Barbados Labour Party promoted the water-borne toilet facilities, and now that project between the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission will be shattered in this respect.

Sir, I am not advocating it in a derogatory way, but you might need to put back some stand-pipes in place, as long as these water bills go up, so people will still have access to the amenity that they can still be able to continue to live. It will be a hardship, but people will still have access to water, if the pipes are put back in communities, that they can minimise issues concerning health and their own welfare.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to place a short bit of emphasis on a $7 million in the estimates of the Welfare Department that would have been reduced from the whole amount this year. The Minister of Social Care has a responsibility. Our urban life or suburban life is still totally different from rural life, because when people are living in housing areas, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has to deal with it, and they cannot pay their bills for the water, it is going to impact on the quality of the lives of those people.

I understand that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is the one who officiated over the Social Committee's plans to make this recommendation for water bills to be raised and I want the Honourable Member to give some in-depth thought into what has really been the arrangement, and therefore, ensure that some kind of supplementary will come when that happens to cushion the impact of those people who will be affected.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Thomas has three minutes more.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you, Sir.

Sir, it must not only go to urban and suburban, it must go to the rural people as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government found it fit last year to write off the debt of the Barbados Turf Club to the tune of $19 million. I want to know why some kind of measure could not be put in place in the Barbados Water Authority to cushion that impact of those persons now, rather than raise the money at this time, because we recognise that Barbadians cannot take it anymore.

Sir, you know the calypso, "Lord, I can't 'tek' it no more." And of course my little grandson who sings everyday, "hard time hit we."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, hard times have hit us in such a way that it really boggles my mind how we will continue in another six months, if some serious measures are not instituted to arrest what is happening in this country. Yes, there are challenges internationally, but there are a lot of home-grown challenges that have not been instituted by this Government, which have been taking a toll on the Barbadian public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not support any measure that will cause poor people to be poorer. I have a clearer understanding than most of the Honourable Members on the Other Side of what poverty is like, having grown up in

poverty, and having worked in a poverty-stricken community for more than a quarter of the century. I am still working in communities where there are pockets of poor people who really need that listening ear, and really need that opportunity where social workers and others can give them that chance to be able to get on their feet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what is good about it? When some of them are in the Welfare system and they find employment, they call to say: "I no longer will use it, let somebody else get the opportunity. I am now working and I am in a better position to look after my own needs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder how Honourable Members on the Other Side sleep at night, especially within the last four months. Where are their hearts when it comes to these same poor black people that, for many decades, have been shouting from the mounting top that the Democratic Labour Party is the Party of the poor black people? The same poor black people today, Sir, across the length and breadth of Barbados, are the ones now who will go a couple pegs down, as a result of these austere measures that they call it, the creative Democratic Labour Party, is instituting.

I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, families are now becoming more broken than ever before. Men feel humiliated because more women are working than they, so the women will be the controllers of the household. Quality meal costs have gone up, by more than three, and construction is down, because fewer people are working.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the Honourable Member please wind up.

House A40, Sequence 19, 2.20 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I want to know where is the conscience of this Democratic Labour Party that came in 2008, with a Manifesto "Pathways to Progress". We, in the Barbados Labour Party, Mr. Deputy Speaker, say it is pathways to poverty. Unless the Democratic Labour Party re-examines whatever it is doing that is causing the downward slide in the economy and the other aspects of social development, we are going to be in a sorry situation where we would develop a more mendicant public, something our forefathers would have worked against to empower people, to give them knowledge, a sense of independence and to make them reach out in a way not only to themselves and their family, but to others to help with the development of our country Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this matter before this Honourable Chamber. I can understand why there is little interest in debating this matter on the part of the Opposition, because most of them were not here at the beginning and few are really anxious to speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the conscience of the Honourable Member for St. Thomas has prompted her to start her contribution by saying that she is humbled. I believe that consistency with humility, should be the recognition by the Barbados Labour Party that we are detaining the Honourable Chamber this evening, due to the poor management of the country under the Barbados Labour Party Government.

We are validating the illegal imposition in terms of an increase in water and sewerage rates by the Barbados Labour Party Government. Therefore, it is right that the Barbados Labour Party should be humbled and contrite and should ask Barbadians to forgive them for their transgressions, because that is poor governance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, calling the kettle black and all of these sorts of rhetoric by the Honourable Member for St. Joseph will not justify the fact. Two wrongs do not make a right in a Christian ideology.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party is, therefore, very quiet on this matter before this House, and are trying to bring in other issues, but they must accept, if they have a conscience left, that they were wrong and should ask the people of Barbados to forgive them for illegally increasing water and sewerage rates in the dying days of their Administration. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Democratic Labour Party Government is seeking to validate this issue in the interest of good governance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am trained in mathematics and economics and I must confess that I am trained to think very logically. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened carefully to the few Honourable Members on the Other Side who spoke thus far and I see inconsistencies in the logic of their argument. For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you hear the Honourable Member for St. Joseph in his contribution lamenting the fact that his constituents suffer water outages and so on. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas alluded that when her constituents are lathering in the shower they run out of water, as well as to the issue of discoloured water in the washing machines.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember that in 1994, there was a serious drought in our country. I remember working in the same St. Joseph. I was campaign manager for the

Democratic Labour Party candidate in the 1994 General Elections, and I remember touring the Castle Grant reservoir with the then Minister, the former Member of Parliament for St. Michael East, and the Barbados Water Authority team. I was actually living at Horse Hill at the time and at that high elevation we had serious droughts then.

Sir, coming out of that drought in 1994, the Barbados Water Authority and the Government committed to introducing the desalination plant in order to augment the potable water supply available to our country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a need to increase the potable water available to the country. We are a water-scarce country. Currently, we pump just under 50 million gallons of water per day. It is known that the amount of water available to Barbadians is just about 390 cubic metres per person per annum. This is well below the threshold of 1 000 cubit metres per person per year over which the country would not be considered a water-scarce country.

We are indeed a water-scarce country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so successive Administrations have accepted the need to urgently increase the amount of drinking water available to the public at large, both visitors and residents domiciled here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important to engage in massive capital works programmes which cost a lot of money. On the one hand, the Opposition is lamenting that there is need to increase the amount of water available to the public for drinking purposes, yet they want to criticise this Administration's adjustments in terms of access of funding to the Barbados Water Authority. You cannot have it both ways, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Barbados Labour Party Government and the Honourable Member for Christ Church West committed the country to the construction of a desalination plant with Ionics Freshwater Limited at Spring Garden in a 15-year programme, as was mentioned before. Ionics Freshwater Limited is a private company that sells desalinated water to the Barbados Water Authority, of course factoring in a profit, and we are just nine years into this 15-year contract.

I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Barbados Labour Party through the construction, of that desalination plant and the arrangements, in terms of its operation, has increased the cost of water available to the public. Sir, because it is a private sector company selling to Government, it means that you have to factor in a profit, which means that the final cost to the consumer is higher.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the day when this contract expires so that the Government can, in a fair manner, purchase that desalination plant so that the Barbados Water Authority can operate that desalination plant, without having to factor in a profit as exists now, because we are buying from a privately-owned company. This would reduce the final cost of supplying the public with water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is going to be a need for more desalination plants because, as I understand it, the research is such, that the desalination plant at Spring Garden pumps brackish water along the coast. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a limit to the quantity of brackish water available, so then it may have to go to full-scale desalination of sea water, which is even more expensive. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we have more private sector interests coming in setting up desalination plants, we could end up with horrendously high rates for purchasing desalinated water from private plants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, water is an essential resource and I strongly support the Bill. Even in terms of national security, it is not useful to have a situation where the essential water is being actually owned by the private sector. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are issues that we as a country must seriously look at.

The point I am making, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there is obviously need to increase the amount of potable water available to the public, because the demand is not getting less. It is increasing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to see tourism increase. We want to see more cruise ship passengers come to Barbados. When the cruise ships come in in their numbers on Wednesdays, people along the western areas notice a decrease in the pressure of water because you have to pump water to supply those cruise ships. When more tourists stay in the hotels, more water is being used, so more water must be available to the public.

House A40 Sequence 20

2.30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we want to see improvement in the tourism industry, we must be in a position to supply the necessary potable water. Therefore, as a country, we must be frank and realistic, and as politicians, we must transcend the narrow political interest and seek to develop the country. We must seek to engage the people of Barbados, who are reasonable people, that in order to facilitate the speedy development of our economy where we need to diversify our economy, we need certain infrastructural reality such as an improved water supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is very clear. I am sure the Honourable Minister of the National Housing Corporation and Honourable Minister of Tourism can elucidate when they speak, but there is a direct correlation between infrastructural development and access to potable water.

Sir, whenever a developer wants to develop a new housing district, either low-class or middle-income, or to build a new office complex, a new hotel, a set of villas or guest houses, they have to apply to the Town Planning Department for permission to build. Sir, the Town Planning Department cannot arbitrarily give permission for the building of these projects. They must consult with the Barbados Water Authority to verify whether they could supply the adequate quantities of water to that new development. If the Barbados Water Authority cannot supply that water, then that development is stuck.

Sir, we saw where the Barbados Labour Party built a new prison in St. Philip and did not do the necessary planning and as a result, there are water shortages there. This Democratic Labour Party now has to address that issue. Sir, we will have to supply more desalination plants in terms of the reverse osmosis plants, as I understand there is a big project for the Belle.

Sir, these are realities, therefore, people should not try to fool the public that we are being irresponsible as a Government. We must realise that if we want the country to develop in terms of the economy and infrastructure, then there are certain basic amenities, such as water, that must be provided in a timely and efficient manner. Sir, they go hand-in-hand. You cannot have one without the other. This is what we are talking about. We are not arbitrarily acting. We are looking at the future, whereas the Barbados Labour Party wants to return us to standpipes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am in shock. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas who just spoke, had the strange courage to tell the public that she supports going back to stand-pipes. This Democratic Labour Party is taking people forward. We are committed to giving all households access to potable water in their homes, and the Barbados Labour Party wants to take them back to stand-pipes.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please be quiet so that I can hear the speaker.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not giving way to a point of elucidation. The Honourable Member had the chance to speak and I did not interrupt her.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is seeking to mislead this Honourable House. I spoke to indicate that if the water bills are carried up by 60 per cent, the Government would have to look at measures to put stand-pipes back in place, because that 60 per cent rise would cause people who would not be able to pay their water bills, still to get an opportunity to have access to that amenity.

Sir, that is the point I made. I have not asked Government to put back stand-pipes because this is what the Barbados Labour Party worked towards, through the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission programmes, to give people waterborne toilets on their properties. Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable Chamber.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for confirming what I said. It was the Honourable Member who talked about stand-pipes and not this Honourable Member. The public has heard and they will judge.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to increase the amount of potable water available to the public in order to facilitate development, for example, through the Mains Repair Programme. Sir, since we are a water-scarce country, we must practise serious water conservation.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I will speak for the last time. Can I have some quiet so that I can hear the Honourable Member speaking? I cannot hear Honourable Members clearly due to cross-talk which is coming from Both Sides. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew, when the Chair is speaking, please keep quiet. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am seeking to be very frank about this matter. I am seeking to transcend the narrow confines of partisan political politics. I am speaking in the interest of the development of this country. We all live on this piece of the rock and we will either swim or sink together, and I am seeking to swim.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are a water-scarce country and so we have to augment the potable water supply in terms of desalination, but that is not the only aspect, it must be a multifaceted approach. Sir, with desalination, there is the issue of what can be done with the brine that can harm the environment. Sir, it is a trade off.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember back in the l970s, places such as Antigua were so short of water that on emergency occasions they had to import shiploads, I think from Barbados. They had then to go the way of desalination to support their improvement in tourism. We want to increase more cruise ships coming to Barbados. Sir, we are home-porting, which puts a greater demand on the scarcity of potable water available on our land mass.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talk about water conservation and what research has found, is that because the water rates are so low, many people waste water.

Sir, I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central that we on Both Sides should appeal, as I am taking this opportunity at this juncture, to all and sundry to conserve water because this resource, though precious, is but limited in Barbados. It is a natural resource, but we have limited quantities. We do not have large numbers of rivers like other mountainous places in the Region. We have limited rainfall, we are a flat country, we do not have many natural rivers, and so we need to conserve water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, many people waste water and I frown upon that. Therefore, when people are in their showers and lathering, there is no need to have the water at full blast, going down the drain. That is water that we could ill-afford to lose. Sir, it goes further. When we are brushing our teeth, some people are brushing their teeth and the water is at full blast, going down the drain. Sir, these are simple issues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember when the Other Side was in office, we used to hear the then Minister talking about energy conservation, about the need to move from incandescent bulbs to florescent bulbs. I remember the former Honourable Member for St. James South asking the public to stop wasting water, stop leaving lights on, et cetera.

Sir, at the macro level, when you multiply the energy saving that each household across the country engages in, you could see the tremendous savings. Therefore, in the same vein, in terms of the conservation of water, if individuals and individual households conserve water, then at the national level it reduces the wastage. It also reduces the need to get into this heavy desalination exercise.

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

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say that according to my investigations, tremendous far-reaching plans are being laid out in terms of water conservation at the Barbados Water Authority, for instance, the reuse of water.

Sir, within my Constituency, the City of Bridgetown, the Barbados Labour Party neglected the Bridgetown Sewerage Plant at Lakes Folly, to the extent that people had to endure an awful stench which caused them immediately to have rashes, loss of voice and respiratory problems. These are very serious issues about which the people of the City are concerned.

2.40 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Sir, as I understand it, in this plan, the sewage waste water treatment plant at Emmerton would be rehauled and refitted, along with the South Coast Treatment Plant, so that we can recover a lot of that waste water that is flushed down the drain and the effluent just sent out to sea. Sir, with modern technology available to us, this water could be treated and, in a very safe manner, could be used in terms of irrigation for agriculture and golf courses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, plans are afoot to refit those plants and even to refit the West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant, which the Barbados Labour Party neglected.

Sir, when we were in office, we were talking about the West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party was in office for 14 years and did not advance the West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, within that same West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant, which this Democratic Labour Party Government is committed to advancing, the people in the New Orleans area and Chapman Lane would have been connected to the Sewerage Ttreatment Plant because currently, although they endure the stench of the plant, they are not connected to that sewerage system.

Sir, as you know, this is a low-lying area and it is very difficult to get a suck well dug because, as soon as you go a few feet, you have water because a lot of that land was reclaimed, when we put Pelican on to Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are very serious issues. Sir, the West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant would ensure that ecoli bacteria that come from septic wells along the West Coast does not ease into the ocean, kill the reef and contaminate the sea water.

Sir, this is our major tourist belt and the West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant would have been needed decades ago and the Barbados Labour Party neglected it. Sir, this Democratic Labour Party is taking it seriously. It

costs money to build the sewerage plant, but Sir, where does the money come from?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a people, we have to understand that we must make sacrifices for the national good.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, within this new West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant waste water will be channelled. Sir, one option is to get it channelled on to the Bridgetown West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant, where the water could be then channelled to industries in terms of pooling along the Spring Garden Highway, channelled up to Wildey and the South Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant could be fitted so that waste water could be channelled as far as Newton, in terms of those processing industrial operations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, further, we can irrigate the golf courses and agriculture primarily in the dry season, but in the wet season, when this is not necessary, we could take that treated waste water and put it into designated areas to recharge the underlying aquifers. Sir, do you understand how far-reaching and imaginative this Democratic Labour Party Government is engaged, to ensure that the aquifers are replenished so that this waste water from the Sewerage Treatment Plant is not sent out to sea. These are far-reaching plans, but Sir, it cost millions of dollars to retrofit those sewerage treatment plants.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could the Honourable Member please wrap up now?

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you very much.

Sir, I just want to talk about the cost implications to revamp the South Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant, to connect the Bridgetown Sewerage Treatment Plant and the West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant, and to say that it could cost in the region of US$75 million. Sir, it is a lot of money, but it has significant long-term and medium-term benefits to the country.

I want to say to the people of Barbados to stay tuned, because this Democratic Labour Party cares and we are working together to uplift our country.

Sir, I thank you.

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. James Central earlier today said that Barbados is a water scare country.

Sir, over the last decade and a half, not only have we, who occupy this Honourable House been told that our country is experiencing, and has been experiencing a water scarcity, but the general population, as a whole, especially those people who have the environment in mind as one of their priorities when they pass judgement on developments in Barbados, these people have been very concerned about our status as a water-scarce country.

In fact, to go out of Barbados and to view the whole question of water-scarce countries, it seems clear that Barbados has been rated and ranked among the 30 most water- stressed and water-scarce countries in the world, ranking alongside many a country known for deserts.

Mr. Speaker, if we look carefully at what we in Barbados should be appreciating and later making decision on, we should look very closely at the whole question of our total water resources, including water not necessarily in the sea and including water not necessarily in our mains, and including water not necessarily coming through our pipes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member besides me, on my right, has a Constituency, part of which is an area called “Spring Farm” and there is an abundance of water flowing down in Spring Farm and Porey Spring. Sir, nobody is going to suggest that we should so risk our health by drinking that water as it is, but at the same time, it is water, in the same way that the water that flows through Three Houses is water, in the same way that down by Bath, in St. John, are a number of existing springs and a number of evolving springs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you seek to traverse the terrain between the beach facility at Bath and Martin’s Bay, going just along what used to be the old train line, you are going to encounter many instances of mud and slush caused by springs coming from under the water and, Sir, in circumstances where we say we are water-scarce, and in circumstances where we can identify a spring in Spring Farm, there is one in St. John, not by Bath, but somewhere close to the primary school in St. John, going down that hill. Sir, I do not recall the name of that particular hill, the bottom of which has a spring.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also seen in Barbados water, as I have said, at Three Houses and at other parts of Barbados there is water, and none of the water to which I refer, including the water that flows down Bawdens is really part of our national grid, and is not readily available to the Barbados Water Authority. Sir, the question is: Should that be so?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority deals only with its existing reservoirs, deals only with its existing sources and continues to ignore other sources of

water which, with creativity, technology and the political will, we can exploit for the good of Barbados and reduce the extent of the scarcity?

I think that the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations(FAO), I think that the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA) and agencies like these that tend to be willing to offer technical advice and technical support, should be able to come to Barbados, at a cost to themselves, evaluate the entire situation and then make recommendations how some of the water not currently in the national grid could be put in the national grid and be treated and such like.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I grieve to know that my country is designated water scarce and even in the dry season, in parts of St. Andrew and parts of the East Coast, you are coming across water flowing from springs.

H/A40/2.50 p.m. Sequence 22

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Sir, a former officer at the Soil Conservation Unit told me that the Soil Conservation Unit, in its oversight of the area, had encountered an excess of 40 springs. As a result, they developed a system to ensure those springs did not undermine the road works in the area.

Sir, there used to be slippage between Bloomsbury and an area called Fruitful Hill. Going down that hill, there used to be land slippage, repeatedly, caused more by underground springs than anything else.

Some years ago, while I was Minister of Agriculture, we were able to mobilise the Ministry to take some of that water away from the road. Unfortunately, because the Barbados Water Authority had not been empowered, or did not have the facilities or technology to do anything about it, they had to channel it away from out of the road and out into the open.

Sir, it bids me to tell you, I am told that 75 per cent of the rain that falls in Barbados goes to waste, 75 per cent of the available rainfall that comes to Barbados, and it comes to Barbados seasonally, goes to waste, meaning that only 25 per cent of rainfall is put to productive use. We have to look at all of these things in the context of trying to rescue our water resources, in the context of an uncertain future, where water resource management is concerned, especially in light of things like global warming and phenomena which can continue to place stress on the management at the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, there is evidence that Israel, a place also known for water scarcity, has been able to develop its technology in such a way as to practise conservation and to optimise the use of their scarce water. As far as I understand it, Israel is a friendly country to Barbados. I believe Israel has an Honourary Consulate to Barbados. I believe there is an Ambassador for the Region who might be based outside of Barbados, but whose portfolio includes Barbados. If the Israelis, through sheer necessity, have been able to do something about their water shortage and the Israelis are friendly with us in Barbados, would it not be a good idea to approach them for help, to find out how they have been able to succeed in managing scarce water resources?

Sir, we have to make sure that all of the problems facing the Barbados Water Authority are looked at one by one. I take exception to anybody suggesting that management alone at the Barbados Water Authority must take responsibility for what has been happening there.

At the level of policy, decisions have to be made, and at that level of policy, then, once policy makers truly empower the management of the Barbados Water Authority by providing insightful programmes, by providing insightful directives, then life can be easier for the management of the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, I speak in the context of suggestions, that the management itself has to be reviewed and that there are too many line managers below the General Manager. I also insist that it is a matter for the political directorate to come, first of all in Cabinet to look at the matter, and then bring the matter to this Honourable House in a way that would indicate that we are going to set out improving the position of the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, it is a grievous thing that the Barbados Water Authority, established by statute, has a monopoly and is financially insolvent. That is a very grievous thing, a monopoly on something that is precious, a monopoly meaning that there is no competition, a monopoly meaning that it has existed from time immemorial, and the type of monopoly which ought to see the Barbados Water Authority prove itself, to be more cautious and discrete in managing its finances than has been the case.

The Honourable Member for St. Thomas had made reference to the fact that some time in the 1980s and 1990s, the Barbados Water Authority was indeed making money, and the decision was taken to apply that money, not for future use of the Barbados Water Authority, but to put that money in the Consolidated Fund, treating it as part of the overall national revenue. Sir, we are into a time when the Authority is cash-strapped and cash-hungry.

Sir, this debate today will not be the final debate on water in this Honourable House. The problem is one that is multi-faceted. It gives me some comfort that in our school system, in particular at the elementary primary stage,

school teachers go out of their way, beyond the call of duty to sensitise their wards and charges, as to the need to handle water as a precious resource carefully.

When I go to the primary schools, sometimes I go there without much notice, I would walk into a situation where teachers are telling children not to waste water, and telling them if they pass and see a pipe dripping, tighten the head so that the water would not be wasted. You hear teachers lament the fact that over time, some people have been irresponsible in how they use water outside of drinking that water.

Sir, some of our people, for example, who wash cars may be using too much water on those cars. Some of our people who grow vegetables, are actually growing their vegetables with potable water in a situation where vegetables, like other agricultural crops, need not be cultivated and nurtured by what is potable water.

There are countries on earth that have separate systems that have systems developed where the potable water is flowing through one particular channel, going in one direction, and where so-called brackish water is held back for non-domestic use and for uses like agriculture, washing cars and such like.

Sir, it means that the Barbados Water Authority should, in light of a number of things I have said, identify water not in the national grid, from areas like Bowdens and Three Houses. Even if they are not interested in channelling that water into the Barbados Water Authority grid, at least have that water available for public purposes for use in areas where it would be wasteful to use pipe water.

Sir, it is against that background, that I would oblige the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, who said that there were certain historical patterns that had developed as far as the increases in water rates go.

In 1973, the then Government of Barbados successfully negotiated a loan and finance from the Inter-American Development Bank. This was not mentioned by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

H A40 3.00 p.m. Sequence 23

Tuesday June 30, 2009

House A40, Sequence 24, 3.00 p.m.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Sir, one of the conditionalities in that 1973 financial package, which came by the way of Barbados, was that the water rates had to go up. Sir, that goes back to 1973. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South was accurate with the other increases as well.

Sir, when we looked at the fact that the poor in Barbados are going to be made now to pay increases that, as far as I know, had not gone before the Fair Trading Commission, we have now to look into the accounting system at the Barbados Water Authority.

Some of my constituents have told me, Sir, that in the months of April and May when their bills came to them, their bills would mention a figure and beside the figure was put “estimate”, and in every sense that estimate was two and three times what they normally pay. Then, in the following period, after a rough estimate had been imposed, where people were paying threefold the amount that they normally were charged, in the period following April and May, the Accounting Department, without putting in the word, “estimate” has come and asked Barbadians to pay substantial amounts of money, even before the proposed announcement to increase in July has taken place.

I would want the Barbados Water Authority to look at the metering system and the personnel who should be reading the meters, because if a lady’s bill is at $400 when it used to be $120 all the time, and you take it that when it was $120, meter readers were responsible for correctly reading the meter and feeding the information into the Accounting Department, then, a situation arose, Sir, where people who were paying $120 are being asked to pay $400.

Then the possibility is that the meter readers did not go to read the meters, or were prevented from reading the metres, or read them hurriedly, or that something happened within the Barbados Water Authority that we, in here, do not know, which caused rapid escalations in water rates in April, May and June, and this has come before, Sir, the expected increases in water rates that will take effect from July 1.

The contention on This Side, Sir, as led by the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, is that considering the times that we are in, with an escalating cost of living, increases in unemployment not noted by the Honourable Member for the City, increases in the prices of basic goods, Sir, a scenario and against a background where the economy that we had been seeing and we are being affected by, is in a fairly shaky state, because of a number of variables, how can we as a Parliament find it convenient at this time, with inflation going up, employment levels going down and, as they would say in Barbadian parlance, “sufferation” occurring among the masses, to consider increasing water rates? This is a situation where water, a basic commodity, a number of people are going to be severely affected.

Picture, Sir, that small or medium-sized operator of a laundry, who is going to see his laundry bill go up by 60 per cent. Picture that hotel on the West Coast, in the Constituency of the Honourable Member for St. James Central, or in other Constituencies along the West Coast. Picture hotels and restaurants facing an increase of 60 per cent in circumstances where it is well known, as they say in Law. It is a notorious fact, that a lot of businesses, including hotels, have for some time found it very hard to pay the water rates that they were charged. I say so, Sir, before the increases that have been announced have taken place.

Picture, Sir, the lady who lives alone, who has been disqualified from Welfare assistance, whose meter goes bad unknown to her, who might have a leaking pipe somewhere on her premises and does not know, innocent entirely, and picture her paying both the increase and the surcharge that necessarily follow from the meter reading indicating, Sir, that an excess of her normal amount of water consumption has occurred. Then that poor person would be suffering, in addition to any other suffering the person might be undergoing, medically and otherwise.

We feel, Sir, on This Side that if water is a necessary input in business activity and the price goes up, then the cost of production will go up. Sir, as the cost of production goes up, if a particular business entity is hard pressed for money, it could find itself in a situation where it has to exercise a choice of retrenching workers.

It may also face a situation where it finds it hard to pay its National Insurance Scheme contribution. It could happen in a situation, Sir, where with the increases in production costs, they are forced to increase the commodities and services that they sell, thereby causing further inflation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, This Side having thought through the matter, is of the view that considering all the factors and all the variable extent at this particular moment in Barbados' economic history, that the Government could have found ways and means to soften the effects of the problems at the Barbados Water Authority.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North and the Honourable Prime Minister (I almost said Right Honourable. He qualifies for the title "Right Honourable", but all he has to do is seek the right counsel and he will become "Right Honourable, and he could become so in this term. He needs not wait.

Incidentally, Sir, the term, "Right Honourable" historically rates higher than "Sir". The only Knighthood that is higher than the term, "Right Honourable", is when you get an Honour called, "The Right of the Garter", which is scarcely ever granted. So if you are the Right Honourable Member for Christ Church South, you are actually higher than a person called "Sir", and you can take some comfort in the fact that if somebody is called "Sir", at the level of the Knight of St. Andrew, that, ironically, further down the line, in the classroom, some of us would have taught are also called "Sir", but that is not the point).

Sir, the point is that the Honourable Member for St. John and the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, were able to raise some financing, much of which is going to impact positively on the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, if the Government took that step to refinance the National Housing Corporation in a situation where that body too, had been short on money, could not other sources of finance be located, which would spare the consumer the need for the consumer to be subsidizing the Barbados Water Authority? Clearly, the Barbados Water Authority's response is that there have been several delinquent consumers who have not been paying their water bills on time.

I would like to caution all Barbadians to pay all their bills and to do so promptly. It is true though, Sir, that at this time in our economic history, that many a Barbadian who is willing to pay, simply cannot pay, but to get back to the point Sir, of debts owed to the Barbados Water Authority, it is uncertain how much of that accumulated debt is going to be repaid. Therefore, to rely on the repayment of debt due to the Barbados Water Authority as a source of capital, may not be such a wise thing.

House A40, Sequence 24, 3.10 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: The reason I say so, is because monies coming in periodically every two weeks, or every month as in the case of the Barbados Water Authority, are really monies coming in in the form of current revenue. What the Barbados Water Authority really needs is capital injection.

Sir, from a particular standpoint, philosophical and otherwise, the question is, in a situation where the Barbados Water Authority really needs capital and a massive capital injection, can it really rely on current inflows of revenue which would ordinarily be applied to current expenses to capitalize the Barbados Water Authority?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know if that point is clear, so let me repeat. The Barbados Water Authority needs a massive capital injection. After all, it has to replace old mains that burst frequently. It has running expenses, things like wages to pay, vehicles to maintain and things like that.

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: The point I am making, Sir, is where the Barbados Water Authority incurs recurrent expenses almost on a daily basis, that such expenses should be funded from rates that are paid by consumers. Sir, the point is further developed that where a big amount of capital is required to refinance the Barbados Water Authority, that capital required ought not to come from current revenue. That is the point I am making. I think Honourable Members on Both Sides understand and appreciate that point.

Sir, we have some people in this Honourable House that may not be able to put it in writing where it matters to the same degree as Honourable Members in this particular House.

Sir, that is why I repeated it, because I had the disappointment recently of seeing proceedings occur in the Other Place a few weeks ago, and the proceedings, as heard on the radio, went very well, and when I looked into a certain newspaper the proceedings in the Other Place were not covered at all.

Fellow Barbadians who are in the realm of journalism do treat the Parliament, this one and the Other Place, with enough regard that when serious and non-salacious matters are raised in this Honourable House, that there is a place in the Press for serious dialogue and national debate to be located in the interest of current readership and in the interest of posterity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are some of us in this Honourable House whose interest is not only to serve Barbados to the best of our ability, but whose interest is to lift the debate here to a level that posterity would look back on us with favour, and would say that we were a serious Parliament. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is where I have difficulty with the arms of the Press that do not adequately cover proper speeches made in this Honourable House and in the Other Place.

With those few remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have extended myself beyond the 12 minutes I am supposed to speak for and I am entirely grateful to you for your indulgence. I thank you.

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

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like the record to reflect that this is the first time that I am speaking in this debate, because there might be a perception to those listening that I have already spoken in this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this debate is about a simple validation. As has already been mentioned by Honourable Members on Both Sides, this is not the first occasion that a validation has come to this House. Therefore, one would have thought that the Government with so much to hide, and I am only copying from the words of the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central, would have stuck to the script and would not necessarily have delved into the fact that the level of expenditure has exceeded the level of revenue, and that, therefore, the question of profitability has to be addressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the last occasion when we brought a validation to his House, we did not attempt to blame the former Government for any short-comings. We simply presented the facts as they were then.

If I may recall, Mr. Speaker, on that occasion...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, please.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are the acting Speaker now.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The title is Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On that occasion...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: My title, and let it not be mistaken, is the Deputy Speaker. Even though I am sitting here, I must be addressed as the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On that occasion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Members on That Side chastised the Barbados Labour Party Government for the delay in bringing that validation.

In the words of the Honourable Member for St. John at the time, he did indicate that it was a simple amendment that any Attorney-General could have put on a piece of toilet paper.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are somewhat surprised that you have a validation. The shoe is now on the other foot, and we are talking about certain illegalities on behalf of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these things do happen from time to time. I believe that the Members of the Democratic Labour Party have found themselves in a very difficult situation because of the economic crisis that we face.

Mr. Speaker, before I go any further...My apologies for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you choose to be so addressed, please excuse the slip of the tongue.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Andrew, it is not that I choose to be addressed as Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the title that was accorded to me. It is not that I choose to be accorded that title, okay. I must warn you to be careful with your language.

Honourable Member for St. Joseph when the Deputy Speaker is speaking please speak quietly or I will ask you to leave. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew please continue.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Can I call you Mr. Acting Speaker then? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want you to understand that if I call you Mr. Speaker, it is not deliberate, it is only a slip of the tongue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one could understand the confusion within the Democratic Labour Party. There is a consistency here with respect to the substance of their argument in this debate. It is consistent with what we saw earlier when we were dealing with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, when one Minister was speaking about building a completely new complex and another Minister came and was speaking about improving the existing facility and the Prime Minister was speaking about something else.

Also in the Ministry of Housing and Lands, they like to talk about housing. The Minister of Housing and Lands would talk about acquiring land throughout the length and breadth of Barbados for his new housing solutions, none of which we have seen to this day, I am speaking about the new ones, and other Honourable Members on That Side have been stressing the importance of continuing the existing housing projects of the Democratic Labour Party. We are seeing them all over the place. Right there in Country Road is a classic example. The difference is in their language.

House A40 Sequence 25

2.30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Sir, we are now hearing some Honourable Members on That Side, including the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown and the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, talking about the need to exclude the private sector from the delivery of water to the public, and yet no less a person than the Prime Minister, in his Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, could speak of the need to involve the private sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I quote the Prime Minister in his most recent Budgetary Proposals. When the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central spoke about the Desalination Plant, the Honourable Member for St. John questioned the type of project and the arrangement. The Honourable Member questioned the wisdom in having a contract to pay $l0 million annually for water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown spoke of excluding the private sector almost completely. The Honourable Member spoke about how he is hoping for the day when this contract would end, when the Government would be in a position to purchase the unit. Sir, coming from That Side we were also hearing about the need to have a private desalination plant.. As a matter of fact, there is a feeling that we should have had about two or three desalination plants..

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over there is confusion as to whether the delivery of water should have the input of Government, as it is presently in most parts of the Region, or whether the private sector should be driven out completely. . Therefore, there is a conflict between what the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister would like us to see, and what Honourable Members on That Side are saying. Sir, I think they are only saying those things in order to attack the previous policies of the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, when the contract for the desalination plant is completed, they are free to purchase the plant. I would hpp[e they would not come and do what they are trying to do now, and make the taxpayers pay one time for such a programme. Sir, this would not be wise in any event.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not saying that there should not be an increase in water rates. Similarly, we are not saying that there should not be a validation or that the validation is long overdue. Our strongest argument, and we must repeat it, is that it should be determined by the Fair Trading Commission (FTC).

There is nothing in our policies in the past that excluded the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) from deliberations with respect to water. When we dealt with the setting up of the Fair Trading Commission (FTC), the question of water was not included initially, for the simple reason that we were seeking at the time to put certain things in place. Sir, by the time we left office, we had put those proposals in place at the Barbados Water Authority for the setting up of a regulatory unit.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party would like to make you believe that if you have to put the water rates before the Fair Trading Commission (FTC), you must first ensure that all water rates are first set.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was since l994, in their Manifesto at page 31, that they made promise to put the Barbados Water

Authority under a regulatory body. Sir, they left office only a year and a few months ago, so this has to do with an unfulfilled promise since 1994.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will ignore that point of order. Sir, the regulatory unit had to be set up in order for water rates to go to the Fair Trading Commission (FTC). Sir, before we left office, that regulatory unit had been put in place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point was made by the Honourable Member for St. Joseph concerning the legislation, which was laid in Parliament by this Government, prior to their realisation that the time had come for them to address the question of water rates. Therefore, they had ample time.

Sir, if in last year's Budget, the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister could have spoken of the need to place the water rates before the Fair Trading Commission (FTC), where they would now come and say there are certain things they have to do first, well, there is a contradiction. They cannot say that things were not in place. The regulatory unit was in place. The relative legislation was there, yet the Attorney-General's Office has not seen it fit to ensure that piece of legislation is debated in this Honourable House. We do not know the reasons. What are the reasons?

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Attorney-General is saying from his seat that it is not in his name. I know that all legislation come from the Attorney-General's Office. Sir, the Minister with responsibility for water obviously did not know the procedure and brought this Bill before this Honourable House when they were not ready. Sir, we are saying that aspect in relation to the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) first had to be addressed.

These water rates should have gone before the Fair Trading Commission (FTC), but before doing so, the Democratic Labour Party had the duty and responsibility, since all of the groundwork was already in place, of ensuring that the legislation was put in place and that we would not be faced with this mess. Sir, on what basis?

Hon. F. J. STUART: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew continues to mislead this Honourable House. Sir, it is true that the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) was established some time in 2000 but this is the 2003/2004 Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, at page 43, there is a rubric that says: "Water with Care", and it deals with the Barbados Labour Party's policy on water. At page 44 it says that the Barbados Labour Party will ensure that the Barbados Water Authority becomes Fair Trading Commission related. This is their 2003/2008 Manifesto, seven years after the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) was set up. Therefore, they had enough time to do it.

3.30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. F. J. STUART: We are in office for 16 months, and yet we are being asked to do something that the Barbados Labour Party could not get done between 2000 and 2008.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was interrupted by the Attorney-General, the proposals were put in place. The regulatory unit was set up, Cabinet had already approved it, the legislation was there, the legislation came to this House and was laid in the House. The Democratic Labour Party has refused to debate it, but Sir, you know why? I am hoping that we are not staring the International Monetary Fund (IMF) straight in the face.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Democratic Labour Party had all intentions to bring the legislation first. I know the Attorney-General well and he would not be a party in Cabinet to bringing a piece of legislation to set up a regulatory unit, or rather to have the Fair Trading Commission established in a way that the water rates could be dealt with by that Commission and then decide that we are not going ahead with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are certain people in the Democratic Labour Party who I have confidence in, when it comes to proposals like that. I do not know much about their conduct otherwise, but we are dealing with their integrity when it comes to matters like these. They intended to bring the legislation but, Sir, you know what push them? Sir, I am a little worried because you remember the strictures that proceeded their fallout from grace with the Barbados electorate, when they were on the verge of going to the International Monetary Fund? Do you remember those strictures when a number of people were sent home and when they divided families in this country?

Sir, we came to office and we had to tell the IMF where to get off. Sir, now we have the IMF right at our doorsteps in the IMF 2008 Article IV Consultation and this is a recommendation to the Democratic Labour Party Government to increase the water rates or else, but Sir, not in that language.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this has already been made a document of the House. I am quoting from page 11 of the IMF 2008 Article IV Consultation, which has already been made a document of the House and if you want me, I will make it a document of the House now, if it has not been

done so. Sir, I am reading it and I will tell you that the question of the increase in VAT will come next. It says:

"adjusting prices of utilities and public services to reduce the budgetary impact of across-the-board subsidies and mitigate costly price distortions and automatic pass-through mechanism for fuel, together with adjustments in regulating prices for other subsidised goods and services such as natural gas, water and transportation."

Sir, this is in response to an IMF directive. We are not dealing with VAT, at this particular point in time, but in this same Paper and this is to come, the tax collection could be strengthened through improvement in the VAT system and it mentions the same Paper. Sir, I agree that we are not discussing VAT at this particular point, and I do not want to go any further in respect to VAT but...

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House again. If the Democratic Labour Party Government inherited a situation where there were VAT arrears outstanding well upwards of $100 million, left by the Barbados Labour Party, anybody is entitled to recommend that there be improvement in the collection, because VAT was not being collected by the previous Government, as it should have been collected. Sir, the Honourable Member does not know what he is talking about.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is interesting that he has addressed the question of VAT, which as I said already, is not really on the table, but I will have reasons to come back to it at some particular point in time. Sir, all we are saying is to let us have the debate with respect to the Fair Trading Commission, so that the water rates can be referred to the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, on what basis are you bringing these increases?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one would have thought that the question of organisational restructuring, institutional strengthening at the Barbados Water Authority and improving operational efficiencies would be matters that the Fair Trading Commission have to address. They would have to be satisfied that these things are done before you get an increase, infrastructural upgrade and expansion to meet new demands, expansion of sewerage service and water augmentation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we spoke about the desalination plants and the need to do this, is also reinforced by what is mentioned in the Budget of the Honourable Prime Minister. Mr. Deputy Speaker, before we could even think about increasing water rates, these are matters that must be addressed, like improving the management and upgrading all systems at the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what about the welfare cases? How will these be addressed? The Honourable Member for St. James Central spoke about the need to address profitability. Sir, in his own words, he said: "The level of expenditure had exceeded the level of revenue and, therefore, these have to be addressed". What is the position with the Transport Board? Are these to be addressed as well?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is this relevant to the discussion before us? We are dealing with the validation. I will allow a bit of latitude but you are going too far. Can we rein it in and get back to the question of the validation of the Bill?

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, all I am saying is that if you accept the need to deal with profitability in one Government institution, or if you ignore it in one, you have to state reasons why you are not ignoring it in the other one. You have to address the welfare cases and the old age pensioners. Sir, these are issues that you also have to address.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is all well and good for the Democratic Labour Party to come here and chastise the Barbados Labour Party Government for doing nothing for the last 14 years, but one would have thought that we were on auto pilot when you listen to them say that we did nothing. They speak about a mains replacement project as though a mains replacement programme never existed.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party instituted a mains replacement programme in 1997 and we did not ask the consumer to pay for that entire programme at one time.

H/A40/3.40 p.m. Sequence 27

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, any mains replacement programme that must be put in place at this particular point, must not come with a burden to the taxpayers of this country. The least you could do is straddle over the period of the programme, but not so.

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

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Sir, what we are forgetting is, that the Democratic Labour Party, in 1986, when there was profitability at the Barbados Water Authority, $42 million, the figure is $42 million, was taken - I was Minister responsible for water - Sir, $42 million was taken out of the coffers of the Barbados Water Authority and placed in the Consolidated Fund. If the Barbados Water Authority had those funds at their disposal, they would have been - you can check with the Parliamentary Secretary, $42 million.

Hon. F. J. STUART: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is again misleading the Honourable House. It is true that the Democratic Labour Party, in 1986, moved $32 million, I think it is, from the Barbados Water Authority's account to the Consolidated Fund. When money is put in the Consolidated Fund, it is for the service of the island. It was not to be spent privately by Errol Barrow or anybody else. Given the excess of that earned in Barbados in 1986, the previous Government was in a very good position to put, not $32 million in an account for the Barbados Water Authority, but put $200 million, and they did not.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: I do not know the argument, but I will ignore that point. We are dealing with profitability because you have taken $42 million from the account of the Barbados Water Authority, and if they had used the opportunity to utilise the $42 million, they would have been able to improve the efficiency at the Barbados Water Authority, and they would have been able to complete the Mains Replacement Programme.

Sir, the question of desalination, the problems to which the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, and the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, with respect to the private sector being involved, they would have had enough funds to deal with these issues, but the Barbados Water Authority was crippled by that Democratic Labour Party Administration, and now they are talking about the level of profitability has shrunk and are blaming the Barbados Labour Party Government for what has transpired, due to their shortcomings.

Sir, even if, when you take all of this into consideration, and you even had the thought of increasing the water rates, not at this time. By raising the water rates you are increasing every single item in this country. You are attacking all of the small business operators in this country. You are attacking the hotels. It is an attack on the hotels in this country. The tourism sector is under threat and a number of hotels are on the verge of closing down. They owe the Barbados Water Authority millions of dollars.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Andrew, can you please wrap up now?

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: At this stage they are already in debt to Government, and now you are bringing these important institutions at this particular point in time to their knees. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that this decision by Government to increase water rates at this time is ill-advised and we do not support it.

I thank you.

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I join this debate perhaps to restore some seriousness to the analysis. First of all, let me indicate that the substantive Minister was due back today, but he had some complications with his flight and, therefore, I thought that in the interest of Parliament that the person who led off the debate in this exercise, should be an acting Minister in the House, that is why the Honourable Member for St. James Central is Acting Minister.

I said that because there is a certain jejune and petulant way, in which the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, with his mind uncluttered by anything serious, can get up in this Honourable House and drop a lot of - I would not want to call it low talk, because I know you would not allow that, nor would the Speaker, but the kind of talk which is frivolous and childish. He does not do himself or this Honourable House any great service in that regard. After all, he also had an example before him, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, who himself takes his parliamentary duties extremely frivolously and petulantly. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew sat in this Honourable House as a Member. He became a Member in 1991 and I became a Member in 1987. He spoke from 1991 until he was unceremoniously dismissed as a Minister in this country by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter. Then he became mute, absent and silent.

When water rates increased in 2005, he was no way around. He did not even come to the House of Assembly. He only came when they talked about property transfer tax, which affected his clients, not a word, and he was on the Back Bench so he could have asked for the Whip to be off. I have sat on the Back Bench and criticised, within reason, Front Bench policies. I was not going to allow my parliamentary integrity to be washed away, simply because I was in a petulant childish mood because somebody fired me for valid reasons.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am going to get to the debate but I am getting to you first because I just heard the Honourable Member for St. Andrew parading in here, but he was silent in 2005. In fact, everybody was silent because the Barbados Labour Party illegally, and if you read the Nation's editorial, the Nation Newspaper took up the cudgel of a member of the Executive of the Honourable Member for St. Andrew's Branch. That is why I tell you that he is no example to follow.

A gentleman, who is on the Branch Executive, has been parading that for a few months we are out of the time, for which Regulations should be laid in respect of the Road

Traffic Act, and he is advising people that they should not pay this and they should not pay that, but in 2005, people were forced in this country to pay increased water rates and their water was turned off illegally for not paying those rates.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I will raise my voice. I am not going to do like you and keep quiet, because I am paid to come in here and speak to the people of this country, something you did not do for 10 years as a Parliamentarian in this country, because you were petulant for being dismissed.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Andrew, can you please keep quiet so that I can hear the Honourable Member for St. John, and also that other Honourable Members can hear him clearly?

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: There were people whose water was cut off in Barbados because they did not pay rates that were deemed illegally charged by the Barbados Water Authority, while the Honourable Member for St. Andrew was a Member of the Barbados Labour Party Government. There were people in St. Andrew whose water was cut off in Barbados and the Honourable Member remained mute, said nothing, did not turn up to Parliament, did not lift a finger, was absent without leave or cause. A total dereliction of Parliamentary duty and the Barbados Water Authority was going in St. Andrew and cutting off their water.

H A40 3.50 p.m. Sequence 28

Tuesday June 30, 2009

House A40, Sequence 29, 3.50 p.m.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: They could not reach him and he was drawing a salary to represent them. Their water was being cut off for not paying rates that were illegally being charged to them.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. It is good to hear the Honourable Member speak about being silenced, but when there were only two Members of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy had him silenced, and nobody needs to be reminded about that. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy had the Honourable Member, who came in here in a wheelbarrow, silenced.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House in that he is creating the impression that the people in St. Andrew's water was being cut off for non-payment of bills. He probably might be speaking about the people in St. John, but certainly, the people in St. Andrew were complaining for not having a proper supply of water, the efficiencies that should have been addressed, if this matter had gone to the Fair Trading Commission. Those are the problems that we were dealing with, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Nothing to do with rates.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not see any point of order. The Honourable Member for St. John please continue.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I was in court, I would say that I adopt the Honourable Member's arguments. The people of St. Andrew could not find him and that is why he did not know their water was being turned off. He was not representing them. He was representing the people who were buying properties on the West Coast, who were paying Transfer Tax.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: He would rush in the House every time they adjusted the Transfer Tax and deliver a big long speech about Transfer Tax, and tried to pull me in it and said I would know. I never said anything because I had more important things to talk about.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You cannot warn me about anything. I am going to go a step further and say this about the Honourable Member, in relation to the point of order allegedly that he just made.

Sir, all of those things that he said needed to be done at the Barbados Water Authority, the Honourable Member was the Minister, for the short time that he was a Minister, responsible for the Barbados Water Authority and he left a very odious legacy, as the Minister responsible for the Barbados Water Authority in this country. Therefore, if people in St. Andrew do not have water, as a result of a lack of infrastructure, it is the Honourable Member for St. Andrew that they are to blame for that.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Oh, he did not know he was the Minister. Well, that is why he was unceremoniously delivered from his first gainful employment in this country.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph said we are like an ostrich in our sand. We are burying our heads in

the sand by not giving the public reasons for the increase in water rates.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West spoke very early about the Barbados Water Authority and was the person who brought the legislation before this House, which still stands on the Order Paper, in respect of the Barbados Water Authority, because we had always intended to bring it under the rubric of the Fair Trading Commission. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East spoke about it in the Budget debate, in response to what I said in the Budget debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I went to the Barbados Water Authority myself because I said that I wanted to speak to the workers and to the management of the Barbados Water Authority, and give them a chance, instead of us just simply imposing the rates, having a dialogue with them about how efficiencies can be improved and what contribution they can make to the development of this country, to help Government achieve its objectives.

This debate cannot only be about water rates, unless you are a very short-sighted individual. It is clear that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew falls into that category.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Let us face it. Sir, this is about a greater environmental issue. It is about the issue of water policy in Barbados, because the capital expenditure that would have to be incurred in this country to bring the Barbados Water Authority up to its optimal level of operation, as well as to pursue all of the critical projects that need to be pursued in that area, the treatment of sewerage and the reverse osmosis, the facility in the Belle and extended areas, we are talking about $800 million in capital expenditure.

I have already spoken to the nation about Barbados' debt profile. I have already spoken about our fiscal position. If when we collected and raked in $400 million more in VAT than was anticipated, the then Government had planned to use that money as carefully - and the Honourable Member was the Minister responsible for the Barbados Water Authority then, and he did not get a cent more from Government to carry out all of those major reforms that he now says that in 14 months we are to do, when he had 14 years in which to do them, which is 12 times the time that we have had in office, in the past 16 years. Sir, that is the point that needs to be made. Therefore, I do not accept any of the kind of analysis, which the Honourable Member for St. Andrew brought to this particular debate.

Sir, the "Nation" editorial - I got interrupted at that point - talked about tyrannical leaders who could impose taxation by fiat - picking up on a point made by the Honourable Member for St. Andrew's branch member and saying that the reason for this legislation is to protect Barbadians against these - and the impression was being given that if you do not bring the legislation within the specified time, you can be likened to a tyrannical leader, imposing taxation unjustifiably on the public.

I am saying to the Honourable Member that if that editorial is to be believed and I cannot refer to it, Sir, in this House - would be described as tyrannical individuals, who imposed various taxes - because it is not only water rates. We had to do other validations. We are saying that if we have to do validations, we will do them, and sometimes validations are done without demure.

The previous Government did validations. They validated some of the things that the Democratic Labour Party had done prior to 1994, and they made a big hue and cry about it, and nobody bothered about the noise they were keeping. They were entitled to keep noise.

As the former Honourable Member for St. George South said in many of those debates, today it is for me and tomorrow it is for you.

House A40, Sequence 29, 4.00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I will say that by and large, I have never witnessed a Member of the Opposition with his hands so dirty with the mud of complicity, as the Honourable Member for St. Joseph who was the Attorney-General when the Act was not drafted and brought to this House. The Honourable Member jumped up in the House this morning and acted as if his hands are clean and he knows nothing about it and said that we are burying our heads in the sand like an ostrich. He said his hairdresser is...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is impugning improper motives to the Honourable Member for St. Joseph. The reality is that the Honourable Member is aware that these matters do not start in the Attorney-General's Office, that they start in the line Ministries. I would not blame the Attorney-General, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, for not bringing the road taxes here that the Honourable Member for St. John announced last year. It is the responsibility of the line Ministry, therefore, I ask that those words about complicity be withdrawn.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: They are too thin-skinned on That Side, Sir. Nobody is imputing any

improper motives. I think we are all shocked and alarmed. I doubt that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, if a Validation Bill had to be brought, would come in this Chamber and speak the way that the Honourable Member for St. Joseph spoke.

We would accept that we were unable to do it in time and that there are vicissitudes and other factors that militate against being able to comply with the requirement and would have apologised to the House, but the Honourable Member for St. Joseph rushed in where angels fear to tread and acted, as if he had no role to play and that the Democratic Labour Party is bringing this thing and we are keeping noise about a validation, but all we did, was to bring a validating bill for actions that we are not responsible for.

The Honourable Members on the Other Side, in these circumstances, were able to debate water rates. There are three matters before the House in relation to water rates, the Bill relating to bring it under the Fair Trading Commission, the Bill dealing with the validation and the regulation for which you can bring a Resolution to debate water rates.

In 2005, water rates were increased and nothing was brought before the House of Assembly, and there were no debates in this Chamber in relation to the increase of water rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I bet you all would not believe that one of the principal spokespersons for the Barbados Labour Party in the past year - I understand it - I do not read them - somebody told me about it today - wrote two columns in which he said that he had carried out an analysis and argued that the water rates in Barbados were too high and should be reduced.

The Honourable Member for St. Andrew said he has no problem with the increase in water rates, it is the timing of it. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph said he has no problem with it, but nobody gave a reason. Another former Honourable Member and a finance advisor to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said that water rates could be significantly reduced, that price gouging is going on in the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where is the Barbados Labour Party in relation to this issue? We have set out very clearly the reasons why we are introducing the measures. One of the arguments on the Other Side has been that all of the things that we are to do, we should hold strain on. We should not undertake reforms in the Barbados Water Authority at this time, this is not the time to do it.

We should not build a cruise ship pier at this time. We should not introduce Constituency Councils at this time. We should not open any new foreign missions, not even in the second leading economy of the world. We should not open one in China. We should not open one in Cuba with which Barbados has had diplomatic relations since 1972, and we should not open one in Brazil which is the leading economy in our hemisphere after the United States of America and Canada. We are supposed to put all those things on hold and then when you do not do them, they would say you have been in office for 14 months and you have not achieved anything.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to grapple with the situation in relation to water because we believe that it is important and critical to the development of this country. We cannot extend the boundaries of our development without addressing the issue of water distribution, particularly in relation to housing and other physical improvements in our landscape.

We are a country that is susceptible to all kinds of environmental concerns. We are also a water-scarce country, and therefore, we should be planning for the future. This is not an investment for us now, this is an investment for future generations of Barbadians and for the next wave of development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every time there is a debate in here, we hear talk about the issue is not about stabilisation. The issue is what is Barbados going to be like coming out of the recession?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every week we put initiatives before this Chamber that are going to be helpful in terms of our development coming out of the recession. The Opposition said they agreed with them, but now is not the time. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if now is not the time, when will be the time to deal with the issue of a commodity that we cannot live without? There are other things we can live without, but life as we know it would not be possible without water. Therefore, we have to look at this matter extremely seriously.

We are not looking to undertake the cost of this programme in one fiscal year, and we never said so, so the criticism that we are trying to do it in one fell swoop is also a non-sensical criticism, because we have said publicly that this programme of mains replacement and other capital development, have to take place over a period of time. Therefore, we are going to start with the replacement of the mains, which is a very critical activity, the rebranding exercise and the establishment of the unit, that would deal with regulatory issues, and the construction of the headquarters for the Barbados Water Authority. Those will be the major initiatives. Some of the work has been done on other areas like the facility for the reverse osmosis plant at The Belle. I believe that we will be able to factor those

projects, into our development plans over the medium-term.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only other thing that I want to add relates to the comments made by the Honourable Member for St. Andrew. Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing is wrong with somebody remaining in the year 1991 or the year 1993. If that was your heyday, you should continue to speak about it. It certainly was the time when the Honourable Member was most active until recently, but his recent activities are less explainable than in 1991.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember that in 1990, I think it was, the late Sir James Cameron Tudor wrote an article in the "Nation" Newspaper, in which in a mischievous way he said that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew was an excellent organiser and is the one to beat in the Barbados Labour Party.

Although the Honourable Member for St. Andrew obviously did not see it as a bit of mischief, he took it very seriously, but you should never believe your own propaganda, or other people's propaganda about you. That was at the time when the Party was going through its turmoil and looking for a leader. He was most active then and I must say that he then went into abeyance, for a long period of time, but now is active once again and promoting himself as a champion Party Chairman and is now ready for greater things.

House A40 Sequence 30

4.10 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: In 1993, the question of a standby arrangement with Barbados was being discussed. Sir, three of the issues were, National Housing Corporation rent, bus fares and water rates.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John, I would have informed you that you had five minutes more but I have checked the Standing Orders and based on the Order, you have unlimited time.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Thank you, Sir, I do not want much of that time. I very much appreciate it and I am guided by you.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: No, I do not want to. I am going to remind you of facts. I am not going to do like you and become reckless and disjointed. I am going to be very focussed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party increased water rates in 2005. The public did not know that because the Barbados Labour Party did bring legislation before Parliament, the place where the peoples' business is discussed. The relevant regulations were not passed to give effect to those water rates and it was done illegally, but we were being attacked all of that time. We are still being attacked in 2005, for water rates that we did not increase. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in relation to rental units of the National Housing Corporation, in due course the Honourable Member for St. Philip North will produce documentation, which will establish that the Honourable Member for St. Peter had given a directive, that economic rates were to be charged in respect of those rental units. I am not going to steal the Minister's thunder on that, but when I saw it, I was aghast.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the third area was bus fares. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party announced an increase in bus fares. When that announcement was made, Wood and the whole Cabinet were slapped down. Sir, subsequently, I believe the Minister lost his portfolio and there were reallocations when he sought to increase bus fares.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it just goes to show how fickle some of these arguments can become. Sir, it would be good if our eldest statesman in here, I believe the Honourable Member for St. Andrew is the oldest person in here right now, would rise to the challenge and the promise with which they were first elected to this Honourable Chamber. Sir, it would be good if the Other Side would stop playing the kind of politics we would have heard of today, which were a lot of petty remarks here and there, which were put together in a potpourri which had a little heat, a little fire, a little nonsense and a little verse.

Sir, it was nothing that adds up to a statement of policy by a man, who in this country has had the experience of serving as a Minister of Tourism, which means he knows about physical development in the tourism sector and about how critical our water resources are going to be for that purpose.

The Honourable Member also served as Minister of Public Works, as Minister of Housing and Lands, and as Minister with responsibility for the Barbados Water Authority. Sir, with all that experience, none of the quality of a debate that you would have expected came from the Honourable Member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, I would excuse the Honourable Member for St. Joseph. I have always said the Honourable Member has not had a good tutor nor a good example. I would also excuse the others, but I am not going to excuse the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, because I expected that on this occasion, if the Honourable Member had nothing to say, the Honourable Member would have

remained silent, but for the Honourable Member to enter this debate in the way that he did, not to raise an alarm about the major concerns about the future of the Barbados Water Authority...

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member should have been most concerned, because it is his constituents that constitute the largest corpus of staff in the Barbados Water Authority. I went there to give them the undertaking that not one of them would be sent home, because every week the Honourable Member gets in here and says that we are sending people home. If there is a contribution that he should have made to the Barbados Water Authority debate should have been that. Sir, the public should judge him by that too, but I am not going into that at this time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I am trying to say, is that the Honourable Member should have been able to point out to future generations why this exercise is so critical to our national development. Sir, instead of that, the Honourable Member has failed once again. He has failed in his responsibility to this nation and has failed in his obligations, to the people of St. Andrew.

Sir, I entered this debate to register my total disappointment with that kind of politics and that kind of exercise to which we were treated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I compliment the Honourable Member for St. James Central for taking a difficult issue and having the courage and fortitude to do his job in this Honourable Chamber, without fear or favour. I compliment the other Honourable Members on This Side who spoke to the specific challenges in various areas of our concern, in relation to the operations of the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can assure Barbadians that the increase in water rates, though it will create some element of hardship, will be a hardship worth bearing, and that Barbadians have been able to bear hardships before. I know when our people believe what they are doing, would ultimately lead to an enhancement of their way of life, they would go along with any Government that is interested in that enhancement.

We have seen that, time and time again, in Barbados, and they are not going to allow any petty backward comments or any small-minded viewpoints or views, coming from small minds to confuse them about where their national obligation should lie. Nobody, least of all the Democratic Labour Party, wants to be in a position to have to increase water rates at this time. The warnings have been there. We have come to a conclusion, the matter is now before this Honourable House and I urge Honourable Members to give this matter their full support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. R. St.C TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North, let me draw to your attention that as I sat in this Chair, you entered this Honourable Chamber and paid no respect to this Chair, so that when you rose just now I could not see you. You are a senior Honourable Member of this Honourable House and know what you are supposed to do in order to be acknowledged. You have to behave in a certain manner and you are fully aware of the Standing Orders.

Mr. R. St.C TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, whenever I leave this Honourable Chamber and reach the point of exit, I turn and bow to the Chair. Whenever I enter this Honourable Chamber and I reach my seat, I bow to the Chair. That is exactly what I do whenever I am leaving or entering this Honourable Chamber. If you did not see me bowing to you when I got to my seat, I will do so now. Good, matter solved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be brief in this debate. I heard the issue of the increase in water rates taking up some time in the debate today in this Honourable Chamber. Sir, Honourable Members on This Side appeared somewhat surprised that Government was going through with this. I would very much confess that I was not, for the simple reason that from day one the new Administration signalled to the consumers of this country that they were second-best.

Sir, prior to January 15, 2008, because of the actions of the last Administration, the issue of consumer rights has been taken from the level of a mere department in a Ministry and elevated to the point where it formed the title of the Ministry. For the first time since 1999, we had a Ministry of Consumer Affairs, putting the interest of consumers paramount to the development of this country.

4.20 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, come January 2008, the Prime Minister, in his wisdom, his very first announcement was that there was no longer going to be a Ministry of Consumer Affairs, but now a Ministry of Trade, Industry and Commerce in which the issue of consumer rights would once again be buried somewhere in the background.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the tone was set from January 1998, as to where consumers would stand in relation to this Government. Sir, nobody should be surprised what the Government perceives, in a matter like this, without any consultation at all to the consumers of this Government.

Sir, really this is where the issue of the Fair Trading Commission comes into the picture, because from as far back as April last year, a Bill was brought to this Chamber seeking a very simple amendment to place the supply of water under the auspices of the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, for reasons unknown to anyone, that Bill has never been debated and we come here today to see that unilaterally, without any consultation at all, that Government has indicated that effective tomorrow, Barbadians would be seeing a 60 per cent increase in water rates.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Well, it was prior to today. Sir, the Fair Trading Commission should be making the determination whether there will be an increase in water rates or not.

Sir, in January 2008, the process of getting the supply of water before the Fair Trading Commission, was well-advanced and there is no justification for sitting on the matter for 18 months, getting the matter under the Fair Trading Commission and then coming to Parliament to say that with the total non-involvement of any consumer at all, they are going to impose on the backs of the consumers an increase in water rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the whole purpose of the Fair Trading Commission, was to ensure that the ordinary Barbadian would be able to have his day in court, as it were. I remember a few weeks ago being in my Constituency visiting and on leaving a house, I heard a shhhhhhh, a loud noise and when I checked, it was a water main that had burst. I rushed back inside and asked a gentlemen if he was aware that water was outside gushing from this pipe. He said yes, that the water was gushing from the pipe for four weeks. I asked him if he had called the Barbados Water Authority. He said he had called the Barbados Water Authority on a couple of occasions, was told that they had other issues to deal with and that they could not get to him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I picked up my cell phone, called the General Manager of the Barbados Water Authority who has, at all times, been extremely co-operative and fast in his response any time I called. Sir, I compliment him and the staff of the Barbados Water Authority for a job well done, over the years. Sir, he was overseas at the time, he took my call, I explained to him what was happening and where it was happening. He gave me the assurance he would fix it and, Sir, it was fixed in a very short time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are now being told that there was a leak for four weeks. Sir, if there are inefficiencies at an institution, it suggests that automatically it is passed on to consumers without them having any say at all in their own destiny.

Sir, the purpose of the Fair Trading Commission was to allow ordinary Barbadians to be able to go to the Fair Trading Commission, call for and to see the books of the institution and all the operations of the institution, to see all the inefficiencies of the organisation and to see what it is you are being called upon to pay for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government has decided that rather than pursue the amendment it brought in April last year before this Chamber, that it was going to abandon that and, instead unilaterally, impose...

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member was not in here this morning and for most of the day and, therefore, would not be aware that in the principal presentation on behalf of the Opposition, which I assumed he did not listen to, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph was corrected. The Government is not withdrawing any legislation. We agreed that we would undertake the rate increase via this route and that, immediately thereafter, we would pass the legislation to place the Barbados Water Authority under the operations of the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, that was established this morning and I am most surprised, as I have said, to hear that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, who should have been following these parliamentary matters, is unaware of that.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, it is a question of putting the cart before the horse. There is no way that an increase in water rates should be inflicted upon the people of this country before it is determined by the Fair Trading Commission.

Sir, not only that, we went a long way to ensure that consumers led the charge in this regard. Not only did we say they would have a right to the books, et cetera of the institution, but we provided a public counsel, a qualified attorney-at-Law, to provide legal services to the public of Barbados, free of cost, paid for by Government, to argue the case for the average ordinary citizen, who would not be qualified, able and know how to present an argument in a judicial setting. Sir, we provided counsel for that purpose and the Democratic Labour Party has by-passed all those systems and decided to get ahead of itself and propose a 60 per cent increase in water rates at this time, on the consumers of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe that consumers should be paramount in the scheme of things and, therefore, I am not entirely surprised, but we are astounded to see that the Government would, in these times, seek to make things harder for the consumers of this country. Sir,

when it comes to water, special considerations have to apply and, Sir, I am unapologetic for saying that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, water has been said by some, to be a fundamental human right because you cannot live without water.

Sir, maybe you could live without electricity, a telephone or a host of utilities, but you cannot live without water. Sir, Section 6 of the Barbados Water Authority Act encapsulates that sort of philosophy when it says that the "Authority", meaning the Barbados Water Authority shall, unless prevented by drought, other extraordinary event or unavoidable accident, provide to the public a supply of potable water for domestic purposes.

Sir, philosophically, therefore, the legislation recognises the right to water as being almost a fundamental human right. You should not be, especially at a time of hardship, moving in the direction of an increase in water rates. You cannot be because, Sir, you cannot live without water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you are going to look at the issue of adjusting water rates upward, then the Government, having decided it is going to take it upon itself to impose the increase, must be guided by a philosophy. Sir, the philosophy that must guide the Government in terms of what a water rate would be pitched at, the benchmark has to be affordability.

Sir, water has to be affordable to everybody, if not, what are you going to do? What kind of society would you expect to result by imposing a rate of water upon people who would not necessarily be able to pay the adjusted increased rate? What society would you be looking to produce?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the benchmark has to be affordability and Government cannot, in a room of 15 people or 16 people, on any Thursday, know what would be affordable to a consumer.

H/A40/4.30 p.m. Sequence 32

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, what is why, again, I must say that the matter ought to have been placed before the Fair Trading Commission, which would have possessed the competence to go into these matters, and extirpate information from the Barbados Water Authority to get to the root of the matter, to be able to decide what rate would be reasonable and what rate would be affordable.

Sir, I am saying there can be no increases in water rates in Barbados at this time, and indeed there ought not to be any for a long time. Sir, Barbadians cannot take any more pain. They cannot take any more pain from this Administration.

Sir, the price of everything in this country is going up. The Honourable Member for st. Joseph, today, was at pains to point out that consequent upon a Prime Minister giving the assurance that the cost of living was priority No. 1, priority No. 2 and priority No. 3, gas immediately went up, diesel went up, food went up, electricity went up, and now we are hearing that a commodity that is needed across every spectrum of the society, whether it is in business or in the home, that now is to go up and further pain, and as the Honourable Member for St. James North said, 'sufferation' is now to be inflicted on the backs of Barbadians who are reeling under the incompetence of an Administration that does not even know how to buffer a crisis. Sir, that is what is happening.

Sir, I am appalled, as Barbadians are, at this betrayal by the Government. I am as appalled as Barbadians are. Before coming here today I had to go and pay a bill, as I was there a lady came to me, a security guard, and said, "Mr. Toppin, how am I going to manage to pay this now?" I asked her who is her Parliamentary Representative. Sir, I must confess to you that she said, by name, "The Honourable Member for St. Michael East." I said, "Earlier today in Parliament the Honourable Member for St. Michael East spoke in support of the increase in water rates." I told her that when she gets her next water bill, and subsequent water bills, to make sure and go to him with the water bill, every single one.

Sir, I am now taking this opportunity to call on every single Barbadian who has as their Representative a Member of the Government to bombard their offices, go there early in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening and at night with your increased water bills. Go there and tell them that this water bill that they said is to be increased, that you want them to take on the responsibility in relation to paying it. If you cannot find the Members of Parliament, because I understand that you cannot find them, all the big clients they used to have, all of a sudden they are dwindling down. They cannot go there anymore now.

A certain one who used to walk through the City a lot, he is afraid to walk through the City anymore, especially in the Bolton Lane area. He does not venture there anymore now. The licks are too hot now. Well, if it is that they cannot be found, and they have become invisible men, when the Constituency Councils are launched on Sunday, make sure, Barbadians I am saying to you, go to these Constituency Councils with your bills.

It was portrayed in here that these Councils would be able to do every single thing under the sun. So I am saying

to Barbadians to take all of your bills either to your Member of Parliament, on the Government's Side, because they are the ones who voted for them, or get to the Constituency Councils fast with all of your problems, all your bills, repairs and everything, and your problems should be solved in all fairness.

Sir, I am not going to delay the Chamber anymore. It is really unbelievable that a Government, professing to be caring about people, would seek to add another burden on their backs at this time, especially water. Not only that, but it would seek to do so without involving, on even one single occasion, any consultation or participation at all by any one of these same persons, who would have been able to tend their views fully and have their day in Court, if the matter had gone before the Fair Trading Commission. I believe, to strengthen the point made by the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, this has a nasty stench of International Monetary Fund involvement.

Sir, it has a nasty stench of the International Monetary Fund involvement in some way, because it is unbelievable that a Government seeing a population reeling, as it is, would decide to impose a 60 per cent increase on the one commodity that an individual cannot live without. Sir, it is the most inhumane thing, and dastardly thing, that could be done by any Administration at any time. This Administration has the distinction of being the one that did it.

Sir, I am not going to support it. I am standing on the side of my colleagues on This Side. I am supporting the validation, but I am not supporting any increase in water rates at this time.

I thank you.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for recognising me. I did not anticipate that I would have to participate this afternoon in the debate. However, given some of the comments which I heard from the last speaker, and equally from the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, I thought it necessary to enter the debate, and in particular to make just a couple points. I will not delay the Honourable House, because I thought the Honourable Prime Minister did an excellent job in laying out the position of the Government, as did all the other Honourable Members on This Side, including particularly, the Honourable Member for St. James Central, who introduced the debate.

Sir, it is amazing. It is obvious that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North rushed out from where he was, came into the Chamber ultimately and uniquely ill-prepared for the debate just to put in the record that he does not support the increased water rates. He said absolutely nothing in relation to the Validation Bill.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: He does not understand. He does not intend to understand, and would not encourage his mind to try to understand what was in that particular part of the Bill, particularly since it speaks to the political malfeasance of the Barbados Labour Party Government, when they were in office. I think the Prime Minister spoke eloquently about that.

Sir, I was amazed. In fact, I was humoured when listening to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North saying that he was canvassing. He corrected himself and said, "I was visiting in my Constituency, and when I left a house that I was in I heard "ceeze", and when I looked, I saw a burst main, not a burst pipe, a burst main...". This is what the Honourable Member said: "I asked a neighbour how long that main was burst, and he said for four weeks."

Sir, I would never try to degrade neither him nor the House by saying that the Honourable Member is not telling the truth, or that he is a liar, because that would be unparliamentary, and I would have to withdraw it, but I had difficulty believing the story, as humourous as it was.

A40 4.40 p.m. Sequence 33

Tuesday June 30, 2009

House A40, Sequence 34, 4.40 p.m.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Sir, apparently, when he was going into the House, he did not hear, 'shhhh', 'shhhh', but he heard it when he came out and he then asked the neighbour how long the thing was burst, for four weeks, no water running down, no water collecting, but a burst main for four weeks and he only discovered that it was burst when he was coming out of the house, but he did not discover that when he was going in, which leads me to wonder and to ask what time of the night it was when he was going in the house, but I would not go there.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it really is amazing. We know, and we could get on This Side and parade all afternoon about the mismanagement of the Barbados Labour Party Government, in relation to the Barbados Water Authority, but we thought it better to try to lift the debate to discuss an issue which, obviously, is very central to the development of this country, in terms of its social development, its economic development and, indeed,

its physical development, than to get into a small talk and a cross talk over water rates.

The fact is that the Barbados Labour Party Government did not have the intestinal fortitude when, as they said and continue to say that, Barbados was doing its best, 14 years of the best of times, the economy growing by so much an amount, Value Added Tax collected more than $400 million in the first year - $18 million in all, over the period.

Barbados was doing so well in times of plenty and times of good when, in fact, the increase in water rates and the adjustments at the Barbados Water Authority ought to have been undertaken, but the Barbados Labour Party Government decided they could not bring themselves to muster the courage of principle, to muster the courage of thought, and to muster the courage of action, to do what was necessary in this country. Sir, you know, they left it for the Democratic Labour Party to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now they waltz up to Parliament, climb up on a high horse riding it all the way to hell, saying: oh, you are putting another burden on the people of Barbados, a burden which we inherited and therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, given the state of the Barbados Water Authority, which was profitable up to 2005...

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: In fact, that is the only year that it was profitable.

Sir, we can do two things. We could pretend that it does not exist and do not deal with it, or we can ask the public of Barbados in all seriousness and fairness, to walk with us on this obviously difficult journey, to ensure that we can bring a level of adjustment and readjustment to the Barbados Water Authority, so that it can become solvent, so that it can serve the public of Barbados, so that we can guarantee the boast that we make all over the world, that Barbados has the best water anywhere in this part of the hemisphere and indeed, in the entire world.

You cannot make that boast if you allow it to fall into disrepair. You cannot make that boast if you compromise the very integrity of the institution, the financial and commercial integrity of the institution, charged with the responsibility of collecting, procuring, treating and distributing water in Barbados.

Sir, what are we to do as a responsible Government? Turn our backs on this very important matter? Mr. Deputy Speaker, that would be irresponsible. What we are saying to the public of Barbados, yes, I have problems with water. I moved to St. Philip close to 10 years now and I complained to my MP, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North about low water pressure. He lives up there, so he knows what I am talking about. We complain about it all the time. Sir, up to Father's Day, I turned on the tap and there was no water. This is not new. This has been happening for a long time.

The fact of the matter is, that we recognise there are issues in the Barbados Water Authority and we have indicated, that we are going to tackle those issues. Sir, this is not just an increase in water rates. This is an increase that will go towards that major restructuring programme, that needs to take place at the Barbados Water Authority to ensure that we can guarantee the integrity of the system for generations to come, which is what the last Government ought to have done. Sir, they did not have the courage, did not have the fortitude to do it. Therefore, they compromised the integrity of the delivery of water in this country and the health of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there is any Party in this country responsible for the mess that is at the Barbados Water Authority and for the fact that we have had to increase rates today, is the Barbados Labour Party Government. Sir, understand that is what it is, understand that is where it is, so do not let us play the blame game.

Let us grow up and be mature enough to say as a Parliament that there is an issue, there is a major problem, and we are going to work as elected officials on behalf of the public of Barbados to correct that problem. There is no perfect time to increase rates, except when you want to say to wait until the economy was doing well. Why you did not increase them when the economy was doing well, under the Barbados Labour Party? Why did a whole Cabinet, under the chairmanship of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East take a decision to adjust water rates, and have it reversed the next week when the substantive Chairman of the Cabinet returned to the island?

It was announced.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, and as he smiles in so doing, I know that he feels that the same political games that he asked us not to engage in, he is now engaging in. It is a lie. It is untrue. And I ask him to withdraw it, Sir.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that at some time, a few years ago, the then Honourable Minister responsible for the Barbados Water Authority, a former Honourable Member for the Constituency of St. Philip South, I cannot call the name, made an announcement in Barbados that the Cabinet took a decision that water rates would be increased in Barbados.

Therefore, if I am wrong on that point - I do not think I am then. Therefore, I see no reason why to withdraw it.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is now trying to change his allegation. I am asking you for a ruling. His allegation was that I chaired the Cabinet when an increase for water rates was approved and that it was reversed the next week.

The very thing that we are here today doing is validating that increase, which was not only approved by the Cabinet, under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister, but was also executed. Therefore, the Honourable Member is talking all over his face. He is misleading the Chamber.

House A40, Sequence 34, 4.50 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Honourable Member wants me to say that event did not take place, I believe I would be distorting the facts by saying it did not take place because it did take place. The same Honourable Member came here with a Resolution for a large amount of money for the Barbados Water Authority to invest in the mains laying programme that seemingly, against what was promised, did not take place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that a substantial amount of money was voted by this Parliament for the then Government to improve the Barbados Water Authority, but they have absolutely nothing today to show for it. They weighed down the place with all the Barbados Labour Party supporters falling over each other and burdening them. I do not know if they were from St. Michael North East. I know the ones from St. Michael North East are in other places like the Urban Development Commission, but we would not go there. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that they are culpable in this respect, so we are not going to try to get into that wrangling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I realised there was this plan, apparently to identify me as the person responsible for increasing the water rates because they kept saying that it is the Minister of Social Care who chairs the Social Policy Committee that determined that water rates should go up. Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing could be more incorrect than that. There is only one committee that decided that rates would go up and that is the Cabinet. I am a member of the Cabinet and I take collective responsibility for that. There is no Social Policy Committee that determines anything about water rates.

The Honourable Member for St. Thomas parroted the Honourable Member for St. Joseph that we cut the budget of the Welfare Department. I had corrected this already, but the Honourable Member for St. Thomas has a distinct inability to understand the English language, written or spoken, even on a fair day.

I have said before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will say it again for the record of this House, that the failures of the previous Administration allowed a situation to develop and continue to persist where the Welfare Department was returning on average BDS$8 million to the Treasury when there are people all over my Constituency who could not get assistance from that Department.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I asked the question who is going through this, who is doing an analysis to ensure that we are reaching the people we need to reach, who is doing the systematic targeting, who is getting up and going out looking for it, all they could say is that you cut the rates, but you cannot cut something if you do not spend it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we took a decision as a Government, that there must be more precise targetting and that there must be better efficiency in the delivery of resources to persons. You cannot come and say you want $30 million when you know your capacity only allows you to spend $20 million, because when you tie up that $10 million, there is some other important Government programme that cannot get that support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you look at the information governing the payment of water rates at the Welfare Department, the average for every year is about $190 000 and the provision in there in terms of utilities is close to $400 000 on average, so we are well within range of any potential increase in water rates. In fact, we anticipate that with a 60 per cent increase, it would be about $214 000, so we still have scope to assist the poor in Barbados if that should arise.

We also have the resources provided for in the Poverty Alleviation Bureau which currently pays on average $107 000 in arrears, for water rates, because they do not necessarily pay the every day current rates for those who cannot pay, the elderly, the indigent and so forth. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you add 60 per cent, say probably $64 000, it will be $171 000 out of a budget of about $4 to $5 million, so there is nothing to alarm people about in this country. We have made provisions for these.

We recognise in our planning of the Estimates this was going to be a difficult year and we ensured that we created enough space, so that people in Barbados can get assistance, and so I want to dispel this foolishness that we hear from operatives of the Barbados Labour Party that we cut the Welfare Vote and that is causing people not to get money. It is untrue and I hope the Honourable Member for St. Thomas would stop making that non-point.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be sidetracked. In concluding, I want to say that I support this Bill. I know it would be difficult on some persons, but we would work with those persons to ensure that they can continue to access this very vital commodity and resource of our country. All of us would work to ensure that our constituents are given enough breathing space to be able to manage and those who are having difficulties, the agencies responsible will act and ensure that they can manage.

Sir, the one thing we would not do as a Government, is compromise the very integrity of this country. Mr. Deputy Speaker, from what I have read, seen and heard happening at the Barbados Water Authority, if we do not act now, 10 to 15 years down the road we are going to have a massive problem on our hands. It is going to seriously compromise the financial, physical, social and economic integrity of Barbados, and it will go on the record. If we were to take the decision not to act like the last Government did, we will be held responsible for a gross malfeasance on the people of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy that my colleagues and myself, led by the honourable Prime Minister, at least have the courage, even in these difficult times, to take decisions, which even though they may appear tough, are the right decisions to make at this point in time. Therefore, Sir, I want to give this every possible support and to make it clear to Barbadians, that this Government will only place burdens on them when it is necessary to do so in the interest of protecting Barbadians and Barbados' development.

I am obliged to you, Sir, and I thank you very much.

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

House A40 Sequence 35

5.00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise in this debate to contribute, but recognising that a debate that seeks to address the issue of water rates, as will be increased tomorrow by 60 per cent, in isolation from whatever else is happening in the economy, is a false debate.

Sir, I start from this premise because it is easy for us to construct all kinds of arguments in here to support why, on its own merits, increases may be desirable. Sir, in so doing, I want also to bring clarity to a number of issues, facts and developments as they surround the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt that a Validation Bill has been brought before this Honourable Chamber, as that is what we are debating. Sir, may I say, as I indicated earlier on a point of order, these things arise, very often, from the line Ministry not completing their work. It happened with the same Barbados Water Authority in 1997, when we had to validate water rates that were increased by the Democratic Labour Party. We in this Honourable Chamber will come shortly to validate the road taxes which the Prime Minister announced one year ago, in order to be able to give that legitimate authority.

Sir, I would want to say that every time we sought to validate, we did not castigate it as an illegal collection, as was done with the emotion in this Honourable Chamber today. Mr. Deputy Speaker, suffice it to say, it has been a feature of the modern governance of Barbados that validations have been successfully done by virtually every Government since Independence.

Sir, to get back to the point I made at the beginning, any debate in relation to an increase in the Barbados Water Authority rates by 60 per cent that is viewed without looking at what else is happening in this country is a false debate.

Sir, let us start from the beginning of this Government's term. This Government set out, as its main objective, the reduction of cost of living. The reduction of cost of living was its mantra throughout 2008, picking up from their campaign in 2007. Sir, this year, in 2009, they then added the objective of the maintenance of jobs.

Sir, if I am to judge this Government by the objectives that it has set itself, which are keeping the cost of living down and keeping people in work, I am saying to you that what stands out from this Government is a policy that has seen a consistent increase in rates, in particular in two rates, that has had a negative impact on both cost of living and jobs in this country. Those are the Government's energy policies where we saw a 77 per cent increase in diesel and a continued flow-through mechanism. Secondly, this 60 per cent increase in water rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South sotto voce is saying it is working. It is working in bringing prices up. It is working in keeping people out of jobs.

Sir, let us look at the facts we have in Barbados today. In the first quarter of this year, inflation is at 8.61 per cent. Let me break it down. You go into the supermarkets and you are paying more this year than you

were paying last year for food items. People who are on fixed salaries are finding it difficult to make ends meet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me go further. You have the situation where unemployment in the first quarter has also gone into double-digit figures. Sir, Honourable Members on This Side have already spoken about the phenomenon, that for the first time in the history of this country, since the Central Bank has been keeping statistics, more men are unemployed in Barbados today more so than women. These are men who headed households.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this debate comes against the backdrop of cost of living increases, that are trending towards double digits and unemployment that is already in double digits.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not have to tell you about the construction companies that have either laid off people or who have people working two weeks on, two weeks off. I do not have to ask you to walk through Broad Street or Swan Street and see the position with people in stores not being able to get sales.

I do not have to refer to the fact that the Barbados Shipping and Trading is now taking decisions to lay off people, in circumstances where the Prime Minister said he would not even let the ink dry on the deal. Therefore, the people working at Mannings lumberyard or people working at Seawell Air Services, who are due to go home or in some case have already gone home, still need water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is perhaps even more difficult for those who are still working on short time, people at chicken processing plants, people who would normally worked four or five days a week, who are now working two or three days a week. Sir, all this is prior to the imposition of these rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what do these rates mean in terms of jobs and cost of living? Sir, that is what it comes down to when we say that even though there may be an arguable case to look at how best we meet the Barbados Water Authority needs, now is not the time. If I may use the analogy that we have a population that is virtually struggling to keep their heads above the water, Sir, the one entity that could carry the debt for an extra year is the Government of Barbados, but what is not certain is whether those people who are struggling to keep their heads above water could stop themselves from drowning in debts, as a result of these new rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have listed them off but let me give examples, let me start with shops. Sir, shopkeepers already have to pay $1 000 fee imposed on them a year ago. That very shopkeeper who is paying a water bill of $l50 a month, now has to look for $90 more a month. Sir, when that is multiplied by l2 months, that works out to $840 a year. Therefore, this Government has caused the average small shop and the average rum shop in this country to pay at least $2 000 more in additional fees, without in any way increasing their sales. Sir, furthermore, their sales have gone down because the average person has less money in his pocket to spend.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, each of us goes into our Constituency and on Friday and Saturday nights every shopkeeper would report that he or she is selling less food and less drinks. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in relation to the food stuff, as you know, because you frequent one in my Constituency, people are crediting more and more goods, and more and more people are buying what they need for a day or two at a time instead of buying more. Therefore, the plight of the shopkeeper is in trouble.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us look at the plight of the single mother who is working at a fast-food restaurant, who is earning $6 an hour. In fact, in some cases, they are paid $5.89 an hour and are working 30 hours a week. Sir, that person is carrying home not even $l80 weekly sometimes. That person receives $720 monthly. When that person has to pay house rent at $400 a month, they have $320 left. If they spend $75 a week on food for themselves and their two children, that leaves them with $l20.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had my Constituency office checking the water rates of those households. In one particular instance, one household was paying a water bill of $36. That $36 now goes to $57.60, so that woman who is already under straightened circumstances, who is not entitled to welfare because she is working, she is not an elderly person, she is not an indigent person, she is not physically or mentally challenged. Sir, what we are saying is that it is going to inflict untold hardship on such persons.

5.10 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will not always be struggling to keep our heads above water and the reality is that we hope within a year or two that Barbadians can tread water again, swim, dive and do all those things without struggling to keep their heads above water but, Sir, you know what makes it even worse?

Sir, I have given you the individual circumstances and I can tell you about the women working at the gas stations who may be struggling to earn $225 or $250 a week. Sir, if they have three or four children, as in one case I have here, paying a water bill of $70 a month, Sir, they have to look now for another $42 to pay, when they are not getting any increase in their salaries.

Sir, in this Parliament just now, one of the workers who facilitates us, stopped me and asked how could the Government expect her to pay because her bill is almost $100 a month and she now has to look for $60 more a month and she does not have constant work every day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying to you that she is not entitled to welfare, the policemen are not entitled to welfare, the nurses are not entitled to welfare, the general workers, the clerical officers, the minibus drivers, none of them are entitled to welfare.

Sir, let us now go to the next level because the truth is, that we are facing an economic environment in which jobs are being lost at a rapid rate, sector by sector, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism.

Sir, the figures for the first five months of the year show that almost 22 000 less tourists have come in terms of long-stay visitors for this year than last year. It shows that cruise tourism is also down by 2.2 per cent and the figures in the first 10 days of June have us looking at a 20 per cent decrease already.

Now I say to you Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in those circumstances, it means that those businesses that are confronting difficulties are going to be challenged to maintain people in their jobs. Let us not even talk about profits because most of those businesses are cash-strapped. The evidence of what is happening in the corporate sector in Barbados is there for everyone.

Sir, last year, savings of business firms in Barbados dropped by $130 million. It meant that businesses were living off their savings in order to keep afloat and, Sir, we are saying to you that now is not the time to impose another cost on them that would further strain their cash flow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us look at it. The Government says that they recognize the problem and they brought a programme here to defer National Insurance for a year for businesses, but this will now compound the individual circumstances of those businesses in a way that they cannot give any guarantee to anybody to keep people employed, to keep people in jobs. Sir, that is what we mean about timing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did some research today and in one particular laundry in Bridgetown, their water bill is $8 000. They now have to look for $4 800 more a month because their bill is now $12 800. Sir, when you extrapolate that on a year, that is almost $60 000 more a year, which is the equivalent of three employees.

Sir, let us go to the chicken industry. The chicken industry is a water intensive industry at all levels and I have every reason to believe, that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central spoke to the same person I spoke to today, but I have not heard his voice in this debate on it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the cost of water to the chicken industry in Barbados is $1.2 million and a 60 per cent increase, is going to bring the water bill of the chicken industry, to another $750 000 more a year. Sir, now you cannot import foreign chicken and we are not suggesting that, so chances are the consumers are going to have to pay the increase, and already there is speculation that might lead to an increase of about 7 cents per kilogram for chicken.

Sir, the irony is, that we learned about the 60 per cent rate increase from the Minister of Agriculture, who with his other hat, is asking the chicken producer to drop the prices on chicken in Barbados. Sir, you are asking them to drop the price on chicken, but you then heard the news yesterday that they must now face $750 000 more in cost, in that industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I go on to hotels. Sir, a small hotel with a water bill of $5 000 a month will now face an increase of $3 000 more a month, which is $36 000 a year. A medium-sized hotel with a water bill of $12 000 a month will now face an increase from $12 000 a month to $19 200 and, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James Central gets up in here and leads this debate for validation today and not a word on a 60 per cent water increase that would send home his constituents in St. James Central, back where they live in Fitts Village, Bagatelle and Redman's Village. Sir, that is the insensitivity I am talking about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot quarrel with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North when he says that you have to go now and ask the Members of Parliament who supported this Bill how are you going to make that payment now.

Sir, it is not that there is not a valid case for dealing with water eventually, and I will show how it could be dealt with. Sir, a large hotel, $20 000 a month and $30 000 a month, depending on what hotel it is, would now face an increase of $12 000 a month, which is $150 000 a year, almost in increased cost at a time when 22 000 less visitors have come to Barbados in the first five months of the year. Sir, do not forget that reduced visitors mean reduced chicken purchases too, so that this economy is in the grips of stagnation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have rising unemployment; rising inflation. We have a drop in our reserves at an astronomical rate and, luckily, we had enough reserves there at $2.7 billion when we left to be able to give us that buffer for the last 18 months. Has this rate increase gone to the Social Partnership, when we have been told that all

other rate increases or layoffs, or short-time, must go to the Social Partnership? It may go to the Social Policy Committee of Cabinet, but it has not gone to the Social Partnership, to the best of my knowledge, Sir. Yet, this is going to inflict hardship across every household and business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am told that Banks Breweries or any other drinks manufacturers that use water will now face an astronomical increase in their operating expenses. I am told the increases can run as high as $800 000, as a result of this 60 per cent increase by Government. Sir, this action today will impose $800 000 more on an entity that cannot dare put up its prices because its competitors, Carib and Heineken, are not facing the same water increases and can still come in at the same lower prices into Barbados, as they were coming.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we say this, it is not because we begrudge the Government anything, it is not because we want to oppose for the sake of opposing, because there are measures that the Government has brought here that we have supported but, in our judgement, we do not believe that this is the right decision at this time for an economy that is facing serious problems, in relation to more people being laid off and in relation to keeping prices down.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we talk every day, the price of energy is inching up over $70 a barrel, so that you are going to have a double whammy. This is why we say to the Government, that in order to maintain jobs, you do not have an energy policy like the one you are pursuing and, certainly, not a water policy at this stage that will lead to that. Now, Barbados, for sure, is a water scarce country. I have listened to the Other Side, and other than the personal allegations and accusations, which I have come now to just dismiss because I do not think they know any better.

H/A40/5.20 p.m. sequence 37

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, when you hear them with it, you know they have nothing of substance to say. Sir, they have tried to confuse the public's mind about what is the agenda for the future, and what that has to do with the state of the finances at the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, let me go back, because I was intimately involved in this, just before I left Government, in terms of the capital programme of the Barbados Water Authority.

On November 5, 2007, the Planning and Priorities Committee, (PPC), the Sub-Committee that deals with infrastructure, took a decision to approve certain projects of the Barbados Water Authority. One of them was the Reverse Osmosis Plant, which you have heard the Government speak about over and over, today and before.

We felt then - even though PPC had taken the decision that Government should finance it - that it really ought to be a public/private partnership, because you were building a plant that would live, perhaps, beyond you and me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that would have a shelf life of 30-40 years and that it was better to allow the Private Sector to build that plant, to help us deal with the nitrate problems at the Belle, Codrington and Ashton Hall, which would lead to us being able to bring them back down, because there are accountable for 40 per cent of Barbados' water supply. Sir, I would have then got the Barbados Water Authority to go back, as Minister of Economic Affairs, and agree to carry a Cabinet Paper on November 15, 2007.

Sir, the Cabinet agreed on November 15, 2007, that not only would it change from public financing for the Belle Reverse Osmosis Plant, but it would also add Ashton Hall and advertise for that to be a public/private partnership.

Sir, the time line had the Government started it - because the Ads went out before the Government changed for requests for proposals - and the time line would have seen that Plant start in April or May 2008, and finished this year. But a Government that did nothing for 18 months, now wants to come and talk about it, as if it is now a new and fresh idea for them to do, that is the Reverse Osmosis Plant.

Sir, on that same date we took a decision to commission the Zoning Review, a review of the zones in Barbados for water, because in 1964, when Mr. Barrow settled the zoning of this country, there were major concerns in relation to biological contamination and not chemical contamination.

In addition, the technology that existed 40 years later, did not exist at the time when the Cabinet took that decision. So we recognise that we need an independent study, to advise the Government of Barbados about the zoning. I believe that study has been done and it is in the hands of the Government now for them to act upon.

Sir, we also took a decision that we would retrofit the Belle Pumping Station for $5 million, to allow for longer chlorine contact time to deal with some of the biological problems. That decision was taken. We took a decision that $6 million would have been given to the Barbados Water Authority in the next financial year, to prepare it for the Fair Trading Commission. That next financial year, in fact, is the year that this Government has been in office, and to date, even though the Bill has been before this Honourable House for 15 months, not a person

has told us whether any additional work has been done to prepare the Barbados Water Authority and bring it any closer to going to the Fair Trading Commission.

Sir, it is our contention that to set prices on the basis of inefficient systems - an inefficient system does not mean workers, it means systems - To set prices on the basis of inefficient systems may cause an artificial rise in prices in this country, simply because water is used by every household and every business, and that is still our position. I am happy that the Government has at least committed that it would continue with carrying it to the Fair Trading Commission, but I am sorry that it has been this delinquent in getting it there, particularly since we had taken a decision to apply the funds to it.

Sir, the last one, which should be of particular interest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that we would sewer - I hope you know about it. If they have not told you, I am telling you that the Barbados Labour Party Government agreed that we would sewer the Belle in the catchment area surrounding the Belle, Licorish Village, the Belle Gully, the Ivy, including where the Barbados Community College is. It would cost $24 million and we would do it, avoiding the massive relocation of residents in that area, because of the number of persons that have settled over the last 30 to 40 years.

Sir, all of these relate to capital expenditure. I have explained how you can deal with a public/private partnership, certainly, for the most expensive of it, the Reverse Osmosis Plant, without having to put an additional burden on the Barbados Water Authority, in terms of capital expenditure or raising that kind of debt at this stage.

In addition to all of that, that same Cabinet Meeting took a decision on a five-year Mains Replacement Programme for $50 million, which is the very programme the Prime Minister is talking about, and the Minister has been talking about, that should have started a year ago, and that has not started, but decided on since the year before.

Sir, I am saying to you, that you cannot seek to pay for capital expenditure out of your recurring inflows. You have to be able to raise that money, because you want to pay it back over 20 or 30 years, because the life span of the mains that you are putting in, in fact, may well be 40, 50 or 60 years. The ones that we are replacing have been in the ground for a 100 years, and we are in no different a position than Trinidad, Jamaica or the Bahamas, all of whom are facing the prospects of having to replace colonial infrastructure, laid in the days of Queen Victoria. That is when it was laid.

Sir, I believe that a sensible policy would see us every year spending money on a replacement of a portion of the Mains Replacement Programme, but the Mains Replacement Programme started under the Honourable Member for St. Andrew. I remember when we first took the presentation in 1997. When you hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West say that it did not get off the ground, he was out of the Chamber when the Honourable Member for St. Thomas gave details of the mains that were laid in recent years. The Barbados Water Authority can give him chapter and verse of the mains that have been laid since 1998.

Let us not get into this kind of debate and recognise that it is in the interest of Barbados, that there be an annual Mains Replacement Programme that over the course of 25 years, sees us replace the entire mains system as required, as is done in other countries of the world.

Sir, I go further. Let us recognise that no doubt, there is a case for financial assistance to the Barbados Water Authority, in order to meet its operating deficit, but the question that this Parliament must ask itself today is, can the people and businesses of Barbados afford to carry the cost of the Barbados Water Authority, at the very time when they are struggling to keep their heads above water?

Can a Government be serious about lowering the cost of living to ease the burden on people? And more important, perhaps, than even that, keeping people in jobs, but at the same time, execute two policies that by their very nature, affect every single firm and household in this country, energy prices and the pricing of water?

Will the Government of Barbados be bankrupt by carrying and helping financially, the Barbados Water Authority for another year to 18 months? No, it will not be.

The Honourable Member for St. Thomas has already given the example of the $20 million, almost, $19 million to be precise, that was written off for the Turf Club. We were told by the Prime Minister that money is to help sustain jobs in the racing industry, and in good times we might agree, but that money could better be spent now in supporting the Barbados Water Authority and insulating businesses from having to face the decision to lay off people in this country.

Equally, when people see that the Government is prepared to spend $2.8 million in catering for the next six weeks in Camps, at a time when people like the lady who works in this Parliament does not know how she will pay her water bills, because she is down to three days a week working, then people must feel resentful.

H A40 5.30 p.m. Sequence 38

Tuesday June 30, 2009

House A40, Sequence 39, 5.30 p.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, people must feel resentful that they are not in a position to meet those water bills, but the Government can take up $2.8 million and spend for food in six weeks, where traditionally, people would normally have brought sandwiches or whatever and camp directors would make sure that every child ate in this country.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: That is a fact. All of us have known what it is to pay camp fees for constituents who could not afford to pay them themselves. Therefore it is a question of priorities.

On Sunday coming, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West will launch a programme that will take $6 million and put it in the hands of Councils, at a time when those same people at the Councils may not have jobs in the chicken industry, may not have jobs in the hotel sector, may not have jobs in the construction sector, and we ask how the Barbados Water Authority can be supported at this stage and for how long.

There is a case for supporting the Barbados Water Authority in terms of its operational deficit. There is a case also for Barbadians to understand that the Public Sector Investment Programme that we will have in this country in the next decade, must put water first, in terms of its capital programmes, but it means that we are going to have to say no to other things.

Sir, we cannot now, because if hotels close in this country, if chicken farms close in this country, if small farms close, if hairdressers close, if laundries close, when there are signs of economic growth again, there will be no businesses there to exploit the growth opportunities that will come.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, that is why we say that the most important thing is, for the Government to allow people to keep their heads above water.

Sir, this is a Government that believes in pricing people out of business. This is a Government that has made a principle of pricing into unemployment. This is a Government that has priced people into hardship, and this has nothing to do with the international environment. A 60 per cent increase in the Barbados Water Authority lies fully and squarely, at the feet of the Democratic Labour Party. It has nothing to do with the external environment.

Similarly, Sir, I say to you that the increase in fees in road taxes, trying to pay for a Highway in three years, when the Highway will have a shelf life of 30 to 40 years, is economic folly, and wreaking hardship on Barbadians. I can only appeal to this Government. I believe that they feel they are doing the right thing, but I believe, Sir, that they are being advised by obviously someone who does not interact with real people, in real circumstances.

I can only say, Sir, that to be able to preach fiscal prudence at the expense of people's lives - we have had two restauranteurs who have created suicide in this country in the last two weeks. We have had other implications for people who cannot make ends meet and being forced to give up their houses and to move back home. These people, Sir, cannot make ends meet.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I am saying to you, Sir, that this is not an easy decision, but we believe that there are enough new initiatives that the Government is trying to put in place, that the Government would have been better advised to focus on making sure that the people in manufacturing, agriculture, tourism and in the distributive trades, do not have to face the kinds of decisions that they have to face.

Sir, if we thought May, June were bad, the forward projects for bookings in this country in the tourism sector for July, August and September are worse. We are confronting a serious situation in this country and I say to you, that now is not the time to douse people with more prices, more fees, in a way that they cannot meet what they have to face.

I want also to say, Sir, I believe there is a legitimate case for water conservation. I make the appeal to all Barbadians that, yes, irrespective of what the Government does, we have a responsibility to reduce water usage in this country, because we are a water scarce country. The Opposition will support any programme that the Barbados Water Authority wants to implement that calls for water conservation.

I also say to you, Sir, that at the same time however, we have had as a nation to face the prospect that swine flu is around, and the one thing that you have to do to cause yourself to be insulated from swine flu, is to wash your hands, which means that there would have been a natural increase anyhow, in the volume of water that would otherwise be used. Sir, now is not the time and we ask Government to hold strain. Let us see ourselves through the end of this year.

This Order has to be brought back anyhow, because it is wrong in relation to Clause 1 and we hope that when they bring it back, they would have gone back through it again with the Barbados Water Authority people, in relation to Clause 1.

I hope and appeal to the Government in the same way that you could say in the Budget debate, that 100 per cent was too arduous an increase, the increase as recommended by some analysts was in the vicinity of 100 per cent of existing rates. It means that the Government is helping to finance the difference between a 60 per cent increase and a 100 per cent increase. Therefore, if you could finance that difference, why can you not finance the difference and keep the rates off people until they can see themselves safe onshore, out of the water, and out of danger of drowning under the prices that face them in this country?

The Prime Minister said then that I considered this high and not practical in the current economic environment. It is the view of the Opposition, Sir, that 60 per cent is high and not practical in the current economic environment and that the Government ought to carry the burden for the next six months to a year, to allow people to be able to adjust themselves, keep people in work and not have businesses face the prospect of almost $800 000 increases, $600 000 increases, $250 000 increases.

I am also reliably informed, Sir, that the Barbados Manufacturing Association made an appeal to the Government for special rates for manufacturers, but what has come today Sir, has no special rate for manufacturers. They will pay the same 60 per cent across the board, and for those industries that are water intensive like chicken processing, soft drinks and breweries, et cetera, they are going to feel the brunt of this adjustment.

This is not a case of trying to nitpick. This is a case of fighting for the survival of the Barbadian household and the Barbadian businesses. This is the case of trying to keep people in jobs and to keep prices within their reach, so that they do not have to dehumanise themselves in order to keep kef and kin together.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The Barbados Labour Party's position, Sir, is that we will have to deal with it. We will have to be creative in how we deal with the capital expenditure. The public must not be confused with the fact that the $800 million or the $1 billion that we will have to spend, has to be financed by way of long-term financing, because all of the assets have a long-term life.

Those assets will be used 40 years from now, when most of us in this Chamber will not be active. Therefore, they need to be matched by financing that has 30 to 40 years to allow for the repayment of those assets. If that is done, like how we do with our houses, when you buy a house for $200 000, you do not pay all $200 000 in three years. Barbadians know that you pay over 20, 25 and even 30 years. It is no different for the mains replacement. It is no different for the Barbados Water Authority's building. It is no different for the Reverse Osmosis Plant.

House A40, Sequence 39, 5.40 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I ask the Honourable Members on the Front Bench, it is not too late, to study themselves and do not look at this issue in isolation, but look at it against the economic reality of this Government.

The Honourable Member for St. Andrew raised a point that has me disturbed, because I would truly have to believe that the two major pricing policy changes that this Government made were recommended to them by the International Monetary Fund in the Article IV Report of last year.

The International Monetary Fund recommended that you increase energy prices and have an automatic pass through mechanism, the Government did it. They recommended that you increase water rates at page 10 of the document. In fact, the Mission urged the Government to decide promptly on measures to generate the necessary fiscal savings. They recommended it for water, and we have that here. They have equally recommended it for transportation and natural gas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the International Monetary Fund recommended that to us for years, but we took positions, that in the same way that this country agrees to subsidise free education because of the kind of society we want, we will also subsidise public transportation, because I have never seen a rich man catch a bus unless his car breaks down and not even then. It is the poor people who can least afford to do it who catch the bus. This Government took a decision to also remove bus fares from school children, that is part of the subsidy programme.

What we are saying to you, Sir, is that you cannot simply willy-nilly apply measures that work in other countries in the context of our system. In Barbados' system, we are facing a private sector led recession. That is what makes what is going on all the more difficult and dangerous as compared to 1991.

In 1991, the Government had a balance of payments problem, but it was not facing the level of private sector led recession that we are facing now.

Sir, you are a businessman apart from your profession, and you can only pay people if you have money coming in. If you have now to pay additional costs with no increase in sales, something has to give. It is either that you charge more for your service or you cut expenses and most people would cut expenses by way of labour.

Sir, the International Monetary Fund has recommended other increases, so what next would this Government do? Sir, I say to you that this is not the time. We ask the Government to hold strain. We recognise that the Barbados Water Authority needs financial support, but we believe that in the same way that you can write off $19 million for the Barbados Turf Club and find $6 million for the Constituency Councils, and another $4.1 million to spend in six weeks' time for the summer camps, Sir, when I add that up, that is almost $30 million, which is more than what the Barbados Water Authority would need in any one year to avoid these water increases.

We, therefore, say to the Government that it has to get its priorities right and make sure that by its innocent design, it does not end up causing more Barbadians to be out of work, as is sure to happen after today, and more price increases, as is sure to happen after today.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want first to thank Honourable Members in this Chamber for the various presentations that they made during the course of what has been a long day. Without trying to extend the proceedings significantly longer, I would want to put the records straight in respect of one or two points that were raised during the course of the presentations by a number of Honourable Members.

I want to first start with the comments made by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas and, to put to rest the continued comment being raised in this Honourable Chamber, in respect of seeking to put the blame for the absence of leadership and the absence of a proper mains programme on the Democratic Labour Party Government, of the 1986-1993 period, by indicating that there was some $30 million that had been transferred to the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe other Honourable Members have commented on that and I would not want to go into that $32 million.

I just want to make the point that when the Democratic Labour Party left office in 1994, the Barbados Water Authority was earning profits and had substantial accumulated profits. At that time, there was also substantial deposits with the Barbados Water Authority separate and distinct from that $30 million that was transferred to the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to quote a number of figures from the financial statements. In 1993, there was some $22.2 million on the books of the Barbados Water Authority in the form of treasury bills, deposits at the bank and other Government paper. In 2004, that figure remained at $22.5 million. In 1996, this is during the time the Barbados Labour Party was in Government, that figure climbed to $39.1 million; in 1997 it dropped to $34.1 million; by 2002, it had dropped to $5 million, and in 2003, it dropped further. It was down to $2.5 million. The point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there was plenty of cash available that could have been utilised by the political directorate at that time in executing any reform and any major capital works programme in terms of the mains.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the studies that had been commissioned in respect of the leakage of water in this country that had been done in the early 1990s, indicated that leakages in the mains in Barbados were in the vicinity of 60 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party is not in a position to say that it was not aware of the existence of the leaks, or the magnitude of the leaks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in managing water resources in any part of the world, there are going to be a certain amount of leaks. I believe the benchmark figure is some 20 per cent. If your leakage is in that sort of vicinity, you are pretty much in what is projected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for over 20 years we have been looking in Barbados at a situation where there were substantial amounts of leaks, that is why the whole question of leaks and the mains would be addressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, measures would be put in place to fund those mains as we go forward. Indeed, I believe that there is a $150 million loan that had been secured by the Barbados Water Authority payable over some 30 years that had been intended for the use of replacing the mains in Barbados.

House A40 Sequence 40

5.50 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the financial resources were there and even if more than $30 million was moved in the l930s, the Barbados Water Authority had sufficient funds that they could have executed that particular programme.

Sir, I just wanted to put that record straight. I hope that we would not have to listen to that particular comment as we go forward in this Parliamentary Session.

I want also to refer to a comment made by the Honourable Member for St. James North, who correctly articulated that matter. I think it was again articulated by the Leader of the Opposition in respect of the financing of the capital programme. I want to say that the increases we are seeking are in an attempt to finance the recurring operating expenses of the Barbados Water Authority. We are trying to finance that current recurring expenditure by this particular increase.

Sir, in no way are we trying to finance capital expenditure out of this increase. That capital expenditure in respect of the replacement of the mains, in terms of the other programmes relating to the osmosis plant and the construction of the new headquarters will all be financed by long-term loans that we are negotiating, to carry the Barbados Water Authority forward. This increase in rate is intended to cover the operating expenses. Sir, it is important that we recognise that fact.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in looking at the last available financial statements at the operational level, the Barbados Water Authority had lost $5 million. In 2005, they lost $l3 million and this was before debt servicing, this is before the funding of the pension responsibility of the Barbados Water Authority, which is in the vicinity of $6 million yearly. That also has to be funded. The debt servicing was in the vicinity of a further $7 million yearly, and this is on top of the operating losses that the Barbados Water Authority has been incurring each year. Sir, that is why we need to bridge that particular gap.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important that we understand that and that we do not have the wrong messages being put into the public forum, as though we are trying to finance capital expenditure out of this increase. Sir, obviously the debt servicing of the loan will need to be financed because that is a recurring expenditure each year. Sir, those things will be funded by the increase because those are considered to be part of the operating expenses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other point is that once we could reduce the number of leakages, once we could get that programmed within reason, that operating expenses will automatically be reduced because part of a substantial amount of the operating expenditure is incurred in pumping and producing the water that is being wasted through the various leakages.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am advised that in relation to the main replacement programme, there are some 4 000 households still to be metered. That programme is continuing. We expect that in less than two years' time, that programme would be completed.

I believe one Honourable Member has referred to the pumping of water in the North and to the fact that it has been done substantially from the desalination plant on Spring Garden. We are currently utilising some 4.2 million gallons a day. The capacity of that plant is six million gallons and it is intended that we will be increasing the usage of that water taken up, so that we will be utilising the whole six million gallons which the plant can produce.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important also to recognise the cost of the water we are paying to Ionics Freshwater Ltd. It is also important to recognise that the cost to the Barbados Water Authority is less than the minimum rate we are currently charging to domestic householders, which I think is in the vicinity of $1.65 per cubic metre, while the cost of water from the desalination plant is in the vicinity of $1.25 cents per cubic metres. Sir, it is important that we understand that because some of the comments made this morning, have distorted some of the information as far as that is concerned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members also made the point that provision is being made for the Barbados Water Authority to have those rates come under the Fair Trading Commission (FTC). I believe that process is ongoing and that technical funds are being negotiated, that would assist the Barbados Water Authority in positioning itself that it can go to the Fair Trading Commission (FTC). The Barbados Water Authority cannot go to the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) unless it is put on a proper financial and regulated position to begin that process.

Mr. Speaker, as has been said earlier, the Barbados Water Authority has the opportunity to do this because these increases in rates that we are trying to validate this afternoon had been made since 2005. Sir, certainly there was a 3½ year period before the previous Government was removed from office. If that were their intention they could have easily initiated those issues to which the Honourable Member for St. Andrew had alluded.

The Honourable Member did not go into specifics as to the reasons the Barbados Water Authority could not be taken to the Fair Trading Commission, instead the Honourable Member made a number of casual comments that there were some issues that were being worked on. Sir, I do not know what particular issues the Honourable Member was speaking.

6.00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is also important, coming out of these various presentations this morning, is the fact that as a Government, as it relates to the Barbados Water Authority and to a number of other statutory corporations we are seen to be leading, to be able to make decisions that are going to be in the best interest of the country rather than staying on the fence, as has been done by the previous Government.

Sir, since 1997, they had substantial funds to play with and they have not sought to adjust the losses being made at the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, or they have not sought to adjust the losses at the Barbados Water Authority, in terms of getting that programme started.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to extend this debate into all the other areas of wastage under the Barbados Labour Party, in terms of the money that was wasted in The Gems Project, and different things like that, but it is important that Barbadians are reminded what the Barbados Labour Party did with the windfall they had in 1997 and coming forward, those excessive amounts of taxes they put on the backs of Barbadians and failed to reform the different institutions of Government and position them.

Sir, in these hard times, so to speak, we are reminded very much of the whole Bible story of the years of plenty in Egypt and we need to prepare for hard times to come. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party failed to do that. They failed to restructure the economy and the institutions of Government and, to a large extent, that is why we are having to do this exercise this afternoon in terms of correcting the situation at the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is also important for Barbadians to understand that water is a scarce resource. In fact, the way the rates have been structured is to, more or less, penalise heavy consumption of water and that is why the rate in Block No. 4 was as high as it is. Sir, even with those rates, and with the proposed increases in the rates, we have to look at Barbados being a water-scarce country and compare that with the rate being charged in some of our neighbouring islands.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to look at Dominica. Sir, in Dominica, water in Barbados dollars is $57.98 cents for an average of 28 cubic metres which puts you at about $2.07 per cubic metre and, as you know, in Dominica water is abundant.

Sir, in Antigua, which has a similar climate to Barbados, and where water is also scarce, the rate is $6.68 per cubic meter. Sir, in Tortola, BVI, it is $7.93 per cubic metre. In Anguilla, it is BDS$11.47 per cubic metre.

Sir, Barbadians are currently paying, even at that high rate in Block 4, the rate is just around $7.00 per cubic metre. Sir, as I have said, in Anguilla, it is BDS$11.47 per cubic metre and, Sir, in the Cayman Islands, it is $11.76 per cubic metre.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the other Caribbean islands and when you look at those other countries that water is a scarce resource, the rate that we are paying here is not out of sync and, Sir, in a lot of cases, our rates are less, and even with the proposed increases, we will be substantially less than a number of these countries. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important that Barbadians understand that and understand the need for us to be conservative and to conserve our water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to make a comment in respect of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, who made a comment in respect of the 60 per cent being charged. Sir, let me say that the increases in the water rates that were illegally implemented in January of 2005, which had a graduating scale, that some of those rates hit the same 60 per cent so, Sir, what is the point?

Sir, several of those rate increases were up just under the same 60 per cent and, as the Prime Minister said, we were being gouged at that particular point in time, at a time when they were mismanaging the resources, and at a time when the Barbados Water Authority did not have the sort of accumulated operating losses as it has, at this particular point in time.

Sir, in 2005, I believe it was just a marginal loss, but operating losses are now in the vicinity of $40 million per year, a situation that cannot continue to exist. Sir, that is the reason why we have to make some hard decisions going forward with Barbados with respect to water and the utilisation of our water resources.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to also say, certainly in terms of the overall management of the way the operating expenses of the Barbados Water Authority are concerned, because the fact is, that our payroll, as a percentage of the overall total is substantial. The Prime Minister has said that it is part of the policy of Government that there will be no layoffs in the staff at the Barbados Water Authority. Sir, at the same time, we do have to look at the whole question of overtime and the whole operating cost structure there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of those persons could be utilised within the mains programme, thus maintaining their employment. The operating structure of the Barbados Water Authority could be extended to more than one shift instead of having the current shift, which means that overtime triggers in at 4.00 p.m. or 4.30 p.m. We could have operating shifts, which increase the efficiency of the

organsiation and, at the same time, allow the number of workers to be retained without any job losses. I believe that is one of the initiatives that would certainly help to increase the efficiency of the provision of our water services.

H/A40/6.10 p.m. Sequence 42

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Sir, with those few words, I once again ask that they support the Bill before this Honourable Chamber to validate the increase in water rates which were initiated in January 2005.

Sir, I beg that this Bill be read a second time.

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

On the motion of Hon. E .G. HUTSON, seconded by Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. E .G. HUTSON, seconded by Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER, resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. E .G. HUTSON, seconded by Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Act, 2009.

ORDER NO. 3 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GRANT OF A LEASE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP, 225, TO THE CRICKET LEGENDS OF BARBADOS INC. OF A PARCEL OF LAND TOGETHER WITH THE BUILDINGS THEREON KNOWN AS HERBERT HOUSE SITUATE AT FONTABELLE, IN THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL IN THIS ISLAND, TO PROVIDE ACCOMMODATION FOR THE CORPORATION AND TO FACILITATE THE CONDUCT OF ITS BUSINESS.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, the Resolution before this Honourable House seeks the permission of Parliament for the granting of the lease of the parcel of land together with the buildings thereon known as "Herbert House" situated at Fontabelle, St. Michael, to the Cricket Legends of Barbados Inc. simply to provide accommodation and to facilitate the conduct of the business of the said Corporation.

Sir, the terms and conditions of the lease, in fact, one of the most important conditions of the lease states that the lease would be for a period of 25 years with the option to renew for a further 25 years. Sir, the necessary terms and conditions of any commercial lease is attached. In fact, this lease is similar to a commercial lease. As I stated, the fundamental term is that is the period of the lease, which is 25 years, with the option to renew for a further 25 years at nominal rent, subject to review every five years.

Sir, the jurisdiction for the granting of this lease is grounded in Section 5, sub-section 1 of the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act, Cap. 225. That section states that the Minister of Housing may, with the approval of Parliament sell, lease, exchange, grant, assign or surrender any such land vested in the Crown.

Sir, this building at Herbert House is to facilitate and to allow those cricketing legends to continue to make a living from the game that they developed, and obviously to help in whatever instance they can further develop the game of cricket, of course, to earn an income from the game that they so developed.

Sir, this Resolution has been certified fit by the Honourable Attorney-General, and with those few remarks, I beg that this Resolution be now passed.

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

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House be now adjourned until July 14, 2009, at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, July 14, 2009, at 11:00 o'clock in the morning was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

H A40 6.20 p.m. Sequence 43

CONTENTS

MINUTES

Hon. F. J. STUART.....2

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

PAPERS

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON.....2

1. Duties, Taxes and Other payments (Exemption) Scotia Trust and Merchant Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited) Order, 2009.
2. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Marcia Jordan), Order, 2009.
3. Annual Report and Accounts of the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust Limited for the year ended June 30, 2008.

Hon. E. G. Hutson, 2.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE.....2

Hon. R.D. Jones, 2.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE.....2

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 4 – BARBADOS WATER AUTHORITY(VALIDATION OF WATER AND SEWERAGE RATES) BILL, 2009.....2

Hon. E. G. Hutson, 2, 3; Hon. R.D. Jones, 3; Mr. D. D. Marshall, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11; Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, 5, 8; His Honour K. St.C Best, 12, 13; Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 14, 16, 17; Mr. S. A. Lashley, 17, 18, 20.

RESUMPTION

ORDER NO. 4 (resumed)

Miss C. Y. Forde, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27; Hon. P. M. T. Todd, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29; Mr. R. C. Eastmond, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33; Mr. G. W. Payne, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38; Mr. S. A. Lashley, 34; Hon. F. J. Stuart, 35, 36, 37; Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, 37, 38, 39, 41, 43; Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, 39, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 53, 54; Mr. R. St.C. Toppin, 42, 43, 44; Hon. C. P. Sinckler, 45, 46, 47, 48; Hon. E. G. Hutson, 55, 57, 58; Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 58.

ORDER NO. 3 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GRANT OF A LEASE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP, 225, TO THE CRICKET LEGENDS OF BARBADOS INC. OF A PARCEL OF LAND TOGETHER WITH THE BUILDINGS THEREON KNOWN AS HERBERT HOUSE SITUATE AT FONTABELLE, IN THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL IN THIS ISLAND, TO PROVIDE ACCOMMODATION FOR THE CORPORATION AND TO FACILITATE THE CONDUCT OF ITS BUSINESS.....58

Hon. M. A. Lashley, 58; Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 58.

SUSPENSION.....20

ADJOURNMENT.....58

Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 58; Hon. R.D. Jones, 58.

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

BEST, His Honour K. St.C (St. Michael East)
BOYCE, Hon. J. D. E. (Christ Church South)
EASTMOND, Mr. R. C. (St. James North)
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)
MARSHALL, Mr. D. D. (St. Joseph)
MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M. A. (St. Michael North East)
PAYNE, Mr. G. W. (St. Andrew)
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)

DISCLAIMER. *This transcript was prepared with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools and is provided for reference only. It has not been reviewed, verified or approved by the Hansard Department of the Parliament of Barbados and does not constitute an official parliamentary record. It may contain errors or omissions, including inaccuracies in wording or speaker identification. For authoritative quotations or confirmation of proceedings, consult the official Hansard record when available.*

EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. *Minutes.* Hon. J. D. E. Boyce's motion that the Minutes be taken as read runs on, with the words 'Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE:', inside the Speaker's speech in the source. Printed as in the source.

Q3. *Suspension of Standing Orders.* Hon. J. D. E. Boyce's motion to suspend Standing Orders is not followed by a seconder or a record that the question was put. Printed as in the source.

Q4. *Papers, item 1.* The title 'Duties, Taxes and Other payments (Exemption) Scotia Trust and Merchant Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited) Order, 2009' has an unbalanced bracket in the source. Printed as in the source.

Q5. *Order No. 4, Mr. D. D. Marshall.* Mr. D. D. Marshall speaks of water rates being increased 'by 60 per cent across the board' and, later in the same speech, says Cabinet 'is going to increase water rates by 50 per cent'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. *Order No. 4, Hon. E. G. Hutson's reply.* Hon. E. G. Hutson says 'even if more than $30 million was moved in the l930s'; the transfer under discussion was in 1986. Printed as in the source.

Q7. *Adjournment.* The motion is to adjourn 'until July 14, 2009, at 10.00 a.m.', but the procedural sentence reads 'at 11:00 o'clock in the morning'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, 30th June, 2009, with Mr. Speaker, His Honour M. A. Carrington, in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood. The Speaker told Members he had developed flu-like symptoms and might leave the Chair to the Deputy Speaker, His Honour K. St.C. Best, who presided from late morning. The Minutes of Tuesday, June 16, 2009 were confirmed and the Speaker reported receipt of the Accounts and Statements for December 2008 and January 2009. The Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, laid two Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) Orders, 2009 and the Annual Report and Accounts of the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust Limited. The Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Bill, 2009 was laid and read a first time, and Standing Orders were suspended.

Hon. E. G. Hutson, acting for the Minister responsible for water, moved the second reading of the Barbados Water Authority (Validation of Water and Sewerage Rates) Bill, 2009 (Order No. 4). It validated the rates in force from January 2005, set by the previous Administration without being brought to the House, so that the Government would not have to make refunds. He set out the four-block domestic tariff, from $1.55 for the first 8 cubic metres to $4.86 above 40 cubic metres, with $5.05 for ships, and said the Authority was projected to lose about $40 million a year without change.

Mr. D. D. Marshall, the only Opposition speaker for much of the morning, turned to the increase in water rates announced that day, arguing that the Fair Trading Commission should have set the rates, as an Amendment Bill laid in April 2008 proposed, and that 40 per cent of the cost of water was electricity. The Prime Minister objected that the Regulations laid that day could be debated only on a separate resolution; the Speaker ruled that Members might refer to the rise in rates but not debate the Regulations in detail. Mr. D. St.E. Kellman repeatedly rose on points of order and compared the price of local water with bottled water. His Honour K. St.C. Best, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, who said the Authority could not go to the FTC 'naked' without proper financial documentation, and Mr. S. A. Lashley supported the Bill. The House was suspended at 12.35 p.m. until 1.40 p.m.

In the afternoon Miss C. Y. Forde spoke of leakage estimated at 60 per cent and the effect of higher rates on farmers; Hon. P. M. T. Todd described plans to refit the Emmerton and South Coast treatment plants; Mr. R. C. Eastmond questioned the Authority's accounting. Mr. G. W. Payne, after an exchange with the Deputy Speaker about how he should be addressed, argued that $42 million had been taken from the Authority in 1986; Hon. F. J. Stuart, on a point of order, put the figure at about $32 million. The Prime Minister said people's water had been cut off for not paying rates that were illegally charged, and Mr. R. St.C. Toppin argued that the matter should have gone to the Fair Trading Commission.

Hon. C. P. Sinckler supported the Bill amid points of order from the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley. Miss Mottley said that validations had been carried out by virtually every Government since

Independence, that the increase due the next day should not be debated in isolation from the economy, and that the capital needs of $800 million to $1 billion should be met by long-term financing. Replying, Hon. E. G. Hutson said the increases were to meet the Authority's recurring operating costs. The Bill passed through Committee and was read a third time and passed.

Hon. M. A. Lashley then moved Order No. 3, the Resolution to approve a lease to the Cricket Legends of Barbados Inc. of Herbert House at Fontabelle, St. Michael, for 25 years with an option to renew for a further 25 years, which was agreed to without debate. The House was adjourned until Tuesday, July 14, 2009; the last take-slip reads 6.20 p.m.