
THE

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RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning Honourable Members, this Sitting of the Honourable House of Assembly is resumed.

Honourable Members, just let me indicate that unlike what happens when a new Sitting starts where you have a grace period of 15 minutes and it is okay for us to start at 10.15 a.m. instead of 10.00 a.m., there is no grace period once there is a suspension, so essentially, we are set to begin at the specific time set down.

ORDER NO. 11 (RESUMED)

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

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2009-2010 ever cognisant that we are, and so too are the people of Barbados I might add, in the midst of a financial crisis that has enveloped not only Barbados, but the world.

Mr. Speaker, if you listen to some Honourable Members of the Opposition, you would think that Barbados is an isolated and insulated country somewhere in the Atlantic not to be touched by what is happening in the world as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, Iceland, as many of our Honourable Members have alluded to, at this time has a 12 per cent unemployment rate, Germany, 9.2 per cent and France 9.4 per cent, with two million people unemployed. As we speak, President Nicolas Sarkozy is facing unrest country-

wide. Certainly, those are not the kind of things that we are faced with here in Barbados as we speak.

Mr. Speaker, I examined the Estimates for 2009-2010 and find that there is something in it for everyone.

9.40 a.m.

In the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development, I can speak to my constituents on a one-to-one basis and can assure them that wherever they are located, be it in Mansion Road, Station Hill, Industry Road, Waterhall Land or Waterford, that their homes will be addressed in a frontal way and in a very short time.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to sports, I can assure the young men and women in the Station Hill area that the lights on that field will soon be installed.

If you turn to the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, there are two schools in my Constituency, a secondary School, Combermere, and the other a primary/secondary school, George Lamming. These will benefit in some way from the allocation by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development.

If you look at the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, I can assure the people at Waterhall Land, Station Hill, Barracks Road and Worrell Avenue, that their roads will soon be addressed. Therefore, if you would look across the Estimates we can see, without doubt, that something is in it for everyone as we speak.

Mr. Speaker, the Estimates were drafted against a framework that is preparing us in the Ministry of Community Development and Culture for what we are describing as a new engine of productivity, to add to the others that contributed significantly to the economy of Barbados.

We are in the cusp of formulating and bringing to Cabinet a new Cultural Industry Policy. It has been rewritten, made more relevant to the Government, adopted to reflect Government's own policies and it will soon be presented to Cabinet. Sir, we are on the cusp of rolling out that Cultural Industry's Policy.

Mr. Speaker, in the meantime, the Ministry will be pursuing some major initiatives that will be the precursor to what we will be doing and what we will extract from the Cultural Industry's Policy. One of the initiatives we will be pursuing in the meantime, is that of establishing a National School for the Performing Arts. That will come about purely because if you look at things like the National Independence Festival for Creative Arts and other areas, where young men and women are exposed through cultural offerings, it will provide for them a new and next step, a new avenue, a new frontier for them to reach another stage to expose their excellence. This will be done in collaboration with the Barbados Community College and the Errol Barrow Centre for Creative Imagination.

We have already initiated discussions with these two agencies and very shortly, we will be presenting to the people of Barbados exactly the direction in which we will be taking this new school for the performing arts. It will present to the young people and may be some older people, an avenue where they can explore and also take full advantage of their creative talents, where they could take those talents to a next level.

Mr. Speaker, among the population of Barbados, especially young school leavers, we will provide new avenues where they could fully exploit those avenues. Sir, sometimes a child may leave school, not academically inclined, but certainly with tremendous talent in the field of culture and the arts. Therefore, we will present to these persons an avenue where they could flourish and blossom in their particular field of endeavour.

Mr. Speaker, there are certainly some persons in Barbados who are of the mind, that if someone is not academically-inclined, then those persons are doomed to failure, but we are going to be creating that avenue in the Ministry of Community Development and Culture, through the National School for Performing Arts, where these people could fully reach their goals.

We will also be establishing an arts integrated programme, which is a significant programme where many artistes or people in the arts could expose their products. It will also give them an avenue where they will be able to sell their particular pieces of art. That art integrated programme will be predicated on the fact that we will ensure that at least 1 per cent of the cost of all new Government buildings must go to the purchase of pieces of

art, to be placed in those Government buildings, wherever they are located.

Sir, that opens an avenue where young artistes in Barbados can have the opportunity, not only to produce their art, because several of our artists are prolific in that regard, but with absolutely no escape valve where they could have their pieces of art displayed and marketed. This also creates careers for these persons.

Mr. Speaker, we are also going to be setting up a secretariat for the Film and Digital Media Commission. That is a commission which will place Barbados squarely in the focus as a location for the filming of movies. Certainly our neighbour St. Vincent has just been the location for the filming of "The Pirates of the Caribbean", and we are going to be positioning ourselves so that Barbados, with all its natural beauty and other acumen, could be the ideal location for the filming of movies, as has happened in the past. Therefore, we are going to take full advantage of our natural beauty and all that we have to offer as a country.

Mr. Speaker, all of this must be done through an agency, and we already have an agency in place. This agency is equipped with a cadre of well-educated and well-trained individuals. That agency, of course, would be the National Cultural Foundation. The remit of the National Cultural Foundation is to fuel the development of culture through training, research and the creation of opportunities in the cultural industry. Mr. Speaker, we do not have to reinvent the wheel, that particular agency is already in place, rearing and ready to go to take us to that new level.

Mr. Speaker, in this year's Estimates, we have increased the allocation to the National Cultural Foundation by \$1.2 million. That will enable them to get ahead with the developmental work, which is separate and distinct from the other work in the Ministry. We have segmented the work of the National Cultural Foundation. One clearly will be developmental and the other will be the planning work with which it would be confronted.

Mr. Speaker, we are positioning ourselves to take Barbados to a new level. We will be exposing a new frontier to the people of Barbados, the young men and women, and positioning and assuring them that the world will be their oyster.

Mr. Speaker, we are repositioning and restructuring the National Cultural Foundation from the point of view that the Board is busily adjusting itself to this particular endeavour. We are at the point where we have already appointed a new Chief Executive Officer, who will take her place at the Foundation from May 01, 2009. I am pleased to announce that Dr. Donna Hunte-Cox is the new Chief Executive Officer of the National Cultural Foundation. Mr.

Speaker, Dr. Hunte-Cox has to be on board, because she will be pivotal in the repositioning and restructuring of the Foundation. They have their work cut out for them, but I am absolutely clear in my mind that the staff and management of the Foundation are fully equipped to do that.

Mr. Speaker, last year's Festival was a success in whichever way you look at it. Crop Over produced record crowds at all of the major events held under their auspices. The Semi-Finals, Cohoblopot and Junior Monarch, were all well patronised. There was only one fall-off. That is the Party Monarch at East Coast Road and of course, there were some residual fears about the Joes River tragedy, to which we are extremely sympathetic to the victims and their families. There were also the unpalatable new restrictions that were put in place for the last Party Monarch at the East Coast Road.

9.50 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, this year we are to move from the East Coast Road to Farley Hill National Park, where we would be showcasing two of our major events in the National Cultural Foundation calender at Crop Over. That is, the Party Monarch Finals and the Semifinals.

Mr. Speaker, the Semifinals have been held in a concert atmosphere and that provided for little interaction among the crowd, the entertainers and the contestants, and therefore, we have decided to move that from the Garfield Sobers Gynasium to the Farley Hill National Park. Sir, those are two of the major changes in this year's events over the Crop Over season.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to thank the management and staff of the National Cultural Foundation for their unswerving support over the last year.

Sir, last year we started quite late because we were a new Government at the time and we had to restructure and put in place new systems at the National Cultural Foundation. Sir, the staff rose to the occasion and did themselves and Barbados proud and I want to publicly thank the staff there and also the Board of Directors of the National Cultural Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, the National Cultural Foundation in collaboration with the Barbados Tourism Authority, have undertaken the task of attracting more visitors to Barbados, especially during that period around Crop Over, when I am informed that hotels suffer a little fall-off in room occupancy around that time. We have undertaken a successful tour of Trinidad & Tobago during Carnival time, in collaboration with the Barbados Tourism Authority and we are wooing a number of Trinidadians, along with people who work in Trinidad at the time, to attend Crop Over this

year. We are further establishing some renewed synergies between these agencies. We are looking at going to the Jazz Festival in St. Lucia with the same initiative that we adopted in Trinidad at Carnival to further woo some people in St. Lucia to come to Crop Over this year.

Mr. Speaker, we are also looking in the new financial year at some new projects to be completed that were very much in the pipeline over the last number of months prior to our coming to Government. They have been lying in a state of inertia, but we have lit the fire under them once more and represented them, some of them with major changes and some of them in the same mould as they were presented when they were originally presented.

Mr. Speaker, we have put Queens Park on the back burner because it was costing us some \$23.9 million to refurbish and reinstate the entire Queens Park as a whole.

Sir, because of the financial difficulties we are facing this year in Barbados and throughout the world, we have put Queen's Park on the back burner for the time being but we will be looking at refurbishing at least two buildings in Queen's Park, that is, the Steel Shed and the Daphne Joseph Hackett Theatre. We have access to some fund within the Ministry of Community development and Culture and we would be addressing the refurbishment of the Steel Shed, which to my mind, is a crying shame because it was abandoned a number of years ago by the last Administration, for what reasons we do not know, but we are putting that back on the front burner, and having the Steel Shed reinstated to its former glory, and we will be doing some major repairs to the Daphne Joseph Hackett Theatre which also houses the Art Gallery on the ground floor.

Mr. Speaker, among the other projects we will be addressing next year will be the Empire Theatre. Sir, as you know, the purpose of that project is to restore the Empire Theatre to its former glory as a state-of-art theatre and cinema, to facilitate the development of culture and also the cultural industries in Barbados. Sir, that restored facility would provide performing space for the staging of dramatic productions and performances of all types.

Mr. Speaker, the theatre, when restored, will have a seating capacity of some 675 people and will provide a space for performances in music, dance, drama and pending the availability of performing art space, the theatre could potentially serve as the base for one or more national performing groups as theatre space and limited storage facilities for cultural groups.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, the Empire Theatre would provide a well-equipped and readily accessible site which would accommodate the following entities. We are looking at four entities to be accommodated at the reinstated

Empire Theatre, that is, the Barbados National Youth Orchestra, the Proposed National School of Dance, the National Symphony Orchestra and the National Performing Arts Company.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to publicly thank one of our directors at the National Cultural Foundation, who has dedicated his time over the last year to 14 months in bringing some life back to the Barbados Youth Orchestra, and I want to publicly thank him for doing just that.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of China and Barbados have reached an agreement in which the former has agreed to finance the restoration of the Empire Theatre at an estimated cost of \$20 million. The Government of Barbados and the Peoples Republic of China, on February 16, this year, agreed that a portion of the grant funding would be used to facilitate a feasibility study to be undertaken by a Chinese team. I want to add that it is recommended that the Members of the National Cultural Foundation and the other Barbadian cultural theatrical experts would work in unison with the technical consultants for the duration of that project, so that we would have a Barbadian input, though we would be leaning on the expertise of the Chinese to bring that particular project to fruition.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other projects we are looking at in the Ministry is the project we call “The Garden” in St. Lucy. As you would know, Mr. Speaker, “The Garden” is the birthplace of the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow and we believe it would be a noble gesture to bring that particular House back to its original glory.

Mr. Speaker, the recommendation is to designate the property as an historic site. It was prompted by an application received by the Chief Town Planner for permission to renovate and extend the existing house.

Mr. Speaker, our Ministry is having a mandate to have an active role in the presentation of a Barbados cultural heritage and will ensure that the property called “The Garden” should be acquired and developed as a place of historic interest for the benefit of all Barbadians and visitors alike.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry further considers that “The Garden” provides opportunity for expansion in the north of the island since many of the existing vacation attractions are now located on the south of the island. I dare add that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would be pleased that, along with the other initiatives that are being explored by this Government, it would inject life into the northern parish that he likes to call Lucy.

Mr. Chairman, we intend also to build a heritage facility, which is expected to attract students at the same

Garden. It will be, of course, open to students, visitors and other groups and a maximum of three small villas would be provided for accommodation within the heritage setting. The accommodation would be developed to reflect the historical period and the rural ambience of the property.

Sir, the partial restoration of the building and mounting of a suitably inscribed plaque would be put in place. Of course, it would be suitable for wedding receptions; award ceremonies and certainly built along the model that we see presently at the George Washington House.

Mr. Chairman, the fourth project that we would be moving ahead full steam with, is the completion of the Rock Hall Freedom Project. I am sure the Honourable Member for St. Thomas would be pleased to hear this. Sir, that project is now very much still in Phase 1. We have moved two of the elements of Phase 2 into Phase 1.

10.00 a.m.

Certainly at this time construction of the monument is complete. The requisite road works have been completed. The social impact study of the likely affects of the Freedom Village on the residents in the community, that has been completed. In phase 1 will be the construction of an Amphi Theatre, the construction of a Bridge to link the road to Rock Hall to the statue, car parking facilities and the relocation of houses which have been partially completed, and also the construction of souvenir shops and an Interpretive Centre. We brought those two components into Phase 1 and we will be completing that in the next financial year.

On a visit to the site, not too long ago, it is a site used heavily, by the taxi drivers in Barbados, traveling to the monument with tourists. When I was there for about an hour, I saw no less than about ten coaches full of tourists, so I believe, and I am sure that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas would be pleased with the impetus brought to that village. It is a historical village, and I believe it is the first free village in Barbados, ripe for development in the area. Sir, we are moving ahead with those new projects within the Ministry of Community and Culture. The other component of the Ministry, is the Community Development Department, responsible for the highest quality professional social working community development services and achieving strong cohesive communities.

I have realised at the Ministry that there has been a fall-off in that strong robustness in community development. I am sure that in the past there has been great emphasis in ensuring that the Community Development Department lived up to its remit and mandate, and I want to

continue by adding more impetus in pushing that Department in the right direction.

We have programmes which range from training and exhibitions across the communities, occurring at regular intervals. That is part of the training component. There are a number of components we would be addressing in the next financial year, but pivotal to it all, are the programmes and training courses. Those training courses would involve the Community Independence Festival this year. In the past years the Finals for the Community Independence rivalled a lot of events occurring within the National Independence Festival of Creative Arts calendar. Therefore, I have taken the initiative to instruct them to reschedule the culmination of the Independence Finals culminating on Errol Barrow's Day.

There has been a paucity of activity on that particular day, most of it occurring on Errol Barrow's Day, picnics and stuff like that. We need really to inject or infuse into it some life. Therefore, I have asked that the culmination of the Community Independence Festival be on Errol Barrow's Day.

Sir, there are some other initiatives in terms of the training programme. That includes the establishment of some cooperation and synergies among a number of other agencies, including the National Sports Council and also the Division of the Youth Affairs, in adding some spark and life to the community games.

We also have a Community Arts Programme and a Community Sculpture and Wood Carving Programme, Music Training Theatre, Film Making and Christmas celebrations.

The training will include workshops in areas of business development, identifying attachments as far as possible for further general development and enterprise growth.

In terms of the Community Technology Programme (CTP), initiated a number of years ago, we have now broadened to utilise EduTech-ready schools. In the past the Community Technology Programme was confined to the resource centres which were retrofitted and equipped for that very purpose, but we have out-grown several of our resource centres, and already we are endeavouring to facilitate the EduTech-ready schools. These schools are West Terrace Primary, St. James, Hillaby Turners Hall Primary, St. Andrew, Christ Church Boys Primary, Christ Church, The Christ Church Foundation School, the St. Michael Secondary School, Grantley Prescod Memorial Primary and Princess Margaret Secondary School. We will be utilising those EduTech-ready schools to expand the CTP Programme across the island.

I want to add that those particular courses have been over-subscribed in some instances. Both young and old are taking full advantage of the Community Technology Programme, and I want to implore others who have an interest in that field of endeavour to actively pursue it with some vigour.

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

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Sir, there are some other programmes which we will be introducing over the next financial year. One of them, I am proud to say that it was on my initiative that I am moving the Community Development Department towards, that is, the introduction of a National committee Lessons Assistance Programme. This programme is an idea that I discussed with the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East. It is a programme that we will be pursuing again with much vigour because we, in the Ministry of Community Development and Culture, believe that there are several disadvantaged children in the school system from depressed homes, who are not given the opportunity to have those extra lessons to push them and to give them the additional assistance to succeed in the Eleven Plus Examination.

There are several precocious and bright children among that cadre of children, who do not have those extra lessons to push them along. Therefore, we are going to develop along with a number of retired teachers and teachers who are currently in the system, this National Community Lessons Assistance Programme. This will begin very shortly. There is already a Committee in place for looking at the mechanics of it, and I am pleased to say that it will soon be introduced.

I believe it will be a significant conduit in repositioning several of our less fortunate children, whose parents do not have the wherewithal to give them the extra lessons and who are seriously disadvantaged. This is part of the programme for the Community Development Department and by extension, the Government of Barbados.

Sir, overall we are quite busy in the Ministry. There are several other initiatives that time would not permit me to fully articulate, but I am sure that I will have the time to return to them in this debate or other debates.

Sir, I thank you.

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

Hon. Dr. D. S. LOWE: Sir, I enter this debate at this moment having listened carefully to the presentations of

my colleagues on This Side and Honourable Members of the Other Side. I believe that this perhaps, is one of the most important debates to date, in this term.

Before I get into the content of my presentation, I should like to thank the constituents of Christ Church East, who have bestowed upon me perhaps one of the greatest honours of my life, to be joining a parade of outstanding Barbadians who have graced this Chamber over time. To them I am eternally grateful for the privilege and opportunity to be here.

10.10 a.m.

Sir, this moment in time should not be considered as a time for fear, but a time for faith. Faith in the will and courage of our people, that in spite of the difficulties of this time or any other time, that we somehow have that confidence that we can rise above the circumstances of life and demonstrate an indomitable spirit that continues to cause this country to develop on pace with developed countries.

Mr. Speaker, these are difficult times we now face and we all acknowledge that what we are going through is not unusual to other countries, developed and developing. What we are going through, Mr. Speaker, is part of a global experience, an economic meltdown experience, and the people of Barbados are asked to be reminded that even the champion countries of the world, the United States of America, China, Great Britain and other powerful countries are facing the same kind of circumstances that now present these challenges to Barbados.

There are countries, Mr. Speaker, which not only contend with matters related to economic challenges, but they are also contending with prolonged civil wars and many countries, the world over, are contending with matters of poverty.

I believe, Sir, that as we contemplate these times, we have to understand that the journey of the world must not leave us behind, because we are part of the world community, Mr. Speaker, and that we should always consider ourselves to be capable and competent to rise to the circumstances. Therefore, this time is not a time for us to fight with each other. This time is not for us to see who is best at what. This time when we combine our collective energies, our collective wisdom, our collective experiences and as a country, singular in focus, committed to the same cause, we must press ahead. Mr. Speaker, unless we do that we may find ourselves locked in partisan contention and miss the bigger picture.

The bigger picture is about sustaining the development of Barbados. It is about creating the circumstances, not only for survival, but for development,

where in the future, generations to come will laud all of us, regardless to our political preferences, that we fought a good fight, that we kept the faith, and now we have passed on to the next generation, a country far stronger and far better than where we found it.

Mr. Speaker, I have been given the remit for the Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage. I am Honoured to have been given such a remit and I want to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for having given me such a seminal Honour to take on the responsibility of a Ministry that, indeed, he holds high in the arsenal of the Government's army.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we must use this time, not simply as a time to calculate numbers, but a time to contemplate the social state of our country. We must not use this time simply as a time to ask about how well we are doing here or how well we are doing there. Economically, because, we must understand as one of my learned colleagues noted in his presentation, that the story of a great society, of a great country, Mr. Speaker, is not in its economic wealth or is not in the symbols of economic strength that we see in monuments and buildings. Mr. Speaker, the strength of a nation is in the survival and the stability of its society.

Asides.

Dr. The Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, because that it so and because we journey on this earth, not as strangers to success because this country has a storied reputation of great successes, but because we journeyed together and that successive Governments have contributed to the strength and history of this country.

Mr. Speaker, this is a time that we must all reflect on what we have done for the sake of country and we must press on in the same mode, with the same mind that as a time, such as this, when our country needs us the most, we must not ask what our Parties can do for us, but we ask what we can do collectively for our country. We love this country beyond imagination.

I have had the privilege to go the world over and watch how other developed and developing countries admire the tenacity and the strength of a small island developing state called, Barbados. They have listened to us and in many cases, they heeded our recommendations. Therefore, we have nothing to be ashamed about.

The Honourable Prime Minister does not have anything to be ashamed about because of the difficulties of the time, because we know full well that in many cases, when Barbados has been on a stride of development, it encountered some difficult times. And whether under the Barbados Labour Party or the Democratic Labour Party,

Barbados has been able to survive those times and pass on a Government to a succeeding Government, stronger than it found it. Mr. Speaker, the truth is that we must understand where we are, in the context of what is happening around us.

I well recall, Mr. Speaker, in 1992 during the midst of a difficult economic time, the then Democratic Labour Party Administration gathered the world together, and was a part of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development now known as the RIO Conference.

The reason we have to keep the matter of the environment at the forefront of our creative solutions to the current times, is simply because you cannot separate the journeys of man from the context of his or her environment. They are intricately laid together and held together by a common interest. Sir, that interest is the interest to survive. Therefore, very often what becomes of the environment is reflected in how people feel about themselves.

If citizens of a nation feel good about themselves and hold themselves in high esteem, chances are, Mr. Speaker, that they will also guard and protect their environment with a the same level of evangelism, if you will. Therefore, I believe that we can continue to work towards encouraging our people to understand that this Government's investment in the environment is a worthy investment.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. D. S. LOWE: Because, as the environment goes, there goes our people. When our environment suffers degradation, chances are that the health and survival of our people will suffer similarly. Because the environment embodies, Mr. Speaker, what happens to our capacity to feed ourselves. Our Environment embodies what happens to our capacity to breathe clean air.

10.20 a.m.

Our environment in this day may well hold the secret of what it means to create a sustainable economy built upon the planks of a green economy. Mr. Speaker, that is where this Government has chosen to take this country at this time in its history.

Mr. Speaker, I am taken by what happened at that 1992 meeting because Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, then Prime Minister Erskine Sandiford, agreed to Agenda 21, which was proposed to prepare the world for the challenges of the next century, including combatting poverty, addressing unsustainable consumption patterns and shifting demographics.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall that what emerged out of that particular exercise was the call for a Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Conference. Sir, these Small Island Developing States have their own vulnerabilities and characteristics and the difficulties they were experiencing in achieving sustainable development, were put on the table at the particular exercise.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to survive these times, we have to look at how best we are going to curb some of those things that affect our people and our societies.

Mr. Speaker, we do not choose to stand on our own. We are prepared to do whatever is necessary to join other countries, developing and otherwise, to ensure that the technologies and whatever else we have could contribute to the survivability of Small Island Developing States, States in Latin America and elsewhere. We are going to make our voices available and have chosen to use the environment as the platform from which to tell our story about survivability.

Mr. Speaker, we accept that Small Island Developing States are vulnerable, because of the size of their economies and markets. We accept, Mr. Speaker, that they are vulnerable to economic and natural shocks beyond domestic control. We also accept that the plight of the environment, as it would affect a Small Island Developing State such as Barbados, is not necessarily driven by domestic habits, but are the casualties of some of the unwarranted practices of the developed countries. Therefore, we have to understand how we must take our place in this discussion and what we have to say.

Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to applaud the young, talented, bright people of the Ministry of the Environment who work around the clock to ensure that whenever Barbados speaks, Barbados is heard. Mr. Speaker, I almost wish I could call them name by name. I almost wish I could single them out but collectively they have taken the Ministry and woven it into the kind of platform where Barbados can be proud of its people and its message.

Mr. Speaker, we have to continue to focus on the Democratic Labour Party's vision for sustainable development, that positions Barbados as a global icon and the voice of the SIDS in the international arena.

In 1992 at the Convention, Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford committed this country to hosting the first global conference on sustainable development of Small Island Developing States which was held April 25 to May 06, 1994. Mr. Speaker, that Conference spoke to matters that we now face. It really captured the vision of Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, a pioneer in several areas of national development.

Mr. Speaker, what it tells me, as an emerging student of politics and governance, is that you do not have to be popular in order to make your mark. Mr. Speaker, this leader was prepared to stand up for some fundamental beliefs at a most difficult time in the journey of this country. Mr. Speaker, it also taught me that sometimes you have to put holding on to a Government secondary to holding on to your beliefs. Mr. Speaker, that is an instruction that all of us could benefit from.

Mr. Speaker, I know that President Obama of the United States is being pilloried all over his country on matters relating to how he is executing the programmes of Government. Mr. Speaker, if there is one lesson he teaches us every day, is that at the heart of your survival, first as a person, is the fundamentals of your beliefs, and that while people could bargain positions away, what should never be up for bargain are those fundamental creeds that you hold salient to how you live.

Mr. Speaker, I believe sincerely that the Honourable Prime Minister and Honourable Member for St. John is one who embraces a similar principle and I am proud to be a member of his Government and to be here in this place today.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to choose a green journey, we have to lay out the fundamental principles that should guide that journey. I am not going to get up in here and holler at this and holler at that as some have done. I want to take my few minutes to try to point this country in the direction that we are choosing to take, because as I said earlier, coming out of this crisis, we should become more nimble in our approach as how we would manage this country forward. We should be contemplating how we are going to be creative in terms of constructing a new order for this society.

Mr. Speaker, there are men and women out there who understand where this country is and where the world stands today. Mr. Speaker, these men and women are not looking for hand-outs or for sweet nothings. As the Honourable Prime Minister said, they are looking for that compass to point them in a certain direction.

Mr. Speaker, we intend to hold on and to point this country where we want to take it, because we believe that the collective journey would work out to the collective benefit of all the citizens in this country.

Sir, there is something called the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Mr. Speaker, the truth is that at this time, perhaps more importantly than at any other time, the whole platform of sustainable development comes to the fore.

Mr. Speaker, I know that in the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto of this current political term, the pursuit of people-centred Government is at the heart where people are given an opportunity to participate in the Government. Mr. Speaker, it is important, critical and vital that as we march forward, we do not see this journey simply as a journey of the Government, but that those who governed and those that are governed are part of the collective struggle going forward. Mr. Speaker, we want the people to own their Government. We want the people to own our progress. We want the people to own our successes. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that if they do, they would also share our failures.

10.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, truth to tell, we know that unless we are able to get all Barbadians on board unlike, of course, those who try to discourage Barbadians from joining the struggle at this time, those who try to make Barbadians think that this is a struggle of the Government and not of the people. Sir, I would want to say that this is a collective struggle and that whether you are B, D, or anything else, you are part of the struggle, because you are linked to this time, not simply by a political label, but because of your birthright as a Barbadian.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, this Government wants to call on all Barbadians to join us in the protection of our environment. This Government wants to call on all Barbadians to become a part of this new era, where we confront the multiple crises of fuel, food and financial, which have resulted in the worst global economic recession and financial meltdown since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Our response to it is not one of panic or fear, for we have the confidence in all of these men and the one lady on This Side, who are all capable of taking this country forward. Sir, we have no doubt in our abilities. There are people who might try to make us think that we are not suitable to be able to occupy this Hall as the Government of Barbados, but we know, it is indelibly printed in our bosoms, that we are just as good as any other Government that has managed this country before.

Mr. Speaker, throughout all the perils of this global circumstance that visits other countries, are visiting us.

Mr. Speaker, it is claimed that the numbers of unemployed globally could rise this year to between eighteen million and fifty-one million, over the 2007 levels. Mr. Speaker, we are not exempt from that and every 1 per cent who falls in that struggle will become part of the 20 million people who are signed to poverty, so that the domino effect of the struggle of these times and what could happen to innocent people should become the concern of

all of us. Therefore, all of us should be rising to the occasion, as I said before, and working with your Government, with our Government, to solve these problems.

Mr. Speaker, there is not only a financial crisis, there is also a scientific crisis as it relates to global warming. Sir, responding to this climate crisis requires a certain understanding of this climate change phenomenon. Sir, we understand that climate change is driven by matters of global warming, green house gases emission, dependency on fossil fuels and energy inefficiencies. If we are going to fix those things as a Small Island Developing State, it is going to take more than just economic wizardry. It is going to take a certain kind of human development planning that will help us to win the protection of our environment and the development of our people.

Mr. Speaker, in other words, what we have to concern ourselves with is that as we go forward, we want to make sure that the habits of our people would not put our environment at risk. Therefore, matters relating to renewable energy, matters relating to how we dispose solid waste, matters relating to how we protect our water resources, matters relating to how we handle flooding and drainage issues in this country, will all be packaged together to ensure that we go forward in harmony in this society and not necessarily that we gallop ahead in development, while the people are left behind and the environment suffers loss.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time in this country not too long ago, when it was said that land should fetch its highest economic value. Sir, that policy has had an impact on this country, one that might be felt for centuries.

Sir, in the rush and gallop to develop parts of Barbados that perhaps should have stayed in their natural form, has resulted in the altering of the landscape of Barbados so significantly that our water courses have now been disrupted.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, five minutes?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, five minutes.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, we now have to correct some of those things and that is why I am making the point that taking this country out of this crisis cannot only result from a mad dash for commercial development. It must also hinge upon that critical platform of environmental friendliness, so that

the ecosystems of our country and our society would be able to survive the thirst for development.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people out there who are saying that we have to find creative ways of developing this and developing that. If you would go down the West Coast, you would see that the windows to the sea are now occupied, that there are curtains up now, there are now tall huge buildings, and that the whole face of Barbados is changing.

Mr. Speaker, it is the remit of this Ministry to ensure that any development occurring in Barbados must comply with our environmental protection standards before they are given consent to develop. Therefore, we will use an integrated approach where the Barbados Water Authority, where the environmental protection agencies, where the Coastal Zone Management Unit, must all come together with the Town Planning Department and others, in forging decisions that are decisions that protect our environment. We must not ever again allow this to happen in this country.

Mr. Speaker, some may think it is folly to be discussing climate change and other environmental policies during this time, but as I have tried to demonstrate, they are inextricably linked. Therefore, we have to ensure that we keep them in focus as we go along this great journey.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage has been established to:

- a) advance a sustainable development programme, underpinned by leading-edge environmental policies;
- b) practices and programmes that protect all aspect of our environment;
- c) protect our water resources;
- d) encourage a higher quality of life, and a holistic well-being of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, we have set some examples of what we want to achieve. In addition, we have articulated a core set of green economic indicators, with the intention of mainstreaming those key statistics in the Government's annual, social and economic reports, as well as the Annual Central Bank Reports. In other words, when we give out information, that information must take into account those factors that affect in a significant way, how we live in this society.

Sir, we must not simply strive at handing over a society to the next generation with a high bank account, high revenues and large foreign exchange. If we do that at

the expense of our environmental protection standards, we may very well hand over a country where it can pay its way, but it cannot protect the survival of its people.

Sir, that is not our intention. We have articulated that core of economic indicators. We have proclaimed the amendment to the Physical Development Plan that provides for the framework of expanding the national green infrastructure, namely, the Barbados National Park.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of the Environment has embarked on a ground-breaking partnership with the local banking and insurance sectors, to work together on coming up with a sustainable agenda for the financial sector. The National Conservation Commission has embarked on the planting of 80 000 trees in an attempt to green Barbados, in a way to help to protect our environment.

We have established a Drainage Division, and I am going to talk about that later, because in relation to the Drainage Division, I have heard Opposition Members making laughing sport at the Drainage Division. I have heard them poo-pooing the fact that there is a Minister for Drainage. Sir, let me say this and let the world hear, I am one proud Minister who has responsibility for drainage. Sir, lest the people of Barbados forget, they must recall that one of Barbados' outstanding performers lost his life in a flood.

10.40 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, there must also remember that the former Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter made a declaration that the days of flooding would be over under his Administration. Obviously, he thought it was important even though the Right Honourable Member did not achieve that, but obviously, there are Members on That Side, who believe it has now become a thing of mock-sport. Mr. Speaker, I am proud, because there are thousands of Barbadians, every rainy season, whose lives are disrupted beyond tolerance because of flash flooding. I am saying this Government is committed to ensuring that whenever we bring an arrest to those issues, we are going to say they will all be eliminated and we are saying that we will have a flood prevention management strategy to ensure that those disruptions in people's lives will not occur once the rains come again. Sir, we will not fix them all in the first instance, but we have started our work already and at Headley's Land there is tremendous progress there on correcting a problem that has outlived the previous Government and we are now bringing it to arrest. Sir, I know the Honourable Speaker, in whose Constituency this area is, is very happy about the progress of the work being done there.

Mr. Speaker, we are also addressing flooding on the west coast, because we know there has been a perennial

problem with flooding in Holetown and we are now ensuring that significant infrastructure work is being done there, at the same time, while we are attending to matters across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to invite Honourable Members on the Other Side because this is one Barbados and the duties of this Government is to ensure that every citizen gets whatsoever Government has to offer, and therefore, we are asking Honourable Members on the Other Side, who may have those areas, that are flood-prone areas, like the Honourable Member for St. Andrew...

Asides.

Dr. the Hon D.S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew would not know where the floods are in St. Andrew because he does not go there often. That is the problem. We want Honourable Members to bring their issues and we are prepared to treat to those issues as well.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is almost up so let me conclude in this regard. If we are going to be able to truly become the first green economy in the Caribbean and in Latin America, then there are some vital steps we must take.

(1) In treatment to the seminal work of the leadership of the late Professor Mr. Headley, we are going to establish the Third National Commission on Sustainable Development.

(2) I will be making a proposal to Government for the establishment of a new Cabinet sub-committee on Sustainable Development that will ensure the issues of ecosystems management, renewable energy, water resources, waste management, land use and public infrastructure are brought to the fore in the design of new policy instruments.

(3) Provisions have made in the 2009/2010 Estimates to facilitate the Sustainable Development commission undertaking the design of sustainability impact assessment tools as a means of mainstreaming the national principals of sustainable development into the policy design and evaluation process.

Mr. Speaker, we will see the tabling of the long awaited Environmental Management Act that would give legislative reinforcement to the work of the Ministry of the Environment and provide for the establishment of the Barbados National Park, which has been, and remains a policy priority for this Administration.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the journey ahead is a long journey. We believe that if we are going to be able to

get to the other side of this crisis and get there safe, that we will have to work all hands on deck to make sure that these things are achieved. Therefore, I look forward to debate on the Heads, where we would be able to define in more specific terms many of the initiatives coming out of the Ministry of the Environment.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you so very kindly and, I am obliged to you.

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

Mr. R.C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, the last Honourable Member who spoke mentioned the question of evangelism or evangelical and I could not help but come to the conclusion that his speech was merely sacerdotal. Honourable House would want to know about the activities of the National Conservation Commission, about the activities of the Coastal Zone Management Unit, about the activities of the gullies ecosystem management programme, of the position with the Botanical Gardens, on the position with beautifying Barbados, on the coastal infrastructure programme and the National Heritage Unit, among other things.

Mr. Speaker, much as he delivered himself with some politeness, some fluency and a measure of admirable oratory, he left many issues unanswered, but now to the Estimates, Mr. Speaker.

Sir, Section 109.1 of the Supreme Laws of Barbados, the Constitution says that: "The Minister responsible for finance shall in respect of each financial year at the earliest convenient moment, before the commencement of that financial year, introduce in the House of Assembly an Appropriation Bill containing under appropriate Head for the several services required, the estimated aggregate sums which are proposed to be expended other than by way of statutory expenditure during that financial year."

Sir, the Constitution, therefore requires Estimates to be laid and Estimates are about spending. However, unlike 50 years when the leaders of that time would just identify line items to spend on, in recent times, the philosophy that has been in existence is that the Estimates could be used as an instrument of development and so, the question has to be, to what degree these Estimates have an environmental thrust?

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was crystal clear, that the many concerns that she had went to the core of the developmental process in Barbados and actually challenged the Government to take stock of where it has taken Barbados so far.

Sir, when one considered the composition and aims of the Democratic Labour Party parliamentary group one would see the use of the term "empowerment". Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has responsibility for Constituency Empowerment and the Honourable Member for St. Philip West has responsibility for Empowerment.

Asides.

Mr. R.C. EASTMOND: If I did not go to school in the right place and long enough, I would have difficulty. However, I take it that at the level of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, Constituency Empowerment is about building Constituencies and developing Constituencies, whereas empowerment at a higher 10.50 a.m. level that would be led by the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, is about enfranchisement from the point of view of bringing people onboard with the aim to ameliorating their business concerns, their commercial concerns and their developmental ambitions.

Sir, having put things in that perspective, permit me to say that the process of modern enfranchisement and modern empowerment started with the Right Excellent Sir Grantley Adams when he brought the vote to Barbadians in 1951. That was the first sign of modern empowerment and modern enfranchisement.

The Barbados Labour Party Government which ruled this country from 1994 to 2008, had created a number of mechanisms by which enfranchisement and empowerment could proceed apace. Let us not forget that it was the Barbados Labour Party Government in an enlightened frame of mind, that created the Fund Access, that created the Youth Entrepreneurial Scheme, and that had itself even before then, brought some empowerment under Chapter 2 39(b) of the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act.

Sir, you will no doubt come to the conclusion that I am listing steps in the empowerment process in circumstances where I identified the present individual units in a process. Empowerment cannot be a one-off event. It is a process and the Barbados Labour Party consistent with its philosophy going back to the 1940s and 1950s, has been able to bring measures of empowerment over and over again.

I want to commend the former Honourable Member for Christ Church West, Sir Henry Forde, who was one of the people in the forefront of what he termed Economic Enfranchisement for ordinary Barbadians of this hue, for ordinary Barbadians of this complexion. Sir, Hillary Beckles joined in the campaign, years ago, asking that there be enfranchisement of the masses at the level of

permitting the masses a greater stake and share in the national economy.

Sir, permit me to mention certain aspects of the policy as proposed by the Government and as brought to the people of Barbados in 2008. I quote, I am reading from Page 9 of Pathways to Progress, the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto of 2008. In part it says:

“ The Democratic Labour Party is philosophically committed to ensuring that every Barbadian resident has access to comfortable shelter. We commit to Housing Every Last Person (HELP).

Under such a programme the Democratic Labour Party Government will:

“In the first 100 days of the new DLP Administration remove VAT from building materials on houses valued up to \$400 000.

Establish a Home Ownership Revolving Fund for public sector workers, providing interest free loans to appointed public servants with 5 years service who are first time homeowners. This fund will be capitalised with an initial injection of \$40 million.”

Honourable Members are free to search their Estimates to locate the figures of \$40 million for this programme for appointed public servants with 5 years service or more.

“To provide 500 lots of land in five(5) months at \$5 per sq foot for the first-time homeowners. These lots have been identified and land will be acquired by private treaty where necessary to speed up the process.

Provide 2,500 house spots for sale to low and middle income wage earners in the first term of the DLP Government.

Commit to building 2,000 housing solutions per year in the first term of a DLP Government. These will include rental units, terrace units and starter homes.

Increase the tax deduction for mortgages to \$20,000.00 per year.”

These are proposed policies that should have materialised in action within the 100 days of the Democratic Labour Party Government in this country.

I am concerned that in circumstances where this Democratic Labour Party has repudiated the position of an earlier Democratic Labour Party Administration, this Democratic Labour Party should be more alert to what it has promised, in light of the fact that between 1986 and

1994, senior Democratic Labour Party spokes people were saying that a Manifesto is never a social contract. Whereas these current contemporary Members seemed to be suggesting that the social contract is at the core of Manifesto promises.

Sir, I want to raise a number of questions and hope that if we do come to Committee stage, answers will be provided.

When is the Democratic Labour Party proposing to remove VAT from electric bills? Where are the 2 000 houses promised each year and should have been built last year? Where is the Fishing Agreement with Trinidad and Tobago? Where is the stabilisation programme for the Barbados economy? On what page or pages is the Democratic Labour Party's job creation and job lost prevention plan in these Estimates? There are more questions as well. Those questions are by no means irrelevant, but there are other questions as well.

Where is the proposed Agricultural Development Bill or Act? What about food sovereignty and the food security plan that the Democratic Labour Party had floated in the year 2008? How much land has been pressed into production after the Democratic Labour Party took office? What is the Government's ultimate plan for the greater Greame Hall area?

Sir, I would not touch now on the question of housing, but I would wish to know where is the tourism master plan. I want answers to that, Sir. Where is the Tourism master plan that the Democratic Labour Party, during the last Election campaign proposed to the people, in a situation where it was an unknown as to who would have become Minister of Tourism after the Elections? Exactly how is Government targeting the CARICOM market more effectively than the Barbados Labour Party did?

Sir, let me make some observations about targeting the CARICOM market. Under the philosophy and principles of the CARICOM Single Market, we in Barbados have to appreciate that these principles suggest meaningful economic integration and cooperation on matters of foreign policy, on matters of common regional interest and such like. It must be said before this Honourable House that we in here cannot lightly regard our relationship with CARICOM, one of the principal reasons that we have a favourable balance of trade with the Organisation of East Caribbean States, and the context of CARICOM and Caribbean Single Market and Economy, we need to heighten that.

Sir, indeed, so far in these Estimates very little has actually been said about trade, but intra-regional trade has

seen Barbados do very well, in terms of its earnings by trading with particular CARICOM countries.

In the context, going back a bit to this concept of enfranchisement and empowerment, we have in Barbados many enlightened young people, many young people with ambition, many young people with education and many young people who are prepared to set goals, and I am asking this.

11.00 a.m.

I am asking this Honourable Member through the Government, Sir, to suggest to us how are young people being empowered generally? and what specifics there are in these Estimates that could engender that type of empowerment and facilitation of young people.

Mr. Speaker, I want now to come briefly to what the Press, though I believe the Nation, made bold to print in today's newspaper, suggesting that the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter had to correct the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. Nothing can be further from the truth.

Today's Nation, if you read carefully, seems to be suggesting that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East made one particular statement and was flatly contradicted and answered by the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter. That craves clarification. May I clarify?

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we were going quite well this morning, in terms of the cross-talk and shouting across the Floor. Please, do not let us start it now.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, cited data from January 2007 to March 2008, when our foreign reserves reached a peak of \$2.709 billion in reserves. That was at March 2008. Then, the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter did cite figures from April 2008 to December 2008. Therefore, what we have is a situation where the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East actually, from the information that she had, was quoting the figures for January 2007 to March 2008, when the foreign reserves were at \$2 793 million. But the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter was able to show that between March and December 2008 these reserves plummeted by \$708.4 million to a low of \$1 990 million.

Now, what is significant in this is that March 2008 was very close to the Barbados Labour Party's tenure up to January 2008, and by no magic could the Government have achieved that high level of reserves between January and

March, without input by the Barbados Labour Party Administration that it took over from.

Mr. Speaker, what is particularly challenging to all of us as Barbadians, is not only where would that \$718.4 million have disappeared to, but as Barbadians, we want to know what steps are going to be taken to provide at least six months import cover, to this country.

Sir, 20 years ago, three months import cover with foreign exchange had been deemed to be enough. Considering the changes in the world, the increases in the prices of imported goods and such like, economists agree that for a country the size of Barbados, there should be import cover of no less than six months reserves.

Sir, we are taking that in circumstances, where since the foreign reserves represent an aspect of economic performance, we also must bear in mind, having taken this decline in the foreign reserves into consideration, that there are other economic indices that do actually suggest that things are not as rosy as the Government would have us believe. Let us look now, Sir, at the deficit.

There is a projected deficit of \$822 million, but it was conceded in here, Sir, that the inflows of inland revenue may not reach the projected target. Now, if the inflows of revenue do not match up to expectations, and our foreign reserves are under pressure, we are faced with a serious situation. The revenue position is always important, because the day that revenue is short by \$1 billion, a negative record would have been set. We would have been, for the first time, finding ourselves \$1 billion in deficit. It would have severe implications for our national debt and, ultimately, our balance of payments.

Therefore, we in this Barbados Labour Party Opposition are seeking answers from Government in circumstances where it is unclear exactly and precisely where we are going to make up any shortfalls from. Under the Barbados Labour Party Government Mr. Speaker, Barbados was absolutely credit worthy between 1994 and when we demitted office in 2008.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, that credit worthiness is changing, and we need assurances from the Government that other indices in the economy are really pointing in the direction that Honourable Members on That Side would have us believe. What therefore, Sir, about the increases in the cost of living? What therefore, Sir, about any possible increases in investment? Are we seeing increases in investment?

I live in the fair and lovely parish of St. James, pacifically in a lovely place called upper Carlton, Zion Hill

in St. James North. I pass the west coast, indeed, go to the beach on the west coast, and coming up from Heywoods and the Merida, right up to Walmer Lodge, Black Rock, there are examples of abandon investment, or investment that has stalled. What is the Government going to do about this particular problem?

Sir, my advice to the Government is simple. Identify the problem. Think quickly about the possible negative consequences, and then, work on the problem before too late.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: It seems as though, Sir, we could very well be laughing and making mock-sport at such a serious situation, that we might be condemned by posterity and history for laughing this matter to scorn. We ought not laugh this matter to scorn.

The Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter said that in many respects, the signals are like 1991. Mr. Speaker, in any situation where the foreign reserves continue to plummet and where we could not boost our exports to overcome the problem, we then have to find alternate methods. What alternate method, quite frankly, was brought here within the last month?

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West had a hand in changing the law to permit and increase in the amount of national borrowing that the country can have, and it was a defensive measure, intended to shore up the foreign reserves. I am going to accuse a cat or condemn the Honourable Member for St. Michael West on it. The reason being that when the Barbados Labour Party was in power, more than once, the Barbados Labour Party undertook similar measures in the interest of increasing the total amount of reserves available to us.

In an ideal world, Mr. Speaker, all of your foreign exchange should really be earned out of exports, whether visible exports or invisible exports.

11.10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, in an imperfect world, in a world of vicissitudes, in a world where even international lenders are sometimes wary of doing business with Barbados, sometimes more through jealousy than anything else, we have to be clear as to what strategies, within a national strategic plan, this country must embark on, with the aim of heightening our foreign reserves and ensuring that in the process, we do not reach the 1991 situation where we only had one week's foreign reserves import cover.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five more minutes to conclude.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, if I look at all of the Estimates, I would raise a number of questions, and I will find myself in agreement with the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central. Last night, the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central spoke with clarity, candour and conviction and said that there should have been more for the productive sectors. Mr. Speaker, that came from the Government side.

Mr. Speaker, if there should have been more for the productive sectors, it would mean that the Honourable Member, from his perspective as a person who learned well at the university, as a person who has always been close to the ground and as a pioneer in the credit union movement, must know what actuated him to say that more should have been done for the productive sectors. Mr. Speaker, if more is really done for the productive sectors, especially the exporting sectors, a lot of the concerns from Honourable Members on This Side of the aisle would be met.

Mr. Speaker, characteristics of these Estimates are a decrease in foreign reserves, prospects of low revenue; cost of living issues, no vote at all of any amount for the proposed new sixth form schools, nothing to show what plans exist for exports of both visible goods and invisible services, nothing to show the way forward for the productive sectors, nothing unprojected, and no new levels of investments.

Sir, as I said earlier, in a situation where inland revenue is not flowing as it ought to, this deficit of \$822 million, if not managed sensibly, can lead to severe consequences.

Mr. Speaker, I will finish by making these two observations. These Estimates put us in what is known in civil aviation as a holding pattern. They are holding things together. These Estimates do not constitute the platform for which 50 years of development can take place. These Estimates do not constitute the platform, which 50 years from now, would see them as the spring-board off which Barbados success has been achieved.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, since the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central, and since I myself join with him, is concerned about the state of the productive sectors, I sensed that all that I have read and understood is instructing me, that the Government might very well find itself having to come back here six or seven months from now with either a mini budget, or with measures designed to cure the problems that I have outlined.

Mr. Speaker, I have not been emotional or emotive in this debate. I have not been casting aspersions widely. I have behaved myself the way I learned from my mother and Sunday School, even though this Parliament did not behave quite like a Sunday School yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, when I went into the night I remembered an exchange between two Honourable Members which was accentuated more by the broadcast than what actually happened on the Floor of the House. Apparently, you could dabble with technology in such a way either to aggravate or to increase. For example, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West never comes over the radio station - I listened now hollering and bawling, he is always modulated, which means that you could make the technology work in a way where a fellow who makes a lot of noise can appear to be a fellow speaking in soft tones.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West is robust and has his own characteristic way of debating. He is a robust debater. He did not let down the Honourable Leader of Government Business on That Side of the House who said he had hoped for a robust debate. We have so far had very much a robust debate.

Mr. Speaker, what we do have before us is a Budget that is merely holding things together in the expectation that some good fortune would come our way, and would rescue Barbados from the type of looming economic crisis which this country does not need nor deserve at this time in this history.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. Yes, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, if I were not present in this House from Wednesday the 18th until 20 minutes after 11 o'clock on Friday, the 20th, I would not have believed what I would have been hearing.

Normally, I listened with rapt attention to the contributions of the Honourable Member for St. James North, but on this particular occasion he has betrayed me somewhat, because he swayed from the normal sensible path that he normally trod. It is unfortunate sometimes when we are caught up in trying to carry the message either of a political leader or of a political institution and therefore, sway away from our true moorings. For that particular breach, Sir, I forgive you and I cause you nevertheless to remain my friend.

Mr. Speaker, we are in possibly the most difficult times in the history of man. This crisis which we have in this world is devastating countries beyond our memories and beyond the memories past. Therefore, we should not pretend that somehow Barbados is immune from the devastations or the ravages taking place in the world's financial and economic sectors.

In fact, to date, Barbados has struggled through reasonably well thus far, but we know that as this crisis

continues to unfold, morphed in different ways and take on new forms, that our stability might not remain at the same level that we would want it to do. Therefore, these Estimates that the Honourable Prime Minister and the Government brought to this House is taking that very much in mind.

These are Estimates which do not set out to be reckless. These are Estimates which try to steer a path of science and to ensure that the services which the Government delivered to the people of Barbados will continue to be delivered to the people of Barbados. That has caused an increase in the gap between the revenue and the expenditure, but this country has always to some extent operated with that deficit or with some deficit. In these most difficult times, you sought to expand that deficit a bit in order to deal with many of the crises which will impact upon this dear country of Barbados.

This crisis, as we know, Mr. Speaker, is so severe, its origin is deep in the belly of raw, naked capitalism. Let us understand that. All of those theorists and all of those who put the market as the God, and that it would control everything, give this market free rein to manoeuvre and to manipulate, have now been brought to their knees.

11.20 a.m.

The economists are stumped to find reason, sense and purpose in this particular reality that we face. Therefore, what has been happening has shown economists that they are not gods. It is about super modeling. Therefore, when they get up before us and make these predictions, it has been shown by this crisis that every one of them is, in fact, wrong. If these were in those days of the French Revolution, there would have been many whose heads would have been placed under the guillotine, because they would have brought people's lives to the most devastating level.

Sir, thankfully Barbados's model is not an absolute capitalist model Governments over time in this country have maintained some intervention, through the provision of public goods, through intervention in other areas of activity and have sought to maintain a reasonable balance in this country.

The unfettered motion of capitalism, its ascendancy in the world, particularly with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the USSR, where everything is now opened to those gamblers of the lives of persons - the speculators - the world will never be the same again. Let us understand that. It has shown that they have failed and that they have also failed us.

Sir, I would want to say let us not blame the Democratic Labour Party's Government for receiving the

whiplash of the practices of others, this is a sensible Government and we are engaged in sensible policies. Sir, the fundamental beliefs of this Party and of this Government is not unfettered capitalism, otherwise we would have retreated a long time ago from the foundation of this great Party, from those things which we consider important to the development of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, even now we will not retreat, neither will we surrender, regardless of what the Honourable Member for St. James North says. Sir, regardless of what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East says, we will ensure that those goods and services continue to reach the people, because we have recognised and have understood the pain of the current reality. These predictors of doom and gloom, these sooth-sayers, these gods of all knowledge, who claim that they can do this better, they must put the shoe on their feet and march in line. This is not a time for the kind of partisan fragmentation I see coming from the mouths and bosoms of the Barbados Labour Party in this Honourable House. We are made of better stock and of better sense.

Mr. Speaker, it reminds me as though we are in the presence of aliens, as though we are in the presence of people who do not understand what is happening in Barbados, and it scares me. There is no need at this time in this democracy to be grabbing for power. That power which you believe would come from the words you speak, from your corruption of the process of what the Government is doing. You must wait your time. The Lord will anoint you in good time.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: You are a foolish young man from St. George, you are a pretender and a puffed-up foolish fellow, that is what you are. You come from good parents, but you are getting on stupid.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I consider those last words to be entirely unparliamentary. Sir, the words “puffed up” and “pretender from St. George” are unparliamentary.

Mr. SPEAKER: To whom was the Honourable Member referring?

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Pardon me?

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not know to whom the Honourable Member was referring.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, in the presence of diabolical forces, you would get this kind of behaviour. This is serious business because these millionaires, left and

right over here, who can still go to the supermarket, who can still fly out of the country...

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: You told us in here that you were a millionaire.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please address your comments to the Chair and not directly to Honourable Members.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and the Honourable Member for St. Joseph have both declared that they are millionaires. Therefore, even within the construct of the current crisis, they are going to be able to live and to live well. But even before the crisis, there were persons in this country who had great difficulty, even to survive. Therefore, these Honourable Members could ‘lick up’ and ‘mash up’, they could behave as though they do not care, but we have to take a different path. Sir, we have to take a different view, we have to do whatever is necessary to ensure that we continue to lift all of our people up.

Mr. Speaker, this kind of behaviour saddens me. It saddens me because I know that normally they might not mean ill-will, but something seems to be coursing through their veins that would cause this level of behaviour over the last three days.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: You are forgiven. Go before your God.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at what has been happening in the world. The values of the world’s companies, \$14.5 trillion, are being wiped out. Let us start to comprehend, if it is possible, the value of the world’s companies, \$14.5 trillion, being wiped out. Sir, that is a ‘mobbaton’ of money, that is a massive amount of resources being wiped out.

Mr. Speaker, the Marshal Plan to rebuild Europe just after WWII, \$1 trillion. Could you understand that even in the midst of carnage and chaos rising out of four and five years of WWII, it took \$1 trillion to establish the current modern systems but that the value of companies being wiped out by this terrible devastation of humanity - \$14.5 trillion?

Sir, even now American International Group (AIG), one of the largest insurers in the world, is still buckling at its knees, even though billion of dollars are still being

pumped into those economies. Sir, we must stop pretending; among those are some of the people that Jesus ran out of the temple because they were trading among those on the other side, because they seemed not to understand the reality. Let us stop it, let us focus on the development of the country, let us put aside our political differences for now. There will come a time for the rabid partisan politics.

Mr. Speaker, I echo also the call of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East. We all must stand together like bulwarks against the torrent, if we break we are going to fall. Some of the language used over the last set of debates - and I am not reflecting - has been painful. It seems as though they want to destroy this country. It seems as though they want to destroy good companies in Barbados, companies where there is a Barbadian who has taken a keen interest in the development of this country, a model, never seen before by those who can climb on their boats off the west coast and sail out to the ocean and just look back. Sir, they do not know, they do not feel it or they do not care. They go out there with grey goose, red goose and pigs on a spit.

11.30 a.m.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, today their mothers and fathers cry shame. There is a tightening in their bellies for what has emerged from these particular individuals. This crisis is too severe for this level of stupidity and the voices must be heard of decent men and women in this country.

Sir, the economists from the hills and from the valleys must meet, reconstruct, look again at their theories, look again at the unfettered nature of capitalism and look again at what these gamblers across the world have done.

Mr. Speaker, in Barbados we are even more dangerously positioned than in the early 1990s, but so far, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister of this country, along with this Government, has managed this process well and good men and women of this country, decent citizens have rallied to the call thus far. I am urging and asking, Mr. Speaker, that more come on board.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes you need to abandon your leader, particularly when your leaders are leading you down the path of destruction. If they believe that the current leaders of the Other Side are leading them down the path of destruction and the destruction of this country, they need to abandon them. Sir, they need to do that because, in the mornings, when they go with their bowls before their doors like Errol Hill, in his poem, *The Beggar Man*: "I turn

away from my doorstep but in pocket burn two bright red pennies".

Sir, they did not even take the time out to share a penny with those who came to their doorsteps. Sir, that is what we are talking about.

Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Education we will continue to provide those services to the young people of Barbados and in some instances, where possible, under these trying circumstances, we will even deliver more. We will find, where possible, that some of our students can benefit through athletic scholarship and we will use that avenue.

Mr. Speaker, where there are offerings to us, we will take them up, once they are scrutinised and satisfy the developmental and resource needs of this country.

Mr. Speaker, we will provide assistance where assistance is needed, if they cannot pay their fees at Cave Hill. We will provide help if there are difficulties at the Community College.

Mr. Speaker, we will not cut back school meals to the poor and the impoverished in our country. We will look for suppliers who will help us to keep the bills down. We will enter into arrangements where farmers of Barbados will be contracted, if it could be worked out, to produce directly for the school feeding programme for the young people of Barbados. Sir, that is what we will do, not buying where markups are 400 per cent and 500 per cent and every year we have to be carrying up the money by millions of dollars because that is not what we want. Sir, that is linking education and agriculture together and working with small farmers.

Mr. Speaker, that is the true socialist construct that we are arguing about, that gives a lie to the unfettered nature of capitalism so that people, working together, could still grow and develop. Sir, that is the kind of thing that we wanted ever since.

Mr. Speaker, these persons have caused my passion to rise a bit. I try to be sedate in my life, because I am no longer 18 years and running up the hill. I still go to the hill, but I walk slowly.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Sir, there are benefits on the hills that even I too can derive. I leave young men to run, pant and fail. I walk slowly, get up there and succeed.

Mr. Speaker, this year, as we continue to look at the provision for students with special needs, have provided a lot more resources to the Challenor School. In fact, we

have adopted that school because we believe that children with special needs, need to be taken care of. Sir, gradually, we will unfold more and more as we become truly inclusive and the taxpayers of Barbados will provide for all its young people. Sir, we have started with the Challenor School and we will reach out gradually to all the others and include them in the Budget of the Ministry of Education and so, Sir, the Challenor School has benefitted this year. We will continue to roll out those provisions.

Mr. Speaker, I am not one who believe, honestly so, that on This Side, we are the provedores of all knowledge. There are systems which have been developed before and I give recognition to those systems. Sir, that has been my nature, and I will not change my nature even in the face of harsh politics. I know that for many years there were certain levels of stagnation within the Ministry of Education. Sir, ideas came up, but they remain dormant. They were not given the mobility and I wondered what was going on for some period during those 14 years.

Mr. Speaker, files must be dusted off, have been dusted off and resurrected during those 14 years and I wondered what was going on for some period during those 14 years. Sir, files have resurrected to make sense of the reality of education in current Barbados in the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes I run into difficulty with those who form the leadership and the pedagogy out of school system. Sir, if you are right, you are right because a thousand voices singing does not make one voice discordant. Sir, somebody has to say that the emperor is, in fact, naked. If the emperor is naked, you could see his total nakedness, whatever the length of his nakedness is.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to cower or run away from these things, because that is not how Gwendoline Jones, Doris Jones or even Matilda Morrison brought me up. Sir, that is not how I was raised. I did not sit under the pea tree, go into the cane fields or into the cassava patch as a young man to be listening to such foolishness. Sir, in my bosom is the product and the produce of strong able citizens of this country, thousands and millions of them across the world. Sir, the Other Side should not pretend that they know it all, that somehow they could wave a magic wand and everything will disappear. No, we laugh at such diatribe and it must be rejected.

Mr. Speaker, we will look for alternative disciplinary strategies over the next few years, as we look at the Ministry of Education and we will enquire that CVQ or the MVQ are brought on Board. The BCSE is an idea initiated before, but has not yet reached fruition, but should start to unfold over the next year or so. Sir, all these are initiatives and programmes and with the assistance of the Minister of State in Education, they will start to unfold.

Mr. Speaker, we will pay a keener interest in privately delivered education in Barbados. Sir, that is what we will do to ensure that all of us are going ahead and going ahead together. Sir, no Barbadian child must be left out of the process and out of the provision of services of education. I am saying to teachers as well, that even though they are trained, that even the doctor must refresh himself or herself, that the lawyer must refresh himself or herself and that the teacher too must refresh himself or herself. Sir, to assist in that process of refreshment would be a system of licensing of all teachers in this

11.40 a.m.

country and a cycle through which further professional development must take place every year. That is the only way we can do it.

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: Sir, I have taken a position over the last two years not to respond in this House to anything said by those on the Other Side. I think it is sensible if persons do not understand, if they cannot understand or they will not understand, or they do not care to understand, to do some clarification.

In these Estimates for this year would be some small provisions for certain agencies in education. Barbados Secondary School Football League - one would remember the Honourable Member from the Other Side who jumped up and pompasett about the provision of some \$15 000 for the Barbados Secondary School Football League. The operative word there is not football. It is schools, secondary.

Young people of this country who, over years were not provided with any resources, with Physical Education teachers working beyond 3 o'clock every day to ensure that we develop, the psychomotor talents that the skills of our young people should not go unattended. No apologies to the person who raised that point. They do not understand the connection between sports, education, culture and society's development. Sir, it hurts me because that particular individual taught for a number of years. I do not know how they cannot understand the nexus between these realities. There are not gifts.

Sir, in these Estimates as well, \$30 000 for NAPSAC, a programme that cost \$180 000 mobilising the Under Elevens in the primary school system of this country. The Ministry of Education never looked at them. It first started with the Barbados Union of Teachers. The pioneers of sports, tracking field among young people was not the Government. It was the Barbados Union of Teachers who mobilised the teachers and involved young

people in the process. Gradually the Sports Council created NAPSAC country, but they cannot provide all the resources. The Ministry of Education has a responsibility to move the process forward.

We can jump and scream in this country about Usain Bolt, a Caribbean brother. We have Akela Jones, of Springer School. Look at her in the newspaper this morning. Sir, people like that will be assisted by this Ministry of Education. No apologies. Her brother John, even though they carry the name Jones, all Joneses are family. There is no nepotism. I want to make that point clear.

Sir, young Bret Carrington, an excellent footballer from Harrison College, who in his first semester, through a scholarship negotiated by the Barbados Football Association, creating waves in the United States of America. That is the kind of dynamics we are talking about. I will not retreat. I will not surrender in the face of evil. I will not. I bare my chest, and if you like it do not touch it. That is the kind of reality.

In these Estimates we have put in a small sum to help the National Council of Parent Teachers Association, because we understand the notion of governance and the notion of involvement.

Asides.

Hon. R.D. JONES: You were 15 or 16 years old. I do not want to hear you, dismiss you. Take your bread and go away. Who do you think you are talking to? I am a gentleman, but I am a 'ruff-up' now, when I hear these piping voices in my ears, I got to get disturbed. Leave me alone. I am not troubling you or any Honourable Members on your side. Because I sit and smile gently do you think that I am any 'patsy boy'?

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: I want to commend the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister for the presentation of these Estimates, and the Democratic Labour Party's Government will carry this country through this most difficult time.

Thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Are there any other Honourable Members to speak? The Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Hon. E.G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to add my voice to this Appropriation Bill before this Honourable House. Sir, yesterday we had to listen Honourable Members on That Side make heavy weather of the fact that

we had some reductions in our foreign reserves. Again, this morning we have heard the Honourable Member for St. James North refer to the fact, well I should not say fact, his view that the coverage on the foreign reserves should be in excess. I believe the figure that he projected was some six months of coverage. Sir, let me just correct the situation in respect of our history over the last few years, and to our debt cover.

Sir, the import cover for goods and services in 2000 was 15 weeks, In 2001, that cover went up to 24 weeks and in 2002, 23 weeks. Sir, you will recall in that time with the crisis of 9/11, that increase was directly related to substantial borrowings by the former Prime Minister. In 2004, the cover was some 16.7 weeks down from the 24 weeks. In 2005, 15 weeks and we have stayed roughly around the 15 weeks cover most of the time in the history of Barbados. In 2007, the cover was 19 weeks and in 2008 back to 15 weeks.

I do not understand the big fuss being made by the Honourable Member for St. James North, in respect of the number of weeks cover that we have. Certainly in terms of the projections for this year, 2009-2010, we are projecting around the same level of 15 weeks cover.

Sir, the foreign reserves of this country, in this year 2008, had decreased but it is not the first time there has been a decrease. In 2004 and 2005 we had a decrease in the external reserves of \$340 million. In 2005, \$138 million. So this is not unusual for Barbados.

Sir, deficits on current accounts have been the history of our financial planning over the years. It is nothing new. So we do not want to have a situation where the Honourable Members on That Side, try to destabilise the population of Barbados, and to give the impression that because we are proposing a deficit on Current

11.50 a.m.

Account in these Estimates this year, albeit a bit higher than it has been in the past, is anything unusual.

Mr. Speaker, given the context of the structure of the Barbados economy, it is an economy that we depend, to a large extent, on imports to sustain ourselves. Mr. Speaker, our natural resources are limited. Our good and services, Mr. Speaker, our raw materials are all imported. So we have, over the years, financed our Estimates, generally, projected of that deficit, on the Current Account.

The challenges that we had over the years have been articulated in this Honourable House for several years. This is why the current Prime Minister, the previous Prime Minister, and we could go right back, have all emphasised the need for us to earn our foreign exchange.

Mr. Speaker, emphasis has always been, and concessions have always been made on those sectors of the economy that are generating foreign exchange. Therefore, we would have seen over the years, substantial concessions being made, in respect of the tourism industry. Again, in these Estimates, and over the current year, provision has been made, and additional money has been allocated for tourism, for the promotion of that particular sector.

Mr. Speaker, the same has happened in terms of the manufacturing sector. The same has happened in terms of the agricultural sector. Successive Prime Ministers have belaboured the point that we need to be earning our way in this country, and so, emphasis has always been put on that, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, the last financial year, 2008-2009, when we took up the reins of Government of this country, we encountered a situation where almost immediately, we had to deal with substantial increases in the price of grain. Our initial reaction to that particular increase was to subsidise to give a price support mechanism to that increase.

It was obvious, Mr. Speaker, that we could not sustain that, or the whole structure of our economy. That would not have been a long-term solution. It was a short-term solution. Coupled with that, Mr. Speaker, was the substantial and rapid increases, in fuel prices, increases at a rate, never before seen. Mr. Speaker, those two things had the impact of putting stress again, on the same foreign reserves.

Mr. Speaker, we do not produce grain in Barbados. We do not produce oil of substantial quantities in Barbados. And so those rapid increases meant that we had to make adjustments. We adopted a position within this Administration that those increases, certainly in terms of the fuel and the grain prices had to be passed through to consumers.

Mr. Speaker, we recognised, in that particular policy position, that we had to be able to support those vulnerable persons within the society, who would have been hardest hit by those particular initiatives. And so, when we did our Budget presentations of July 2009, the Honourable Prime Minister made several initiative to try to protect those vulnerable persons within our society.

The Reverse Tax Credit, Mr. Speaker, persons earning less than \$17 000 a year was increased. A tax rebate which people will benefit from, as I speak, was increased to \$1 300. Increases in pensions for persons receiving weekly allowances, under the National Assistance Act and salary increases, Mr. Speaker, towards the end of 2008, over two years.

Mr. Speaker, these are challenges that we have had to introduce to sustain those persons at the bottom end of the economic scale. I believe, as well, that we had made adjustments to the 2½ per cent levy on a basket of goods, reducing the environmental levy.

What has been the reaction of the Members on the Other Side? When we introduced that policy of passing the whole price increases through the system, the position was, from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, that we should be subsidizing these costs. Sir, had we taken her advice, imagine what would have happened to our foreign reserves, had we continue to subsidise. Had we taken that position, Mr. Speaker, we would be bankrupt.

Mr. Speaker, we could not take that advice. We had to take different strategies. It is okay to come in here with 20/20 vision and speak after the fact. The first and second quarters of 2008, nobody was aware of the fact that we would have a financial crisis within the banking system. Sir, nobody across the world would have been aware of that. We have had, Mr. Speaker, to look for ways and means of going through that particular challenge, dealing with that particular challenge.

As I said before, we do not have the benefit of some countries of producing a lot of raw materials and so on. We have to import those items. And so Mr. Speaker, it is against that background, and the fact that no one knows at this time where this financial crisis will go, that these Estimates have been prepared.

Asides.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, our position on This Side, as has been articulated by all the Honourable Members who spoke on This Side before me, is that we need to ensure that we are protecting the vulnerable groups within our society and that approach of this Democratic Labour Party will continue to put people first.

Asides.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that we are supporting those vulnerable sectors, those disabled persons, those persons earning less than \$3 000 a month, and those pensioners. We need to make sure that we can protect those persons against this financial crisis to the best that we can do, Sir.

12:00 noon

Therefore, for the benefit of the Honourable Member for St. James North who is looking at how we are going to finance this and so on, these Estimates is a statement of proposed expenditure for 2009-2010. It has not addressed

the projection of the revenue to address these issues, and he needs to be aware of that.

Mr. Speaker, we also had the introduction of free bus fares for our students. That measure cost the taxpayers of this country in excess of \$8 million for half of a year. The cost for a full year is projected at some \$16 million. Mr. Speaker, this is money that will be well-spent and will accrue to this country in the future in terms of the social benefit back to our young people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, as we go through different sections of the Estimates over the next couple of days and as we look at the different programmes in some of the Ministries, the fact will be borne out that we must, in our planning, make sure that we put the people at the forefront of our policies.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was of the view that if we adopt the policy of subsidising things like diesel and so on to business houses, that it would encourage more activity at the business end.

Mr. Speaker, subsidies in themselves only create an environment of inefficiencies within our business community, because businesses would get very dependent on that subsidy. Mr. Speaker, while you could give a little subsidy, you have to have a mechanism where you could wean the business houses off that subsidy, otherwise you would run into serious problems. That is one of the dangers with the position that the Leader of the Opposition has in subsidising our way through. Barbadians must understand that they have to pay their way. They have to be able to adjust their whole lifestyle to adjust for these increases in prices and so on.

Mr. Speaker, in looking at Barbados over the years, different Ministers of Finance have sought a number of initiatives to try to stimulate and develop our productive sectors. Over the years, we have put a lot in agriculture. Mr. Speaker, the agricultural sector has stagnated. We have seen a situation where we have been taxing imports of vegetables and onions by over 200 per cent. In some cases, we are taxing vegetables that are not even produced in Barbados or produced in Barbados in any substantial quantities, certainly not to supply demand. We are taxing the imports of these items in excess of 200 per cent to protect an industry that is in some case not active. That is one of the dangers I spoke to a few moments ago in terms of the whole question of subsidies.

Mr. Speaker, we need to look at where we are going to be able to administer, assist and stimulate the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Mr. Speaker, over the past 14 years, the Barbados Labour Party has failed to restructure our productive sectors. This is one of the problems we have to deal with today.

Mr. Speaker, there is no real legacy in terms of the productive sectors. The manufacturing sector is struggling. For 14 years, the agricultural sector has been neglected by the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, their solution to bridging and financing the deficit over the years has been to sell the lands of Barbadians rather than trying to build up the productive capacity within this country.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that has been discussed during this Estimates has been the question of the international business sector.

Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday of this week, we heard the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, speaking at length on aspects of the international business sector. Mr. Speaker, it reminded me of an adolescent who had done all the research and so on, on a subject matter, discussing with her peers and so on, but did not have the practical experience to put with that particular theoretical knowledge, still very much virgin-like in her approach.

Mr. Speaker, one would not believe that the international business sector has been around in Barbados for in excess of 25 years. As a matter of fact, I believe that the first version of the International Business Companies Act was passed some time in the 1960s, so international business in Barbados is nothing new. What has happened is that in the mid-1980s, certain pieces of legislation to deal with offshore banking, captive insurance and foreign sales corporations were passed. Mr. Speaker, those pieces of legislation that we had in the mid-80s went into the whole question of offshore financial services and the development of that sector.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East spoke in respect of the work permit issues facing the sector, but that is nothing new. The work permit issues have been a problem in this sector for 25 years. The Honourable Member spoke as well in respect of a few other issues that were, in her view, dear to the international business sector.

12.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party has had 14 years to correct those issues that were pertinent to the International Business Sector, while the Honourable Member had at least two years. Sir, I full-well recall in other political fora outside this Honourable Chamber, where the Honourable Member had indicated that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East had very little to do, or was showing very little productivity within her particular Ministry, or words to that effect.

Mr. Speaker, at that time, I had attributed it to political banter, but it was only on Wednesday of this week, when I listened to her presentation and realised that all the issues facing the International Business Sector today, were the same when the Honourable Member became Minister with responsibility for that sector. I then realised that there had been no action and that those words I had attributed to political banter were, in fact, very serious comments.

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, the issues within the International Business Sector, in terms of the work permits, we have over the past year addressed the question of immigration within Barbados. There are several challenges and the Honourable Prime Minister has brought these things to the forefront. We need to have a fast-track mechanism in relation to the question of work permits for the International Business Sector. I have already spoken to the Honourable Member in respect of putting that mechanism in place, so that those persons working in the International Business Sector and not find themselves in a situation, where there are problems with their spouses, in terms of their legal status or getting simple things like drivers licences.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the question of the institutional strengthening within the International Business Unit and within the Corporate Affairs Department, is one of the other issues which the Honourable Member has addressed and we have provision in the Estimates for that.

Mr. Speaker, the one key comment I believe the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has made with respect to the International Business Sector, is that this sector will be the sector that will lead Barbados over the next five to ten years. I believe the Honourable Member said over the next 20 years. Therefore, it is imperative, given the synergies that exist between the International Business Sector and the tourism sector, that the resources are put within the International Business Sector, to facilitate the development of this and solving the individual problems within the Sector. Therefore, with regard to the strengthening of the support in that sector, we need to make sure that we are getting proper buy-ins at all levels of the Government service, in terms of Customs Officer, Immigration, training, et cetera, that is required for some of the support staff.

As a country, we have developed a whole network of tax treaties. We need to make sure that we do not find ourselves being held over the barrel, so to speak, by restrictions in our staff component, in terms of the technical level. We do not want to find ourselves in any way being restricted.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we also need to look at the question of computerising the International Business Unit and the Corporate Affairs Department, which are integrally involved with the International Business Sector, such as to the question of speed or of having corporations formed and licensed. These are issues that we are trying to address, certainly within the short-term and medium-term action plan, that we are in the process of developing over the next few weeks, which we should soon be carrying to Cabinet. These will address some of the infrastructural issues within the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the Financial Services Commission, given the financial crisis in which we are right now, the question of ensuring that Barbados is properly regulated, becomes well-known among First World Countries is important.

Sir, I would want to say that the Financial Services Commission, which we are working on, has been passed by Cabinet. I am also assured by the Attorney-General that the pieces of legislation that will need to be tweaked a little bit, to make sure that regulatory body is put in place over the next few months, is being prioritised within his Ministry. Sir, this is something that will happen in the short-run, to ensure that the International Business Sector continues to be adequately regulated and that our trading partners will be aware of that fact.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to make this short interjection and again I want to support the Appropriation Bill that is before this Honourable House.

I am obliged to you.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the Honourable Members on This Side who have so far spoken during this debate. Sir, I do not believe that anyone would begrudge them or me, if I were to single out the Honourable Members for St. Michael North East and St. Peter who, on economic matters, really and truly focused this debate and took it in the direction in which it really should have been going. Mr. Speaker, they are the ones who have explained, in a very comprehensive and uncomplicated way, what we are really up against at this time.

Sir, I would have expected to hear more serious contributions and proposals from the Other Side, particularly from the Honourable Prime Minister, which would have been able to take this country forward. I do not believe that this Government seems to recognise the seriousness of the level of responsibility that it has to discharge at this time. It is also clear to me that this Government is not realising that its honeymoon is over.

Mr. Speaker, by now the Government should be realising, but does not seem to realise, that the people are not interested in hearing any tirades by them about the last Administration or about any Honourable Members of the last Administration, or about anything.

12.20 p.m.

Sir, this is now the second set of Estimates brought to this Honourable Chamber by this Government and it is time that they realise that they are not in Opposition any longer and that they have the affairs of this country to manage. Sir, no continued harping back to the past all the time will negate the fact that they have a lot of promises to fulfill and deal with a number of issues I am not seeing dealt with in these Estimates before this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, my main complaint has to do with the level of bitterness that we continue to see coming from Honourable Members on That Side, not just the Prime Minister, but others as well. Sir, we could not help but see on Wednesday the level of bitterness the Prime Minister still has towards, particularly, the Honourable Member for St. Peter and even the past Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, Clyde Mascoll, and others as well. Sir, this level of bitterness continues to come through.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes Honourable Members on That Side, particularly the Prime Minister, see themselves as if they are persecuted and, my concern is that it is preventing them from buckling down and addressing the serious issues facing the country at this time. For example, what does any reference back to Hardwood Inc. help anybody in these times, to put bread on their table.

Mr. Speaker, they are harping back to Hardwood Inc., but I would have thought that the Honourable Prime Minister would want to shut down discussion on Hardwood Inc. When we listened to him prior to the last Elections and after, we got the clear impression that by now, somebody would be in jail. There was evidence produced, even before the Elections, supposedly, or there was evidence in the possession of the Honourable Prime Minister, that would have led to some serious consequences after the Elections and we thought someone would have been in prison by now, but Mr. Speaker, it was just part of the plan to try to leave a stain on certain decent individuals in this country while, in fact, there was never any evidence. Sir, it is time that the Prime Minister puts up or shuts up, particularly on that issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to say that in relation to the CLICO fiasco, there is any evidence yet that anybody should be in prison. I am not going to say that at this stage, but it is a very important issue still, and we are not going to refrain from dealing with it in this Honourable Chamber. Sir, if you really think about it, particularly the comments

made recently by the Honourable Prime Minister in here, that he would be going to Cabinet shortly with initiatives to deal with CLICO, you really believe that? All of a sudden the plot is thickening with CLICO. We have gone from the point where at the end of January...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member to say that the plot is thickening imputes improper motives and it ought to be withdrawn.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, I withdraw it. Sir, all of a sudden, we see a radical change in position. At the end of January, Barbadian depositors and policyholders were safe and totally insulated, but now, all of a sudden, we have to go to Cabinet with a set of initiatives. We heard about an injunction in Trinidad which, we heard, had no extra-territorial application, but the Prime Minister still had to communicate with the Prime Minister in Trinidad in relation to the said injunction. Sir, we are hearing all kinds of sorts of things and now, we find there is a plan to go to Cabinet and already some \$10 million have been made available.

Mr. Speaker, I am calling today, in addition to supporting the request from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East that the company be placed under judicial management. I am going further and saying that I want that there be a forensic audit of CLICO's operations in Barbados. Sir, I want a full forensic audit and I am surprised that to date, it has not been done.

Mr. Speaker, whatever the Prime Minister takes to Cabinet is going to result in the taxpayers of this country being called upon to bear a financial burden to bail out, in some form or fashion, CLICO. Sir, I am calling for an independent forensic audit immediately.

Mr. Speaker, we need to know. The taxpayers of Barbados need to know the cost of a private jet that has been flown all around because it is exorbitant. They want to know the cost of the jet, they want to know the operating cost of the jet as well, who it was flying around that might have had Government's connection and if any cost at all. Sir, we want to know all these things and a forensic audit will reveal all that.

Mr. Speaker, we want to know because I have said more than once in this Honourable Chamber, that I was concerned about the role played by money in the last Elections. Sir, every time I made the comment, Honourable Members on the Other Side picked up on it as if I was going to resile from my position.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South is also on record as having said that he was concerned at a time when he was vying for the presidency of the Democratic Labour Party that the argument against

him was that the Honourable Member for St. John should be chosen instead of him, because he had the capacity to raise funding from corporate Barbados unlike him.

Mr. Speaker, I saw and felt the money against me, as my colleagues on This Side felt it against them in the last Elections, and Sir, we want to see a forensic audit carried out that would reveal to what extent these depositors' funds and policyholders' funds were being diverted for the purposes of winning an Election in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we want to know as well about exorbitant vehicles, Jaguars and all sorts of things and if they might be on loan to whoever and how come, after the news broke, they are being returned to certain car dealers' yards and all that. We want to hear about all these things.

Mr. Speaker, more important, Barbadians tend to be fairly tolerant and docile sometimes, but I want to know as well, and I cannot at this stage say it is so or not so, but Sir, in Trinidad the Minister of Finance is now being pilloried and pressurised, because she introduced a measure in Parliament in relation to a bailout and did not at the time disclosed, that she had an interest in C.L. Financial in Trinidad, and Sir, now there is cause for her resignation on an almost minutely basis. I want to be clear that I will trust my Prime Minister, but I want to hear the Prime Minister stand up in this Honourable Chamber or somewhere else of his choice - the Honourable Member for St. Michael South disclosed his interest and I want the Prime Minister to come and say it in clear terms, because the Prime Minister is already very active in the process and will be even more active when he goes to Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I want to hear the Honourable Prime Minister says, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that he has no interest whatsoever in the operations of CLICO in Barbados. Sir, if I hear that, my mind would be at ease. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should be less bitter towards other people and tell us a bit more about those sort of things.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister also in his comments on Wednesday decided to bring back up the whole issue of Constituency Councils in this Chamber. There was a full debate on Constituency Councils before, but there was bitterness again. Sir, two independent Senators, as is their right, disagreed, and rightly so, with the whole establishment of the Constituency councils in the way in which they are being established, but the Prime Minister decides that he must make glancing references to them.

Mr. Speaker, they were on the right track and nothing that the Prime Minister or anybody has said since the debate that took place in here, has changed the minds of anyone on This Side about our views on Constituency

councils. Sir, it is Section 5, Subsection 2 that puts the matter of Constituency Councils...

12.30 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, let me remind you too, like I reminded the Honourable Member of St. Andrew yesterday, of the provisions of Rule 28 (4). You have not yet breached it as yet, but I want you to bear it in mind. It shall be out of order to reflect on any quote et cetera. That Council was voted on and therefore, you have to tread carefully on how you address the matter.

Mr. R. ST.C. TOPPIN: My comments are solely in response to the Honourable Member for St. John. He raised the issue. I am saying that we hold to our position on This Side, that Section 5 subsection (2) makes the whole thing a farce, for the simple reason...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that comment is out of order, given the fact that it has already been passed in this House.

Mr. R. ST.C. TOPPIN: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John raised the issue of Constituency Councils, and went on to twenty-five minutes of Constituency Councils, and I am only asking for five.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please proceed or take your seat.

Mr. R. ST.C. TOPPIN: I have been in here for 14 years and have never seen it like this before.

Asides.

Mr. R. ST.C. TOPPIN: Sir, I am saying that as a matter of policy, you cannot establish Constituency Councils, empower them to do things, and then everything you empower them to do is subjected to an exercise only by the approval of a Department over which the Minister has control, and say then that you have established anything that the people would actually be having control of.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have ruled on that matter already, yet you persist. Please move on.

Mr. R. ST.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I am going to go further to say that these Constituency Councils are going to be nothing but slush established, as I said, for the sole purpose of consolidating power in the hands of the Government.

Sir, I heard the Honourable Minister of Agriculture. His comments scare me because he is not even an elected Member of Parliament. The Councils have not even been

established, as far as I am aware, but he can say publicly he will be ensuring there are used for certain agricultural purposes, and he went into a whole discourse of how the Councils will be used. Sir, it is not for him to decide how the Councils are going to be used. It is for the people of St. Peter, in the event that he will get a nomination again for St. Peter, to decide how funds in a Constituency Council in St. Peter will be used. Sir, there is no point in there being any disguise as to the reason in which these Councils are being set up.

Sir, the bitterness, the Prime Minister had to go after two Independent Senators, so he had to speak the way he did. Not only today, last night in relation to housing, even before that, to the Nigerian nurses, people who serve a useful purpose in this country, found themselves pilloried again. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West said at a Branch meeting they did not bring themselves here. He cannot be unkind to them, but as soon as their contract finished they would be hustled off. Sir, everybody is satisfied with them. The union is satisfied with them, people are complimenting them, but the Democratic Labour Party is chasing them out, bitterness after bitterness.

Sir, the Minister of Housing last night spent an entire speech talking about a past issue which was fully ventilated and discussed, but I do not have to deal with him because he was dealt with fully by the Honourable Member for St. Andrew. I just want to add my voice, because I think that the Honourable Minister of Housing really has been riding on a wave of self-acclaimed performance, and the record just is not there to substantiate it. I want to add my voice to it.

Sir, we are asked in this Chamber on so many occasions to compliment the Minister of Housing. If someone could give me a reason to do it, I would be more than happy to, but I could not to date see any reason at all. I saw a promise in a Manifesto that 2 000 housing solutions would be provided per year. It is now 14 months, which is two months more than a year, and what does the Minister of Housing has to show? I do not want the talk all the time about he saw two acres of land here, and twenty-five acres over there. That does not help anybody.

I want to know how many people have got keys in their hand, to turn a door to go inside a house that they can call their own. That is what I want to know. I want to know how many people have received conveyances saying they own this piece of land or this house and land, so that they can drive their car into the garage, go inside and say this is mine? I want to know that, Sir.

Sir, in relation to the National Housing Corporation units, that is a fuller debate at another time. I want to know why it is that in my Constituency, in Eden Lodge and

Grazettes, to date, a number of persons came to me, I have submitted my name to be their attorney...

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, Honourable Members, do not start shouting across the Floor.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Not one person to date in Eden Lodge or Grazettes, has been contacted by National Housing Corporation after receiving just a letter. A letter is not ownership. In case you believe that, it is not - they have not been contacted to take the matter further. I as their attorney have not been contacted. I want to just say to the Government it is more passing strange that there are two of the Government housing estates that seemed to be left behind. I want to ask the Government not to victimise the people in Eden Lodge or Grazettes, just because they took it upon themselves in the last Elections to vote for a politician that turned out not to be in their Party, but an Opposition Member. I want to ask the Government not to victimise them. I want to see more urgent action in the transferring of those titles of the National Housing Corporation units to the residents of Grazettes and Eden Lodge, who seemed, I maintain, for strictly political ground, to be excluded from the process.

Sir, the Government should realise that the situation is getting worse. People are still coming to you in larger and larger numbers asking for housing. The situation is not changing. I want as the Honourable Member thumps himself on the chest, for having completed 500 in 100 days and he mentioned some three hundred and something in a year, as he thumps himself on the chest. I just want him to remember the gaping hole that still remains to be filled in relation to housing.

The Prime Minister said absolutely nothing about the cost of living although the cost of food items in Barbados have gone up to some 16 per cent. The Prime Minister said nothing about the rate of unemployment which continues to rise every day.

Sir, you know how important an issue it is if you spend time in your Constituency, by the number of constituents that before come to you about it. Right now I can say that people in my Constituency before used to come primarily about housing. That is true, but now the numbers coming about jobs are once again starting to equate the numbers that used to come about housing. So we have a housing shortage problem that is getting worse, and an unemployment that is also getting worse. People are in need of jobs and Government is consumed in bitterness and harangue and tirade against a former Administration and not buckling down to recognise that.

We are not the Government anymore. Fix the problems. Fix them. Sir, far from fixing or making any dents, the problems are getting worse.

In the meantime short weeks and pay cuts are now becoming the order of the day. The hotels are already saying that given the projections for April and May, they have not yet resorted to layoffs, but if things do not get better, they are going to have no choice but to engage in comments. As for the comment that who gets pay cuts, I am going to tell you who got pay cuts.

Last week in my Constituency office two people came to me and informed me, one has already gone to the commercial bank on their own and wanted me to follow-up with a letter, and another one came to me to write a commercial bank, because they are working at a very big reputable institution on Broad Street.

12.40 p.m.

They told me that their salaries have been cut, and that the loans they now have to pay to the bank, they cannot pay it on the current salary, after it was cut. They wanted me to send a letter in both cases. One of them had gone in all ready to bargain with the bank and to say that, ease me, because with the salary cut now, I cannot manage to make that loan payment every month. They fear the retaking, Sir, of what the loan has had to be secured.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please refrain from shouting across the Floor.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I am very concerned that the Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber making these wild allegations without substantiating anything at all. He cannot be allowed to continue down this road. Name the company on Broad Street.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am saying that short weeks and pay cuts are entering the arena, and that lay-off shortly will also be a very real activity in this country.

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

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I have to rush through tourism. Sir, I heard it said on the Other Side that some money was placed in the Estimates for the tourism sector that will stimulate this economy. I want to know, Sir, if the Honourable Members on the Other Side really understand what is happening in the tourism sector. I would really give anything to be a fly on the wall, a Thursday on Bay Street in a certain room to hear, Sir, because I really

would like to know what exactly it is that the Minister of Tourism really reports to his colleagues in Cabinet.

Sir, the situation facing tourism now is extremely dire. We had a situation for February. Now, I told the Minister of Tourism yesterday that he really deserves all his pay because he really makes me work for mine. Sir, I have to spend so much time just double checking everything that he says, I think that he really earns his salary, by making me work for mine.

Sir, the Minister is very intelligent, and that is not meant in a sarcastic way, and he can spin very well. Now, the Minister would choose the figure of 7.7 per cent decline for February. Sir, February actually declined by 8.4 per cent. The 7.7 per cent was a decline year-to-date from January/February, but February itself declined by 8.4 per cent. Sir, a decline in February in Barbados is really in excusable.

I remember at the end of the first week in March, the Minister actually told me on the precincts of this Parliament, why you do not run around now with the figures for February. You raised the ones for January, why you do not run around with the ones for February, because the Minister in his heart of hearts really could not believe that even he, Sir, could have been responsible for a decline in February. Sir, it took some doing to really pull that one off.

Mr. Speaker, even as the Honourable Member was explaining earlier in a Supplementary about the allocation of funding for overseas for February, he said you really do not have to spend any money in the UK for February, because there were full UK bookings already for the month of February, because of the cricket. The Honourable Member said that all airlines were fully booked for February, and we then saw an 8.4 per cent decline for the month of February. Sir, it is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at other territories, such as Jamaica, do you know that Jamaica showed a 4.2 per cent for January, a 2.9 per cent for February and for the first week in March, a 9 per cent increase. Sir, Jamaica has tourist numbers around one million plus, and they can increase on those numbers.

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with 500 000. In the month of February, which is one of the best, if not the best months for tourism for any year, at a time when we have an international cricket tournament with England, and Barbados shows decline. It does not just show a decline Sir, it shows a decline that is actually lower than for the corresponding months of 2005.

Sir, could you imagine that we are now in 2009 again, continuing to preside over declines in tourism that

are lower than four or five years ago? Sir, in 2005, which was better than this year, there was no Cricket World Cup 2007, there was no English Cricket Tournament or anything, but that 2005 year, did better than 2009, at a time when the Minister was bragging in this Parliament that February was going to be very good, and we saw this massive decline.

Sir, after finding himself gasping for breadth, the Minister of Tourism runs to tourist spend in Barbados for the year 2008. Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what information the Honourable Member used, but in here before, and according to reports, the Honourable Member refers to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) for his data. In fact, he made the point, expressly, that they would be quite impartial and have no personal axe to grind or no one to favour.

Sir, I have in my hands, a document given to me on Tuesday this week, by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. I was told at the time that this information is somewhat constantly under review, but this was the latest information they gave me. They informed me that this had been sent to the Ministry of Tourism. This information shows that for the year 2008, the amount spent by visitors in Barbados...

Mr. SPEAKER: Please refer to the document specifically, for us.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Yes, Sir. I will make it a document of the House.

The Barbados Tourism Visitor Survey, January to March 2007-2008. Sir, it is broken down into quarters. Sir, when you do simple addition, you see that, in fact, tourist spend for 2008 did not increase, as the Minister said, according to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. Sir, it actually declined by US\$2 133 000, according to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, which is always on the review. Sir, he should at least come with the latest statistics.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I hate to interrupt the Member but he is misleading the House. He can make his little aspersions about myself. That is no problem, but I will not allow him to assail the officers of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. To the best of my knowledge, it is the Member Governments of the Caribbean that are Members of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. I sit on the Council of Ministers to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. I have information from the CTO that is dated 19th March, 2009 that in fact reflects an increase.

I do not know what he has, I do not know what truck it fell over, I do not know who gave it to him, but what I

have is official information given to me as a Member of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well. Sir, he has been able to produce a document and he has identified it. He is entitled to read from the document which he has produced in the House.

Honourable Member, your time has also expired, so please wind up.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, no one stuck this in my mail box, gate, anything of the sort. I travelled physically in person to the CTO's office in Barbados. This information was given to me, Sir, and it shows that for the year 2008, there were US\$1 146 964 000 spent by visitors in Barbados and for the year 2007 there were US\$1 149 097 000, a decline, Sir, of US\$2 133 000. Sir, this is not my information. This is from the CTO, given to me on Tuesday, which is post March 9, or whenever he said.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I am indebted to you, Sir.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I think it would be appropriate to salute the presentation by the Honourable Member for St. John on Wednesday. I have participated in a couple of these debates now, and I certainly thought that what we were treated to on Wednesday was an excellent, very candid and reasoned presentation, by the Honourable Member for St. John, the Prime Minister of Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Barbados is confronted with some very serious situations. We have never seen or experience the type of economic condition that we are seeing the world over.

Estimates - House A34, Sequence 110, 12.50 p.m.

Friday, March 20, 2009

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Therefore, at this time, it is good to know that we can approach our problems and deal with them in a full frontal and appropriate manner. The presentation contains targets and objectives and sets about to balance what we need to do.

Mr. Speaker, some will talk about the fiscal deficit, which is a bit higher than we would like, but that is a sign of the times. The world over, everyone is talking about running massive deficits in order to spur economic activity. What is important is that we are still trying to be

conservative at the same time. Mr. Speaker, I think that the Honourable Member for St. John deserves to be saluted for effectively getting that balance done.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to see that the social services have not been ignored. In many economies, those social services are an obvious casualty at times like this.

Mr. Speaker, we have determined that should not be the case. Far from cutting back, we are shoring up, and what we are not providing resources for, we are using some creative approaches. That is the very good thing about a period that we are going through. You are forced as a country and as a Government to take creative approaches in order to make sure that your citizens continue to enjoy a very good high standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to be part of this exercise. At the same time while ensuring that we get the social services functioning, the Government has identified the productive sectors for special attention. It is clear that where international business, manufacturing, agriculture and tourism are concerned, that Government is placing the appropriate resources and making the right decisions that we can continue to earn foreign exchange.

Mr. Speaker, we heard a lot about the record reserves that we used to have, but the Opposition is not going to tell you that those reserves were built up, because of the sale of high-price real estate up and down Barbados and borrowings. We do not have those options.

Mr. Speaker, the global demand for that high-priced real estate has softened. There are real estate agents who have not had a sale for the year. That is the reality. Therefore, we have to be a lot more creative in how we are going to deal with this question of providing the necessary weeks of cover for our import requirements. Mr. Speaker, that is why we have to even handle the whole question of our productive sectors differently.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the Minister of Agriculture does not sit here in this place. He serves in the Other Place. Sir, there is some view that agriculture is limited in what it can do. However, I know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central will agree that there is a lot that can happen, and there is a lot that is happening.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East brushed on the issue of cotton, but there is a lot happening right now in the Ministry of Agriculture with respect to getting cotton production up, dealing with the link that is there and developing an industry that is properly vertically integrated. It is not just producing the primary product and packaging and exporting it, but doing what is necessary to see that we have an industry that can not only help our

agricultural sector but can also help our manufacturers, fashion designers and retailers. Mr. Speaker, we are creating those linkages and developing and encouraging an industry that can satisfy us, not only for this period, but going into the future.

Mr. Speaker, we at the Ministry of Tourism are very clear as well. We understand exactly what we have to do. I will speak on that in a minute.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly enjoyed the presentation by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East who took some time to single out the community of the disabled and the fact that as a Government, we still remember them and are prepared to involve them in the process. I also enjoyed the presentation by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East who touched on the issue that we do not like to talk about, that of climate change and the environment, and what we are doing to see that those activities receive the necessary resources.

Mr. Speaker, we have a million dollars going to the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary. We have an Inter-American Development Bank programme that would see the Coastal Zone Management Unit get at least \$4 or \$5 million to protect the West Coast, and we have the National Environmental Enhancement Programme (NEEP) that deals with social and environmental problems simultaneously. That is creative Government at work.

Mr. Speaker, it all redounds to help the productive sectors, because obviously as a tourism destination, you need to have a good environment, so that you can still earn foreign exchange. Mr. Speaker, we are cutting right across the board. That is good governance and that is what we are experiencing in this time, and I am very proud to be part of that.

Mr. Speaker, before I get to tourism, I really have to talk about housing. Mr. Speaker, I think it is generally agreed, certainly by just about everybody outside of this House, that the most outstanding Minister of Housing in recent memory that this country has had is the Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that this is causing some bother to the Barbados Labour Party, because all of a sudden now he is targeted and that is not by accident. We know the public relation capacities of that machine you call the Barbados Labour Party. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North is getting too popular with a housing programme that the Barbados Labour Party could not get done. With them there was one failure after another.

Mr. Speaker, the joint-venture programme is a massive failure. The HEART Programme, with bumble bee, firefly, pea chink and cockroach houses, which had

people standing up in the sun with nothing to show, was a massive failure.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Minister of Housing and Lands who has given to us - they are quoting the Manifesto, but because we may not be on our pace that we set out, the point is that things are happening for a change.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East had the unmitigated gall - I am going to borrow one of her terms, to talk about Stewart's Lodge as a project that the last Government left for the Honourable Member for St. Philip North. Mr. Speaker, I could tell you about Stewart's Lodge. I told this story already and I will tell it again. In early 2003, the then Government had 26 seats and they were shoring them up, so they went down Tweedside Road and erected a beautiful billboard with a colour photograph on it, houses coming.

Mr. Speaker, around May of 2003, there was a General Election and the Parliamentary representative who was from Their Side lost his seat and your humble servant won the seat by a few votes. At first, the billboard got fady, no houses yet, then the wood ants started to bite off one leg, no houses yet, and wet rot finally took out the other leg. They finally took down the sign because it got a little ridiculous and nothing happened.

Sir, when the former Honourable Member for St. James South was in here, we used to have housing debates almost every week in here. Every housing acquisition was a housing debate, a lot of pretty talk.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask every time, nothing. Mr. Speaker, could you imagine that six years later, I am going to hear the former Government say that they left Stewart's Lodge entrain. That is incredible. The use of it used to change. It was to be a joint-venture programme, partial ownership, or terrace units, but nothing was ever done. I am happy to say that pen has been put to paper and there are plans to actually build something at Tweedside Road under this Minister of Housing and Lands.

Mr. Speaker, it does not stop there. There is also Greens, St. George, Marchfield, St. Philip, and Workhall in St. Philip. In St. Peter, the Constituency represented by the former Prime Minister, houses are going up at Four Hill and French Village.

1.00 p.m.

Lot houses are going up at Constant, St. George and of course, at Country Park Towers as well. This shows a Minister of Housing and Lands who is at work. Mr. Speaker, let us stymie this public relations madness by others that somehow you can look at a Party that was in Government, which failed so miserably to deal with

housing and that we finally have activity happening in housing, somehow we could forget that.

Mr. Speaker, the real credit to the Minister of Housing and Lands is that he is not just satisfied in putting up houses, he is looking at creative housing concepts. The Honourable Member did not spend a lot of time on it but there is a zero-lot line concept, that has a lot in store for Barbados. We are a very densely populated nation, therefore, the way we go about housing into the future with such heavy demands, as nearly 29 000 persons are looking for housing solutions, land space is limited.

Mr. Speaker, we still want to do a little agricultural production, we still need commercial land, so by having the zero-lot line concept, we can reduce the cartilage between our houses, but we still can afford a decent quality of yard space for families. This is the direction in which we are going.

Mr. Speaker, I do not remember hearing any creative thought at all from the last Government in 14 years, as far as housing is concerned. Sir, we have creativity going into it and I look forward to hearing about that.

There is also the rent-to-own concept, a determination that Government must make sure that housing is made affordable. Mr. Speaker, do you know what the criticism of the rent-to-own concept was? It was said that was happening in the 1950s. Well, I could not believe that was it, and therefore, if it could happen in the early 1950s, why can it not happen in the late 1990s? We are not talking, we are doing, and I think the Honourable Member for St. Philip North deserves every credit for making sure that he does all to see that we are properly housed.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, we are not getting into the project at Lower Burney, you could deal with Lower Burney. I will leave you to deal with Barrack too. That was the problem. Sir, the past Government lost its focus on housing and found that the Housing Corporation and the Ministry had become a property developer for office space, of all things. They lost their focus and that was really unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into a few words on tourism, I want to take this opportunity to extend sympathies to the Schwarzfeld and Cotsman families - Terry Schwarzfeld, the lady who unfortunately succumbed to her injuries sustained during the course of an attack at Long Beach. As we speak, they are going through the funeral services, which is scheduled for 1.00 p.m. this afternoon in Ottawa. The Government is represented by the Canadian High Commission, as well as officials of the

Barbados Tourism Authority. We are very sorry about what has happened and I take this opportunity to offer my sympathies. The Prime Minister has sent off communication directly to the families on behalf of the entire nation.

Mr. Speaker, this is a family that used to come to Barbados regularly. As you know, our repeat visitors become like family, they become like part of the Barbadian whole experience. Therefore, tears are being shed, even here in Barbados, because it is like losing a member of the family. Sir, we offer our sympathies to that family for that most unfortunate incident.

Mr. Speaker, I would say we continue to do all we could in these very trying times. The fact is that the two major source markets for our tourism industry, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, are seeing tremendous lay-offs in the tens and hundreds of thousands literally. In the case of the United Kingdom, they are saying it would be two million job losses possibly this year. In the case of the United States of America, I think it is probably more than that.

Sir, we cannot pretend, if people do not have jobs, if people are worried about jobs, if people are worried about losing their jobs, if they have seen their next-of-kin losing their jobs, it becomes difficult to prioritise a vacation necessarily. Sir, that is not to say we cannot get some business or that we should roll over and play dead. Sir, that is why it is so necessary that we do everything within our power to get our share of the business.

Mr. Speaker, I recently announced that there are some institutional adjustments that have to be made with respect to the public sector organisations that run tourism. Sir, this is not new. Other Governments have discussed this. Sir, if in the best of times, with a world economy growing at 3 or 4 per cent a year, with every thing going well, with record levels of taxation, you saw the need to restructure your institutional arrangements, surely now when everything is in disarray internationally, it cannot be business as usual.

Sir, therefore, as Minister of Tourism, for me to tell my colleagues, this Parliament or the people of Barbados that the status quo can remain, would be absurd. We have to do things differently.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the support from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, but I understand at the Branch Meeting on Sunday - I know how Branch Meetings are - the Honourable Member probably said one thing and came in here during her presentation and indicated, very briefly, that she stands to wait to see what we would do. Sir, that is fine because the Honourable Member knows there were plans to restructure the

Barbados Tourism Authority by the last Government. As I said, it is not new. Everyone has talked about it. However, it is obvious that legislative action is necessary and so the Honourable Member needs not worry. We will be here and will have a full debate on that exercise.

Mr. Speaker, let me also assure the Honourable Member that none of the workers will be taken advantage of, as we have involved the unions in the beginning. I had a meeting with Sir Roy and the shop stewards at the very beginning. We did not drag them along at the end, they have been partners in this exercise. I have had full staff meetings at the Barbados Tourism Authority and at the Ministry and all is well. Sir, I want to say that we will protect their interest and their pensions as well. I will do as you say, but not as you do, because we all know what happened with the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation and its pension fund. We will not get into that, but we will not repeat that at the Barbados Tourism Authority.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is clearly seeking to mislead this Honourable House. Sir, I do not know of any plan at the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation to disadvantage anybody from getting pensions. Sir, if my memory serves me correctly, it started before 1994, to the extent that there was no pension scheme established.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, we will not worry about that. We all know the situation at the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation and what transpired when the corporation went over to the Ministry of Home Affairs and was under the charge of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to say, when you look closely, that this is a pattern. Let us look at St. Leonard's Boys' School, Crab Hill Police Station, EduTech, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, Invest Barbados and Dodds. Mr. Speaker, the thought of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East being the Minister of Finance is scary. Could you imagine the Honourable Member being in charge of a whole Government and the sort of overruns that she could chalk up to just a little piece of the pie?

1.10 p.m.

Sir, at any rate, let me also assure Honourable Members because...

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: I could forgive any Member for assailing me in the course of a political exchange and that is fine. Sir, even if you are being savaged by a sheep, I do not mind that. However, I think...

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, we used to have Mary in here talking about tourism for the Barbados Labour Party but now she has left her little lamb. Nevertheless, I have the latest information provided by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation with respect to our earning for 2008 against 2007. Sir, this is an official document. The Minister of Tourism..

Mr. SPEAKER: Please specify it.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: I will make it a document of the House. It is an update from the Caribbean Tourism Organisation in terms of the estimated earning for Barbados. I will make all the quarterly reports as well for 2008, documents of the House, that will demonstrate clearly that in 2007 the earnings were \$1.145 billion and in 2008 it was \$1.149 billion. Sir, that is a difference of 0.3 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I really loathe to do this because, the truth is, I have said it already, that the discussion and the debate for carrying Barbados' tourism industry forward cannot be reduced to figure. Sir, we used to have that problem in here before and I waited for five years for a debate on tourism. I never got it, because it was always about arrivals and airlift or nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the Honourable Member for St. Lucy fighting to get a little discourse on community tourism. He has had the opportunity already in the first year because we are looking at tourism differently and we are also putting people first, where tourism is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North could take some relief in this. Let me say that I do not want credit for it. I guess I should say that I was sworn in on January 20, 2008, and that it is because of me that Barbados had a record year in 2008, but that is not true.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North needs to understand that it is about the waiters, the waitresses, the gardener, the 'Red Caps' and the taxi drivers. It is about the managers, the divers, the shopkeepers and everyone, who make this place so special that even when times are hard, we can still attract enough persons here to have US\$1.2 million earnings from our tourism sector.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North has fallen in love with Jamaica. "Jamaica we come from". That is his thing and every time he gets up in here, he speaks about Jamaica. Sir, he was right when he said that Jamaica get over one million visitors a year, because it is actually 1.7 million visitors. Sir, do you know that from 1.7 million visitors, they only earn US\$2 million? Imagine that we get just about one-third as many visitors and more than half of what they earn, because Sir, it is a different product. Mr. Speaker, to get into a numbers game with Jamaica does not make sense, and everyone knows that. They have those Spanish all-inclusive and the price points are different and you cannot compare the two.

Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear that I am not holding up Jamaica as any standard for me to try to accomplish as far as tourism is concerned. Sir, Minister Bartlett is a nice man, but it is a different product and a different experience altogether and we should not fool ourselves about it. I would not want to get that Jamaican business here because, the truth is, it is not going to reflect in our earnings anyway because of how the two industries are structured.

Mr. Speaker, why not enter into a serious discussion on carrying Barbados' tourism industry forward, and not try to get into these little numbers games and calling up and confusing people at the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, as if they do not have anything else better to do and, ending up with incorrect information.

Sir, the Honourable Member went down at the Barbados Tourism Authority. I told him he did not have to do that, that he could get it, that he did not have to pimp for information and that he could get it. I told him it was not necessary and that we could have a serious discussion.

The Honourable Member for St. James North asked a very legitimate question about Barbados' Tourism Master Plan. Mr. Speaker, do you not think, as the Shadow Minister of Tourism, it is not a question that he should be asking? He should be putting my feet to fire for the Master Plan because I promised to give it to him. Sir, he is not interested in that, he is interested in getting information to say that the Board is in a mess.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please keep down the asides. You have five minutes in which to conclude.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, let me give the assurance to the Honourable Member for St. James North that we have set up the unit and that they are issues with accommodating the unit. However, we have started the process of getting the consultants in place and Barbados will have, certainly, if not 18 months from now, a Tourism Master Plan, for the very first time. This is another example

of what they talked about, but Sir, we are doing it. Sir, I give the House the assurance that is the direction we are going in.

Mr. Speaker, I would make it very clear again that it is not only about the numbers. Sir, numbers are hard to come by. We are putting more money in marketing to make sure we can fill as many of those empties as possible, but it is not only bums in bed. Sir, you will never hear me use that term because I do not like focusing on that part of the anatomy anyway, so you do not hear me speaking about that. Sir, a bed is somewhere to sleep and a tourism sector is what people are doing when they are up and moving around. Therefore, we have a series of product initiatives to broaden stake-holder-ship in the sector.

1.18 p.m.

It will also encourage their families, friends and colleagues, we are launching the BFA programme next month. That will go along with the efforts that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West would have started, and continue at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with respect to Barbados networkers and so on, to embrace the diaspora. Sir, this is what we are about. Sir, I assure you that for as long as I have the responsibility for tourism, these are the issues we are going to deal with. In short and in summary we are putting people first.

I am just giving the assurance to the entire nation that we continue in very hard times, to make the most out of the resources at our disposal and we will continue to deliver. We will deliver our part in ensuring that during these difficult times that we will do all that we can.

I am proud to be part of this Government and to have heard the quality presentations in this debate as we deal with these very trying times, and make sure that there will be a fair share for all.

I am obliged to you.

SUSPENSION

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2:40 p.m.

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

The question that this Sitting be now suspended until 2.40 p.m. this afternoon was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER: suspended the sitting accordingly.

1.21 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

The Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this occasion, we have come to consider another year's Estimates, laid before this Parliament by the Democratic Labour Party, at the start of their second year in Government.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Member after Honourable Member on That Side over the last two days, today being day number three, have trotted out all kinds of comparisons about what is happening the world over. They have said that challenges are being faced by other countries all across the globe, and Mr. Speaker, saying to Barbadians, we can do no better.

Earlier, Sir, one Honourable Member on That Side remarked that unemployment in the UK is high, so we can do no better. He talked about the economy in Iceland that it has collapsed, again, signalling to the Barbadian people that we can do no better. Another Honourable Member spoke about President Nicolas Sarkozy in France and his challenges, conveying again to the Barbadian people that we can do no better.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party in 14 years of Government, saw economies collapse, but invariably Sir, we told the Barbadian people that we were able to meet a higher standard and that we could overcome the difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party saw crime statistics across the Caribbean increasing to astronomical heights Sir, but we always said that we were required to hold Barbadians and Barbados to a different standard, because we felt that this country could do better.

I believe, Sir, it is now clear that the Honourable Members on the Government Side are using the challenges being faced in other nations as nothing more than an excuse to cover the fact that in speech after speech, they have found it expedient not to condescend to the particulars found in these Estimates.

One Honourable Member said, "I am not an economist." Another Honourable Member said, he is not an economist either. Person after person, Sir put out an immediate disclaimer, I am not an economist, as if to excuse themselves, Mr. Speaker, from delving into this blue book, which really Sir, sets the path and the tone that Barbados is expected to follow.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that they do not quite understand the significance of this document. My understanding of this document is that the Government has said what its policies are going to be. These policies Mr. Speaker, were set out in the manifesto. These promises were set out in the Budget.

2.40 p.m.

These promises are set out in various Ministerial Statements. We then looked to the Estimates to see how these policies are going to be realised.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is clear to me that the Other Side can do no better. The Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, did not say that he was not an Economist and he did not pray in aid of the sufferings of other nations. What the Honourable Member for St. John did was to pray in aid of patriotism.

Two days ago, the Honourable Member said to the people of Barbados that they should cloak their expectations in the flag of this country as if that act of cloaking their expectations in the flag of this nation will bring about some miracle, almost like when the sick lady touched Jesus' garment and was healed. Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados are supposed to cloak their expectations in the flag of this great nation and receive the fruits of their labour.

Sir, I believe that the Honourable Member for St. John does not quite recognise who the patriots of this nation are. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope to have time to come to that a little later on. There is no doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that among all of the professions in this Honourable Chamber that there is only one professional economist, but it does not excuse other Honourable Members from seeking to come to grips with what is to be found in the Estimates.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter delivered, in my view and I know in the view of my colleagues, an outstanding exposition on the plight being faced by the Barbadian economy. The Honourable Member for St. Peter told Barbadians where we are now and what lies ahead. Sir, I believe that the Honourable Members on the Government side have failed in taking Barbadians to that perspective.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my view that the Government in this debate so far has effectively betrayed the trust of the people. They brought to this country a Manifesto saying that it was "Pathways to Progress" that would transform the nation to meet the real needs of the people. I have no doubt, Sir, that they have some kind of understanding as to what the real needs of the people happens to be. That is essentially the role of a parliamentarian.

Sir, I believe that these Estimates do not reflect the carrying out of the promises that are in their Manifesto, or the carrying out of the various commitments that have been expressed by Minister after Minister. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one Minister has said we are going to guarantee that these lights would go in and that this particular facility would go in. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Barbados will know in time to come.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East delivered to us a sermon. The Honourable Member for St. James North referred to it as a sacerdotal presentation. I could not think of a more apt word for describing it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not a word was said about sanitation or about the Barbados Water Authority. In passing, he only delivered a glancing blow on matters relating to drainage. Other speakers on That Side have chosen to string together a list of anecdotes and fancy phrases and so on to deliver speeches in this Parliament. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am afraid our judgement is, and the judgement of the people is, that they have not come into contact with the Estimates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West announced that investment is increasing. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too have to concede at the outset that I am not an Economist, but how is it possible to assert that investment is increasing in Barbados, when we have already established that there is a precipitous drop in private capital inflows in this country from \$920 million to \$409 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that an indicator of investment in Barbados will be found in the amount of foreign exchange, that comes into this country by way of private capital inflows. Sir, you and I know that those private capital inflows come into Barbados when individuals, among other things, make investments in real estates and in various business ventures. If, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have plummeted by just about \$500 million, then I am left to ask how is it possible to assert that investment is increasing in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are other indicators. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the property transfer tax take for the last year decreased by \$4 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, property transfer tax is a good indicator of investment.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member knows that what he is saying is misleading. The Honourable Member is aware of the fact that the property transfer tax has been adjusted, and based on that point, that is not the only indicator that you can use. You can only use that if you are dealing with a constant.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should be aware that the property transfer tax adjustment did not take effect in the last financial year. The property transfer tax adjustment came when the Honourable Member for St. Peter was sitting in that Chair as Prime Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is that this Administration projected revenues that were not met. Sir, it is fair to conclude that there has been a reduction in property transaction. There has also been a reduction in the take from excise taxes. VAT has also dropped. In fact, it might not be fair to say that VAT has dropped. I ought to say that their expectation of the VAT take was not met. That is probably more accurate.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Everybody knows that Barbadians are not now using imported stuff, that they are consuming local stuff and that there is no VAT on local stuff like yams, eddoes, potatoes, dolphin or flying fish.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to those indications I have mentioned before, stamp duties also plummeted. There is also a drop in import duties. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that it is fair to conclude from this, that significant elements of the Barbadian economy where there was robust activity, would have seen these particular elements increasing. The fact that they have decreased in this way would make it quite clear that the economy is not as robust as the Members on the Government side want us to think. Sir, it would also make it quite clear that investment in Barbados is not increasing, but in fact declining.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Barbadians do not need necessarily to look at the dollars and cents set out here because, as Barbadians drive around, they would see that project after project in the construction sector has been completed, but nowhere near the amount of start ups that the Other Side would have hoped for, have been materialised, and significant projects have unfortunately been put on hold.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, corporation taxes are down significantly. International business companies license fees are also down. The Honourable Member who leads this Opposition was careful to point out yesterday that our position is that there are five things that the Democratic Labour Party faltered on or five mis-steps that they took in the last year.

2.50 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Estimates for last year, there was no major capital works set out. On top of that, the

Highway Road Improvement Project was stopped. There was also a 77 per cent increase in diesel, and I think it is important to remind Honourable Members of that. In the July Budget, there was also the largest single increase in taxes and fees by any Minister of Finance. They also failed to adjust the tax band when the land tax valuations came in. They also failed to bring capital works to the fore when it was most needed in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in circumstances where the revenue appears to be down on significant items which we would have expected to be otherwise, if the economy was robust, I believe that the Government would likely have to slash its programmes.

Sir, as a non economist, it would seem to me that we can employ an analogy of any household because Mr. Deputy Speaker, where revenue is cut then, the average household would have to modify its spending patterns. It would have to effect some savings, it would have to adjust the way in which they would spend.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems to me too that the Government is under an obligation to say to the people of this country exactly what we are facing. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter pointed out the extent of the crisis yesterday in a way I believe has resonated with Barbadians. They have resonated in a way that the Honourable Member for St. John has not been able to achieve. It is incumbent on the Democratic Labour Party to say to us how they are going to take us through this difficult time. It is also incumbent on them to say what are their priorities. They then have to follow up that by saying how these priorities have been expressed in these Estimates.

Sir, is priority number one job creation? If it is, then where in the Estimates is it seen? Is the priority dealing with the issue of cost of living? If it is, then tell the country where in the Estimates is it seen? Is it generating foreign exchange? If that is the case, tell us what are the policies in these Estimates that are supposed to generate this foreign exchange. I believe it is wrong for the Honourable Members on That Side to occupy this entire debate over the last two days with generalities after generalities and expect people to take comfort in the fact that as long as the Government is in the reins of the Honourable Member for St. John, that all will be well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is noteworthy in the case of International Business Sector, and the Honourable Member for St. James Central, who has that portfolio, has spent an awful lot of time talking about subsidies and about subsidising all kinds of things, but hardly a moment was spent by the Honourable Member on touching the sector that brings in more than 60 per cent of this country's corporation tax, a matter that is central to his portfolio.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems to me that in a situation where the economy is facing the difficulties it is, it would be important for Government to seize on a few areas and to demonstrate to the people of Barbados, that we are going to use these key sectors to take us forward.

Sir, last year we see that the intake from fees, both registration and licences were down significantly. That tells us that either the numbers of renewals are down or that the numbers of registrations in the International Business Sector are down. If that is the case, and I believe that is borne out by the significant drop in licence fees, then it must mean that this sector is in need of a significant shot in the arm. This is a sector that does not only contribute to 66 per cent of our corporation taxes, it also contributes significant employment for Barbadians and significant foreign exchange. But the Honourable Member for St. James Central treated us to all kinds of matters, but not a word was said about this pivotal part of his project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Estimates are there. What we see is that the amount of money that has been provided for, treaty negotiation is down. Sir, two years ago, it was just \$600 000. It has now been slashed to \$150 000. I do not believe I should have to tell the Honourable Member for St. James Central that a critical part to us being able to expand our offshore sector is our ability to negotiate new tax treaties. Sir, that has been one of the most attractive features of Barbados, that we have a significant number of tax treaties with significant players, and certainly the Barbados Labour Party had committed to expanding that treaty network. Obviously the Government is not interested in expanding that treaty network, if they are going to slash it from \$600 000 to \$150 000. Sir, clearly not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is the priority of this Government? It should not surprise anybody though, that the International Business Sector is not seen as a priority area, notwithstanding its significant inputs into our corporation tax, because there is not a single word in the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party about the International Business Sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it is not in the Manifesto, then the only message that could be sent to Barbadians, would be that it is not seen as a significant part of the Democratic Labour Party pledge to this nation, but I remind you, that it brought in and has brought in over the last few years, 66 per cent of our corporation tax.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what have we seen in the International Business Sector? We have seen company after company being plagued because their files have been misplaced in the International Business Unit. We have seen company after company being plagued, because the work permits are not being processed quickly. Sir, we on This Side understand that one significant trading partner's

Government has actually had to take this issue up with their counterparts in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the International Business Unit works with the Immigration Department, so that at the time we left office, the Immigration Department had committed to turning around work permits within two to three weeks. Sir, it is not happening now, they have agreed to shift the burden of proof.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition spoke two days ago on the fact that we got them to agree that there was no need to require X-rays, when there is nobody in the Department who could read them. A, all they did was to accumulate them. These things were all in an effort to streamline and ensure that work permits are turned around quickly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should not have to explain why work permits are important. The individuals cannot work in Barbados without them, but just imagine the frustration felt by investors in this country when they have set up an International Business Sector in Barbados that is supposed to be doing significant business, and the individuals they have sent to Barbados to run that International Business Sector cannot take up the job, because of the fact that the Immigration Department cannot decide if to give them a work permit or not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is to my knowledge that there have been occasions in the Immigration Department where they have even frustrated individuals. Sir, let me give you an example. There are occasions when individuals, who have applied for work permits, are living in common-law relationships. Sir, the applicant will get his or her work permit for three years, but the common-law spouse gets a visitor's visa for three months, and is told that at the end of the three months to come back for an extension. Sir, for every three months, for the entire time their partner is working in Barbados, they have to go down to the Immigration Department, uncertain as to whether or not they are going to be asked to leave the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are the things that as small as they may seem to Honourable Members, they are the kind of things that do not encourage nor facilitate business, but the Immigration Department seems to have wound to a halt when it comes to the matter of issuing work permits.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a time when the International Business Unit needs to respond robustly to developments that are happening across the world, in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United States of America. Sir, do you know what we did? We had a professional services vote in that Ministry, which enabled us to hire consultants in major

fora, so that we could properly voice the position of Barbados and voice those positions with significant results. Sir, that professional services vote has been slashed significantly. It is now down to less than half of what it used to be,

3.00 p.m.

on this subject, so that we could properly voice the position of Barbados and voice those positions with significant result, but Sir, that professional services vote has been slashed significantly and is now down less than half what it used to be. How then is Barbados going to successfully meet the challenges that are being brought to us again by the OECD? How then is Barbados going to successfully meet the challenges that are being brought to us, by the United States of America Government in their constant attack on offshore domiciles and in particular, Barbados?

Mr. Speaker, also the services sector - When we had the privilege of being this country's Government, we took a principled position that services was a significant part of our mission. It was important to us to increase Barbadian services, because we do not have a lot of natural resources and manufactured to export. What we can export. Sir, efficiently and of first-class quality, has been services.

Mr. Speaker, over the years we funded the coalition of services so that Barbadians could bid for contracts abroad. We funded the coalition of services so that Barbadian lawyers, Barbadian architects and Barbadian engineers, could bid for projects in Suriname and Belize and CARICOM. Sir, the coalition of services, an area where we could export with very little capital requirements and we would benefit from the net inflow of foreign exchange, in terms of professional fees but that too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has been put on the back burner.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that in this economic climate, and in a situation where the Government does not seem to be prepared to tell Barbadians what it stands for and what its priorities are, I feel that we all have reasons to worry.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Sir, I worry about my constituents in St. Joseph, because if the economy is flagging in the manner that it is, and if it is going to be necessary for the Government to slash its Budget, I worry that the slippage in St. Joseph will continue unabated. I worry that those houses in Suriname that are in the process of slipping down into a deep gully behind them, I worry that the slippage and those houses would be lost.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I worry also about the fact that throughout the Scotland District, individuals are being compelled to abandon family lands and look for housing opportunities in Christ Church and St. Michael, thereby putting greater pressure on the Government to provide.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I worry about the bridges too in the Scotland District that are under threat. I also worry about the lack of access to important communities in my Constituency and in other Constituencies, simply because this Government is not prepared to level with the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I have looked at the Estimates for the Ministry of Public Works. Sir, the Scotland District is one-seventh of Barbados' land mass, but the Honourable Member for Christ Church South could bring Estimates to this country and tell the one-seventh of Barbados, that only \$2 million will be spent on the Scotland District. Sir, one-seventh of our land mass will only get \$2 million spent in the Scotland District.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my Administration, when we were on the Other Side of this Chamber, committed to spending \$35 million over a five-year period to rehabilitate and rejuvenate the Scotland District. It is clear to me, from these Estimates, that the Scotland District is once again, being relegated. Sir, last time it was relegated to the back of the line was under the Democratic Labour Party and we were able, through 14 years of hard work to begin a transformation of the Scotland District, but once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been abandoned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do not doubt that the world is going through a difficult economic period, but we feel that we have to ask the Government of Barbados significant questions, because it has come to our attention that the cost for the changes that this Administration has determined it will make to the highway, will be \$30 million on top of the \$170 million. We understand that \$5 million of that is for consultancy fees. We also understand that one single consultant, who used to chair a statutory board in this country, but who has now been moved, has already been paid \$1.5 million, but not a tender notice has been seen in any paper in Barbados or abroad, but yet still, one consultant could get to carry home \$1.5 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, is there relief in sight? There is no relief in sight because traffic in Barbados continues to be congested and Barbadians now have an increase - I believe the Ministry of Environment should be concerned because our carbon footprint now must well be troubled, because of all the stopping and starting and all the detours we have to use in order to navigate our way around this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are difficult times ahead, but the Government is under an obligation to honour the commitment that it has made to the people of this nation. Sir, our job on This Side is to constantly remind them of it on behalf of our constituents and on behalf of those people who voted for us and even on behalf of those people who voted for the Other Side, but have now become completely disaffected. Sir, that is where we are standing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our stance in this Parliament is to demand of the Government that they come to the people of this country and tell them exactly where all the Manifesto's promises have gone, because they have gone nowhere and the people of this country could now see that they are going nowhere with the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had been prepared to forego my opportunity to speak in this debate until I heard the speech of the Honourable Member for St. Joseph. I am aware that Honourable Members want to get to the Heads and I was prepared to allow the Honourable Member for St. John to wind this part of the debate up so we could get to the Heads, but having sat and listened to the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, I think a solemn obligation evolved on me to intervene in this debate.

The debate on the Annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2009/2010 has come at a time of unprecedented turmoil in the international economy, with the world facing its worse financial and economic crisis in the last 80 years. The last occasion on which some of the signals of which we are presently seeing in the world economy surfaced in the world was in the year 1929 and, for the first time, since then, we find ourselves in a situation where prospects look bleak for the world economy, as millions of lives are being daily thrown into distress and cruel dislocation.

3.10 p.m.

Many experts have spoken on this subject. They are those who have reduced the issue to an ethical one and claimed that we are where we are today, only because a few corporate Executives have manipulated the system in such a way that it has now come crumbling down, and their solution to the problem is, if you can get rid of these corrupt elements in the corporate system, all would be sweetness and light again. There are others who argue that very much like the human body, the capitalist system which we have operated ever since the days of the industrial revolution, in the 18th century, from time to time

needs a purging, needs to clean itself out and that what we are going through now, is one of those cleaning out periods of the capitalist system.

Once this cleaning out period has past, there will be a return to normalcy as happened, so they say, after the great depression. Others argued that they are not surprised about any of this at all, and these are persons of a Marxist orientation. They argued that this was always on the cards, that it was always predicted that a mature capitalism would contain within itself the seeds of its own destruction, and because of the inherent tendency of capitalism to over produce, because of the profit motive, it had to demand a world market, which we have something called globalisation, appropriately defined by Rex Nettleford, as a new name for an old obscenity, globalisation, and that the built-in urge of the capitalist class, so called, to want to earn more and do more will eventually lead to the destruction of the system. They argued that in the vocabulary of the average capitalist, there is no room for the word enough. Much more room for the word more, but no room for the word enough.

Sir, here we are in the face of these theories facing the worst crisis, that the world has seen in the last eight decades, and naturally the richest country in the world, the United States of America, and all of her allies, their systems have been visibly crumbling and there seems no end in sight.

It was my pleasure recently to listen to a discussion on the BBC, or was it CNN? Between a number of Nobel Laureate economists, Joseph Stegman, Paul Crewman and a whole set of others, and, of course another eminent economist who has not yet got a Nobel Prize, Jeffrey Sachs, who was in Barbados some time ago. These eminent and learned economists sat for about one hour talking about the present world crisis, and not one was able to state with any certainty as to the possible duration of the crisis, or indeed the possible debt of the crisis. Nobody could say when it would come to an end and nobody could say when it would bottom out. Nobody was sure about the depth or duration of the crisis.

In the last 14 or 15 months, upwards of 3 million people lost their jobs in the United States alone. To say nothing to countries like the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Japan and other countries that have been feeling the full effects of this very deep crisis in the capitalist.

This is not what we were promised. At the end of the Cold War in 1989, when the Soviet Union collapsed and Stalinism was dismantled in Eastern Europe, and we were told that the free market economy had won the Cold War, we were promised a land of milk and honey, and today, although for most of us milk and honey would not be a

very balanced diet, we got the opposite of what the promise was.

In the face of all of this, countries like Barbados have had to make adjustments to the way they see reality and the way they plan their business. Had the crisis originated in places like the Caribbean, on every network in the world, lectures would be delivered to us about how little we know about proper governance, about things like accountability and transparency, and how much we needed to learn from our betters in the North Atlantic economy. Mercifully, the crisis started with our betters, so called. Although it started with them, the full effects are going to be felt in countries like Barbados and other Caribbean countries.

In the face of all of this, one would have thought that a responsible Opposition Party would have seized the opportunity to be magnanimous. I would not say to be patriotic, because I agree with Dr. Samuel Johnson that patriotism is usually the last refuge of every scoundrel, so I am not going to say patriotic.

One would have thought that you would have heard something meaningful coming from the corridors of the Barbados Labour Party. When the crisis first broke, loud voices were raised in the Barbados Labour Party, authoritative voices were raised in the Barbados Labour Party, that what the country needed was a stimulus package and a significant one too. We were told what a large sum of foreign reserves have been left for us and we were asked why are you looking at it. It is there to be used. The country needed a large stimulus package. I agree with my colleague the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West that call may well have been one night after the maker of the statement watched CNN. That is from where they are learning.

Sir, we in the Government took the position that since we did not know the full depth of the crisis and had no idea, we could not compass its possible duration, that wisdom prescribed that we should be cautious and watch the situation more carefully, but this persistent cry continued, large stimulus package.

3.20 p.m.

Sir, in the United States of America, and in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and in Japan, there were large stimulus packages, but stimulus packages that, to date, have had no palpable effect on the situation, which those packages were designed to cure. Therefore, when that did not work, and when the crisis seemed deeper and promised to be much longer than the voices in Opposition had planned for, the tune was changed. We are now being told that the time for stimulus

has passed. What you need now is stabilisation, as if we were not stabilising the situation all along.

Sir, one of the problems we have in Barbados is that for many people, politics is another brand of sport. Games of one-upmanship are played. Harsh competitions are ways for press attention, and people open their mouths and say anything as long as they think a journalist will report it.

I have agreed with the late Sir James Tudor that in politics, the loudest mouths are usually the dutiful companions of the emptiest heads.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: And so it was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we came to these Annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

We heard from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East two days ago. As usual, she washed all over the place. The Honourable Member touched on every subject it is possible to touch on, in a speech of two hours, and at the end of it all, we were told what is required is stabilisation, which is what the Government has been doing from the time the crisis broke.

Then came yesterday, like Rip Van Wimple fresh up from a 20-hour sleep, the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter. His role, it seems, was to try and alarm the country as much as possible, to spread alarm and despondency because, you see, this political pantomime that is being played out, is supposed to be a re-enactment of what happened between 1991 and 1994.

It is not without significance that the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter kept referring to 1991, as he spoke. The whole idea is to try to resurrect memories of a period, that Honourable Members on the Other Side consider to be a dark period, in the recent political history of Barbados, so that they can inflame passions in the country, and to get people acting irrationally.

The playing out of this pantomime, of course, had a reverse order. Between 1991 and 1994, the irresponsibility and the alarm were spread first, and then the no-confidence motion came after. In 2009, the no confidence motion came first, and the pantomime is now being played out after. But the very same scenario, and it is hoped that the Democratic Labour Party will fall for that. Therefore, the response of the Opposition has been to confuse, and to spread alarm and despondency.

What has been and should be the response of a sensible, thinking and caring Government? Mr. Deputy Speaker, amongst the fragments of poetry, left by a little known Greek poet by the name of Archilochus, a very

interesting statement is to be found. Archilochus said that the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing. We heard the many things the foxes over there have known. We have heard it from the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter yesterday, and we heard it from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East on Wednesday afternoon. All Archilochus was trying to say, as I understand him, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that no matter how many tricks the fox may think he has, all the hedgehog needs when he is under attack, is to roll himself into a ball and push his spines out and you have to keep off. In other words, he understands the lesson of survival.

All the many things the fox knows are no help to the fox, when confronted with the hedgehog's one defence, and this Government knows the one big thing, that is, that we must carry Barbados successfully through this crisis that is at present plaguing the world.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: How are we going to do it? The first issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has to be that of helping those persons who are employed to keep their jobs. Of course, the Government does not employ everybody, so the Government has no absolute control over all persons working in Barbados, but we can help to create the environment that makes it possible for employers in the private sector to keep as many people as possible employed.

Sir, we are doing that, not by acting irresponsibly, but by spending prudently and by maintaining a dialogue with the private sector, through the social partnerships, so that, as the Honourable Prime Minister so well said, we can all understand that our aspiration and our expectations should be wrapped in this country's flag.

It is pointless for Barbadians to believe that in a highly abnormal situation, we can continue to act normally. We have to temper our expectations, control wastage, control our excesses, and watch this situation carefully, because we do not know its depth and we do not know its duration, but they can be assured that their Government will do everything in its power to ensure that as few jobs as possible, if any, are lost in this crisis, and that where we can create jobs to make the lives of our citizens better, we will do so. Sir, that is the undertaking of the Democratic Labour Party Government.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: The second response from the Government has to be a commitment to protect the most vulnerable elements in this society. Now, there were three two-thirds majorities of the Barbados Labour Party

between 1994 and 2003, the 1994 election, the 1999 election, and the 2003 election.

3.30 p.m.

After three two-thirds majorities of the Barbados Labour Party between 1994 and 2003, and the largest amount of revenue available to any Government of Barbados since the year 1627 when this country was settled, we have come into office and the present Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, Urban and Rural Development is flabbergasted, shocked and horrified at the scale of visible poverty with which his Ministry now has to deal in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to protect the most vulnerable elements in the society. I had hoped that in this debate, I would have heard Honourable Members on the Other Side complaining about the vote for the Urban and Rural Development Commissions, the Welfare Department, the Disabilities Unit and the National Assistance Board being cut, and therefore, exposing the disadvantaged to great peril. Mr. Deputy Speaker, no such word came from the Other Side because this Government is committed to ensuring that as few people as possible fall through the cracks during this very difficult period of world history.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the country needs to be assured that gone are the days when there was an absence of egalitarian distribution of this country's resources through those social agencies. The Urban Development Commission, the Rural Development Commission, the National Assistance Board, the Welfare Department and all of our social care agencies, will indiscriminately minister to the needs of the people of Barbados. We do not practice that kind of politics of exclusion on the basis of whether a Constituency is represented by a Barbados Labour Party candidate or a Democratic Labour Party one. Those days are past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central told a horror story today about how he and his Constituency were treated once he won that seat in St. Michael South Central. That is not the politics of the Democratic Labour Party, for the very simple reason that you really cannot...

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can set out to hurt one person in Barbados, but you better understand that you are never hurting one person, because that person has relatives and friends, and when you think you are hurting one person, you are in fact raising a fairly large army around yourself that would turn on you and destroy you at some time.

Sir, that is the commitment of the Democratic Labour Party so far as our social care agencies are concerned. This is not just hollowed rhetoric. The Honorable Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, took the decision that the concepts of social care and family should undergird all that we do, hence for the first time in the history of Barbados, the country has a Ministry with responsibility for social care and also a Ministry for family.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, none of these objectives can be achieved without there being a climate of Law and Order in Barbados. Times were when it was thought that the only role of the State was to preserve law and order and to keep the streets clear of garbage. Mr. Deputy Speaker, even the removal of garbage has now become a capitalist enterprise but the State continues to be responsible for the maintenance of law and order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have ministerial responsibility for the Law and Order Ministry. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you had to see it to believe the physical conditions, under which Members of the Royal Barbados Police Force were called upon daily to discharge their responsibilities.

Your Honour, as a frequent attendant at the courts of Law across the country looking after those who run afoul of the Law, I would have a very clear idea of what I am saying.

Practically every police station in Barbados, with the exception of Oistins, and I believe Holetown, and I think there was a new one built in District 'E' in St. Peter, is in a horrible state of disrepair. Again, I do not understand how all of this could have happened 14 years later with three two-thirds majorities and the largest amount of revenue earned by any Government since 1627.

That Government of the Barbados Labour Party did not need any assistance from the Opposition to carry out any of the policies that needed to be carried out in Barbados in respect of matters of law and order, yet wherever you turn in Barbados, Members of the Royal Barbados Police Force were complaining about the conditions under which they have had to work and have been crying out for a better deal.

The Honourable Member for St. John and I have discussed this matter over and over again and we have determined that an end has to be brought to this. Therefore we have decided to embark on an aggressive programme of constructing new police stations across Barbados. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East in her speech talked about how many plans the Government of the Barbados Labour Party had for all these police stations and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I myself do not get into these debates about who did something first and or who planned anything first. I have said from the Floor of this House on more than one occasion, because I verily believe it, that the only persons who have a right to say that they did anything first were Adam and Eve, nobody else. Therefore, the test of the efficacy of the policies of the Barbados Labour Party and those of the Democratic Labour Party will be who producing the police stations.

This Government is determined not to leave the Members of the Royal Barbados Police Force in a position to have to be making these complaints 10 years from now, when in fact, they continue to render an inestimable service to the preservation of law and order in Barbados and to the maintenance of personal security. It is imperative that this Government keeps its undertaking to the Members of the Royal Barbados Police Force, and to that, I am irrevocably committed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this debate, as it has matured up to now, has been a quite interesting one, because it marked the line of distinction between the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party.

3.40 p.m.

I have to confess that I listened to him with rap attention because his speech had the echo of the orderly movement of a good funeral oration. It is as though the Honourable Member was pronouncing over a corpse, that corpse being his native land Barbados. There was a certain glint in his eyes, as though once this happens, he and his colleagues could prove to the people of Barbados that they have made a mistake in January 2008.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we harbour no such feelings on these matters. It is our view that the deepest crisis to hit the world in the last eight decade is upon us now and that what is required, not only in Barbados, but across the Caribbean, and in Barbados in relation to countries across the Caribbean, is a coming together of all persons of goodwill, to protect what we have built up to now and to prepare for a great leap forward, once this dark period in world's history is passed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party stands ready and willing, not only to take the people of Barbados through this period but also to go to the next level to ensure that this country makes the next great leap, which is the realisation of most of the ideals contained in the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this debate is still young. We were accused of not giving specifics on anything. The specifics are contained in the Estimates and will be debated when we get to the Heads. These are Second Reading

speeches on the Appropriation Bill. This is not the time for specifics. We will get to the Heads and that is when this allegation will be dealt with.

Sir, as of now, these Estimates have my 100 per cent support and I want to extend heartfelt congratulations to the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Member for St. John, for the foresight he has shown in putting us in this position at this time.

I am oblige to you.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all, let me say a word of thanks to all Honourable Members on Both Sides of this Honourable House, who have contributed to the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill. I did not agree with all, but nevertheless, I believe that we had a debate which can be described in a variety of ways, but perhaps I would wish to begin by reminding this Honourable Chamber that when I spoke on Wednesday morning, I said as follows:

“Mr. Speaker, I wish to appeal to Honourable Members to depart from the norm somewhat, in their approach to this Estimates debate. As I said earlier, our emphasis should be on sending correct messages, firstly to our fellow countrymen, as well as our brothers and sisters in sister nations. We must strive to raise the standard of our debate, so that at the end of this process, Mr. Speaker, Barbadians are more enlightened and inspired by the capacity of their country to weather current economic challenges.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I went on:

“If as Leaders we listen closely to the messages of ordinary Barbadians, we will discern that they expect, in a course of our deliberating on such issues, a narrowing of the partisan political divide. Our countrymen and women want this Parliament to be more constructive in its deliberations and its output. As far as I am aware - and I think I would know if it was otherwise - there is no plan to call a General Election in Barbados in the next 24 months. The public is demanding, therefore, that as elected Parliamentarians, we focus in this Honourable Chamber on utilising our skills, knowledge and intellect in the creation of a sustainable strategy for going forward.”

I challenged Honourable Members in the process of their contributions to this debate to be so guided.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I made that appeal in the hope that in my wrap-up we would have succeeded as a Parliament in narrowing those perspectives of where we are as a country and more important, what we need to do to stave off the great threats and challenges to our very existence as a Small Island State, which has been described

by others outside of Barbados, those in Barbados, as well as those in this debate, including the penultimate speaker in this debate, as worst than the Great Depression of the 1930s; the worst economic depression in 80 years, a time when not even my father was alive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my remarks on Wednesday, I gave this Honourable House the assurance that Government had been, and would continue to be, flexible in its approach to problem-solving and adaptable in its policies. We said so from the outset. Again, I want to quote from those opening remarks.

“I will not seek, on this occasion, to mislead this Honourable House or the country into believing that somewhere in my files today or in the proverbial “black box”, I will be bringing to this Honourable Chamber shortly, resides the solution to all our problems.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I went on:

“While there are others in this Chamber and outside who believe that somehow, were they standing before this microphone at this time, the streets of Barbados would be automatically lined with gold and rivers would flow with milk and honey. I would be the first to concede that over the course of the next few weeks, months and years, there will have to be reviews and a shifting of emphases and resources.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is where we started the debate. I went on to say:

“No practical fiscal policy can be etched in stone, given the environment in which we live and operate today. Therefore, these Estimates represent an approach that responds to current and anticipated challenges and also makes provisions for adjustments, as may become necessary, given the very dynamic environment in which we operate.

Mr. Speaker, every morning we awake, we rush to read the newspapers and listen to the radio and television, to discover the new challenges that confront us. Therefore, I stress that our approach, over the course of the next financial year, will be one of setting and pursuing relevant and realistic goals, while, at the same time, positioning ourselves to respond to situations as they arise.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those were my opening remarks and that was the tone I brought to this Honourable House and to this debate on Wednesday. I even went further and appealed to Honourable Members and to the country as a whole, to temper expectations with reality and commonsense. Sir, specifically less than 60 hours ago, I said to Barbadians:

“We must wrap our ambitions in the colours of the National Flag. We must endeavour to do nothing that is deleterious to the national well-being. We are called upon as Leaders to set forth an example. Others will be looking to Barbados and to Barbadians for guidance and inspiration in how we handle these challenges. It is left to us as a nation and as a wise and enlightened people to pursue, in the short-term, strategies and initiatives that would stave off our coming face to face with the hardships that are being experienced by millions around the world, in countries with far greater resources and capacities than we do.”

3.50 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sorry that I have to repeat all of this, but I am repeating it because this is where we started in this debate and I was very careful to point out the way forward. Finally, I said that no one knows when things will turn around but that one thing is certain, that people need to have confidence in order to begin to spend money and invest again. The environment, I made clear, needed to encourage such behaviour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, immediately upon rising to her feet, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition made it clear in her assessment that the Estimates of 2009 were empty. Sir, that is where the debate began.

Mr. Speaker, to quote her directly she said:

“There was only a lot of long talk but no detail plans to tackle the problems of this country.”

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East spoke in a manner as if to suggest that if the Barbados Labour Party were in office it would have been in a position on Wednesday to spell out and set forth solutions to all the country's problems. In essence, she felt there was more that the country should do and should have done to ameliorate the suffering of working Barbadians. She went as far as to outline a list of all the projects that the Barbados Labour Party was undertaking that the Honourable Member felt the Democratic Labour Party should be continuing across all sectors.

Mr. Speaker, no doubt this was a precursor to her Budget presentation in which you anticipate that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East would criticise every single dollar of new taxation. Sir, she will lament the absence of any and ever conceivable initiative to minimise hardship on Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was her predictable self, asserting that not enough has been offered, and again, insisting at the beginning of her speech on the need for a stimulus package to the tune, we suspect,

of hundreds of millions of dollars. Sir, by the end of the speech it has moved from stimulus to stabilisation and on that hangs a tale.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, under normal circumstances, I would have devoted the next few minutes to responding to the specific allegations of the Leader of the Opposition but, Sir, that has been the trend since January 2008. The presentation of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was not shot down by me, because I have not spoken yet. It was not shot down by anybody on This Side of the House, that presentation by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was very clinically, and in a very polished and effective way shot down by the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of her arguments, not some, all of the arguments that you could distill from the presentation of the Honourable Member were systematically shot down by the Honourable Member for St. Peter. I have never witnessed anything like that in 22 years in this Chamber and the previous 12 years that I spent coming into the public gallery as a youngster. Sir, I have never, ever witnessed it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no other Honourable Member, from the time the Honourable Member for St. Peter spoke made any reference to anything the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said. I do not know if Honourable Members realise that. Sir, from the time the Honourable Member for St. Peter spoke, no other member referenced anything that the Leader of the Opposition said in response to what I said in the Estimates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, added to that is the difference between the perspective of the Leader of the Opposition and the former Prime Minister and Minister of Finance were like night and day. While on Wednesday, having heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, you would have left this Chamber with the impression that there was enough elbow room for the Government to do much more in easing hardship and stimulating vital sectors of this economy.

Sir, by the following evening when you hear the Honourable Member for St. Peter, he came to this country via this House and said not only could not more be done, but that which is promised could also not be done because, according to him, the situation is perilous, it is dire, it is frightening, it is stark and it is worse than 1991.

Sir, you mean to tell me that before the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East spoke that the Parliamentary of the Barbados Labour Party did not meet. You mean that the Honourable Member for St. Peter, as a former Minister of Finance, less than 15 months ago, did

not meet with the new Shadow Minister prior to the presentation on Wednesday?

Do you mean that the Honourable Member for St. Peter did not tell the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East before she spoke that it was his considered judgement, as a former Prime Minister and Minister of Finance that counter-cyclical measures could not wait? He waited until he got on his feet and instead of saying he agreed with the leader, the Honourable Member for St. Peter said, "I agree with you", meaning me, Sir. In fact, from the time he came into the House he said, "I am going to agree with you today", and he winked to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Sir, we know all the tactics so, he came in here to agree with me. You mean he did not tell the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East the day before that a stimulus package was not an effective tool?

Mr. Speaker, you know what is worse than that? Can you imagine a former Minister of Finance allowing the Shadow Minister of his party to come to the country and say that the decline in reserves is \$400 million when he, in fact, had calculated it to be \$800 million which is twice the amount that his Shadow Minister said that it was?

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Sir, for the sake of absolute accuracy, the Central Bank of Barbados place those figures on the website on Wednesday. Sir, if you go now, you would see the date March 18 below it. I got the one page as I was coming into this Chamber. I took the December 2007 figure and the December 2008 figure. The difference between December 2007 and December 2008 was \$472 million. If you take the increase that was occasioned in the first three months then you will see...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I must remind you that a point of order is not for someone to explain their position when they have missed their point previously in their speech.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying the manner in which the Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber and, unfortunately, if Your Honour does not understand that, I will try again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have said over and over again that respect must be paid to this Chair.

4.00 p.m.

I sat in these Chambers on many occasions and saw the disrespect being paid to this Chair. This presiding officer will not accept it.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is because of the respect, I said that I would have to explain what I mean. I am saying to you that the Honourable Member for St. Peter took the figure from April 2008 and used that as his reference point in order to get to the figure of just under eight hundred million. Had the figures from the Central Bank been made available earlier, as we would normally expect, there would have been no confusion.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I see no point of order.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I do not think that any of us spoke to this issue, so where did the confusion come from? I did not create any confusion. This is the first time I am addressing this issue. I furthermore, very carefully, wrote everything the Honourable Member for St. Peter said. I am going to quote it a little later.

What the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is saying, that the Honourable Member for St. Peter said is not what he said. That is what she wanted him to say, so as not to embarrass her.

What the Honourable Member for St. Peter did yesterday was come in here, having heard the speech of his Leader, within twenty-four hours, to say that the decline in the reserves was 100 per cent more, in other words twice the amount that the Shadow Minister of Finance on behalf of the Barbados Labour Party said it was.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: That had to be a serious matter. You told the country that the decline is \$400 million. He said it is \$800 million. Can you imagine how fast and loose people are playing with the statistic and the lives of Barbadians since January 2008? In light of that, I have not contradicted anything the Honourable Member said. The person who contradicted the Honourable Member was the Honourable Member for St. Peter. He said I have come here, I have listened to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East but I do not agree with you. I agree with the Honourable Member for St. John. I heard it with my own ears.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am not saying his figures on the reserves are correct. I will get to that. I am not saying yours are correct either. That is the problem. I

think both of you need to go to Harcourt Carter Optical or buy a computer, because what you are seeing and what the Central Bank has proved in relation to the current position in Barbados are at significant odds.

In light of his contradiction and dismissal of all that his leader proffered in that debate, I consider it necessary to devote a significant portion of this presentation, to addressing the specific charges and allegations of the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

I understand that his motivation to highlight to what he might perceive as the limitation of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, on fiscal and economic matters, is just a continuing trend, nothing new. Nobody in Barbados should forget towards the end of the Honourable Member for St. Peter's tenure, before that Government fell, when he was growing weary and tired, the former Prime Minister and Minister of Finance looked across his then Front Bench, and he found nobody who he could repose his confidence in to carry his financial load. Not only could he not find anybody in his Cabinet, he could not find anybody among the twelve Senators in the Senate and what did he do, he reached into the Democratic Labour Party to find somebody to be the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance in his Government.

The first humiliation took place then, and so contentious was the Honourable Member for St. Peter of the economic perspectives of his colleagues including the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, that he left His Side of the House, reached over to the Next Side and then again, so contentious was he that he clearly signaled in the General Election campaign that were they successful in returning to office, that particular individual would have been his co-leader, and probably by now an anointed successor. So this trend has just continued. So the contempt for and attitude of the Honourable Member for St. Peter towards the prospector of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East on economic matters has now become legendary.

Sir, one expects therefore that when the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East speaks and takes the debate in a westernly direction, that the Honourable Member for St. Peter on the few occasions he has graced us, or graces you with his presence, on the few occasions that he speaks, he is going to take the position to the east. So the questions that Honourable Members of this Chamber and indeed, thinking Barbadians would have been asking themselves yesterday, was whether on this occasion in an attempt to further embarrass and humiliate the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the former Prime Minister and Minister of Finance did not go overboard. Whether he did not mash the proverbial crease, whether he did not carry away to the extent that he

sacrificed reasoned economic theory at the alter of political expediency.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter is an Economist and an Economist like a doctor is as credible as his last analysis and forecast. Sir, you need to understand why, and we need to do this in this debate, to ask ourselves why people say the things they say and do the things they do, what inspires them?

Sir, this House has had former Leaders in it before. This is not the first time. We had the former Prime Minister Barrow, who said that the Honourable Member for St. Peter had his hand on the wheel, when the Jamaican economy crashed. The same thing I heard yesterday from the Honourable Member for St. Peter, but in relation to somebody who is not in the Chamber. That is the difference in personalities, a signalled difference.

We have had former Prime Minister St. John, former Prime Minister Sandiford, even I, even not a former Prime Minister sat in this House as a former Leader of Party. Most of the men of whom I speak, were patriots first. They patiently accepted their lot. They were not begging bowl politicians and they were all proud men who stood on their own record. It is true that they gave a little trouble from time to time, but they were Barbadians who tempered their language by their experience.

I recall in the post-1978 period, when the late Errol Barrow appointed Dr. Richie Haynes as Shadow Minister of Finance. There was the odd occasion when Barrow differed philosophically and methodologically from the then Member of Parliament for St. Michael South Central, but never once on the Floor of this House, never once or elsewhere except perhaps in the confines of George Street was Barrow ever heard to have contradicted or belittled his Shadow Minister of Finance, never. I have never seen it.

I have never heard it. I am sure that the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow, National Hero, harboured ambitions one day to returning as Prime Minister of this country. We knew that, but he never felt so threatened and he was never so venomous in his animosity towards any of the potential contenders for the titular leadership of his Party, as to berate them and to belittle their contributions to the degree and extent that I saw take place in this Chamber yesterday by the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

There are certain ways that former Prime Ministers do not behave and in the context of Barbados, none of those previous Leaders, including the former Prime Minister who sits in this House ever faced an economic crisis of these proportions, none of them. From our late Right Excellent Errol Barrow right up, none of them faced a crisis of these proportions. Yet the impression is given

that somehow Barbados has fallen below the mark in this unfolding crisis. What is it that I have not done?

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said that I did not go on television and address the nation. I went on the television and had chit chats instead.

4.10 p.m.

What is it that I had not done? The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said that I did not go on television and address the nation. I went on the television and had chit-chatted instead. So she cites other Prime Ministers who went on television.

Prime Minister Bruce Golding, she said went on television. Sir, within weeks of him going on television, two bauxite companies closed, there was the devaluation of his country's currency, unemployment in the tourism sector, and the potential end to their implosion of their major airline, but he went on television.

Then, Prime Minister Manning, she said he did the right thing. He addressed the nation. What did he say, and what has he done that is different to me?

Then, she said the Prime Ministers of St. Lucia, St. Kitts, Dominica, St. Vincent and Antigua all addressed their countries. What were their over-riding theme? I do not know if Honourable Members go on the Caribbean Net News, but go and read it for yourself. They said that they were drawing comfort and inspiration from none other than the assurances of the Prime Minister of Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yet, it was against the Prime Minister of Barbados, that a no-confidence motion was brought. In the week that motion was being debated, eastern Caribbean leaders got together and called me and asked me if they could meet in Barbados to solve a potential problem and financial crisis in the region.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, we spent a day exchanging common positions on how we will seek to deal with that particular challenge.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, apparently I did not do what the Members on the Other Side wanted me to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have heard some sick jokes in my life, and I have seen some political stunts and high-wire acts as well, but what we heard in the House yesterday was borderline in every sense of the word.

It is against that backdrop, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I turn my attention to the presentation of the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter. First of all, so outlandish were some of his assertions and conclusions, that I immediately consulted the Central Bank and asked for a comment on the allegations levelled, particularly those involving the Member's generous use of un-sourced and unsubstantiated figures.

The review by the Governor and her staff has brought to light some very interesting findings.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Regarding the statistics from which the Honourable Member for St. Peter spoke yesterday, it is therefore misleading to say that they were un-sourced. They were the Central Bank of Barbados statistics for February 2009, which are obtainable from the Central Bank's website.

As I indicated, they were posted on the 18th of March, the day before yesterday.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, you can never assist the Honourable Member, in not putting her foot in her mouth. You can never assist her, in not jumping in a well. The Honourable Member sees a trap in politics, set by a former leader and is still walking into it all the time. He did not say what he was quoting. I have a transcript of the Honourable Member's speech. He did not say what he was quoting. He said documents produced by the Central Bank recently, more recently than those which you had access to.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You cannot tell me what he quoted from. How could another Member come in this Chamber, Sir, and tell me what somebody else quoted from? In the Law Courts that is not allowed. It is hearsay. But the Honourable Member now would want to tell me what he ate for dinner yesterday too.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You cannot say what the Honourable Member quoted from, if he did not make it a document of the House. There is a reason that he did not make it a document of the House and I will get to that.

What did the Central Bank say? There were numbers of misrepresentations in the presentation. More so, the numbers appear to come from the Central Bank's Economic Outlook, an internal document of the Central Bank. The reason that it is not public, they say, is because without a proper explanation, no one can compare apples with oranges and quote to the public, numbers that are not

comparable. Therefore the Central Bank does not publish it for public consumption because it is not a document that can be used to draw sensible inferences. Only a desperate politician would abandon his training as an economist, having said last week that he was giving up all political ambitions, and was throwing his full support behind the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East - and then winking - would come in here parading bogus unauthenticated and unreliable information with the primary purpose, not of helping our economy, but showing the weaknesses and shallowness of the Leader of the Opposition's analysis or submissions.

He did not use the definition to contradict me, you know. That is why I am saying that the Honourable Member sees an uncovered well and has jumped in it. The information the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter quoted was to contradict the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is compounding it by saying that his information is authentic.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: By telling the House that I have the document from which he quoted, she has not told them what she quoted from, a website, but I have the document he quoted from. Have you heard anything as ludicrous as that in this Chamber?

The fact are as follows, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Net International Reserves of the monetary authorities fell in 2008 by \$205.5 million.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member again is misleading the House. The Member did not speak about the drop of the Net International Reserves, which in fact, is contained correctly, the drop that he just spoke to, at pages 2 and 3 of the February 2009 Central Bank Report.

What the Member spoke about, Sir, was the overall international reserves, which is not only the Central Bank of Barbados, but also the banking system, which is contained, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at page 74 and which shows a drop of \$472 million from December 2007 to December 2008, and a drop of \$720 million, if you took it from March 2008 to December 2008. Therefore, the Member is not comparing apples with apples when he refers to the Net International Reserves, because the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter did not speak to that. He spoke to the overall international reserves at page 74.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have unlimited time, and the Honourable Member wants to

make my speech for me. I have tried as best I can to package this presentation to help her save herself as Leader of the Barbados Labour Party, but the Honourable Member, not that I have any interest in that, but I do not like to see people being unfaired and pummelled in the way like it happened yesterday. Therefore, if the Honourable Member wants to take further punishment on behalf of her former leader, let me go down the line with this matter, very carefully.

I am going to repeat what the Governor of the Central Bank said yesterday. In none of the presentation, neither the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter nor the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East did they quote the net international reserves, which is the commonly quoted figure. Both of them opted to quote other figures for specific reasons, but the figure that is normally quoted in this context, is the Net International Reserves and that was from time immemorial.

Asides.

4.20 p.m.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am repeating again. It is a fact, and the Honourable Member has confirmed it, that the net international reserves fell by \$205.5 million from \$1 547.9 million to \$1 342.4 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not the largest fall in recent years. In 2004, the net international reserves of the monetary authorities fell by \$312 million.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You hear the member in her seat now saying it is not the fall in the reserves that is important. That is not important now today.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is yet again misleading the House. Having listened to the asides, he chose to pick out which part he wanted to say. What I said is that it is not only the fault...

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you on a point of order or an aside?

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not on a point of order or an aside. I am on a point of order on what the Honourable Member just said.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I am saying to you, Sir, that the Honourable Member is misleading the

Chamber by indicating that it is the net reserves falling alone. What we said on This Side is that the international reserves falling, accompanied by the excessive domestic credit creation, is what is of concern in this country particularly given the Government wants to finance a deficit of some \$800 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we said on This Side that if you do not have savings in the system from which you can borrow, and if the banks do not have enough savings and deposits, also with the Central Bank of Barbados, that you would end up having to print money in this country to meet this deficit.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I must remind you again that a point of order should not be misused or used in the guise to explain something which was dealt with in the debate. If you missed that opportunity, you cannot rise on a point of order to do it. I will no longer entertain that type of behaviour.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member needs to call for help. She needs to call West Terrace, Old City or Bush Bar and get some help. The Honourable Member needs a lot of help in this debate.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Members, be quiet please, Let the Honourable Member continue with his speech.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the net international reserves fell in 2004 by \$312 million. The net foreign reserves of commercial banks, which the Honourable Member for St. Peter sought to include selectively, are not included in the commonly quoted net international reserves, because they are very volatile and respond directly to changes in international interest rates, to head office decisions and to other matters, not only to national developments. That is a well-known fact. There are not within the control of the Central Bank of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are, therefore, not included in the officially quoted net international reserves either by the Central Bank of Barbados or the International Monetary Fund. There are, however, of interest, and I am going to concede that there are of interest, not to substantiate what we heard yesterday or what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is trapping herself by saying today, but for different reasons.

The figure of the net foreign assets of commercial banks, or what you might call the net international reserves of commercial banks, were \$329.5 million in 2008 compared with \$699.7 million. That was in fact not low in terms of trends over the last five years. The 2008 figure for

the commercial banks net foreign assets is actually higher than the figure for 2005 when it was \$371.9 million, and for 2004 when it was \$344.9 million. It is, therefore, for reasons of volatility of this kind, that neither the Central Bank of Barbados nor the International Monetary Fund rely on commercial banks' net foreign assets as an indicator of net international reserves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is a fact is that in 2007 the figure was unusual because of Cricket World Cup. That is a well-known fact. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you do not come in here parading a 2007 figure and comparing it with a 2008 figure. You have to look at the trends. That is what the Honourable Member for St. Peter consciously, deliberately and willfully did to this Chamber yesterday and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East seems to want to support that kind of conduct in this Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, technically, the figure for the net foreign assets of commercial banks is influenced by the level of capital inflows into Barbados, as these come through the banking system and only a part of them is transferred to the Central Bank of Barbados. They actually then reach the Central Bank's foreign exchange reserves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of Cricket World Cup 2007, capital inflows were quite significant in 2007. This was partly so for 2006 as well. For this reason, the net foreign assets of the commercial banks were high in 2007. Indeed, it is more accurate to say that 2007 was unusual.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reduction in 2008 is really a return to the trend. It is for these kinds of reasons that commercial banks numbers are not included in the net international reserves quoted by the Central Bank of Barbados. In addition, as a result of the international meltdown which exploded in October 2008, some capital inflows which Barbados expected in 2008 were put on hold. This would also have affected the numbers of net foreign assets reported by commercial banks, since these flows come through the commercial banks and not the Central Bank of Barbados. It has little to do with financial liberalisation, the stuff that the Honourable Member for St. Peter talked about yesterday and does clearly not understand. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when viewed in this way, it is clearly prudent that the commercial banks net foreign assets not be relied on, in determining the country's net international reserves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us look at the performance of the foreign exchange reserves for the months of January and February 2009. The net international reserves fell by \$29 million based on the information January and February 2009. This is unusual for this time of the year, but it is not unexpected since our source markets are in recession. However, it has happened before.

In 2003, the net international reserves fell in the first quarter as well. The Honourable Member for St. Peter gave the impression that this was cataclysmic, that it never ever happened in the history of Barbados, when only five years ago he was Minister of Finance and in the first quarter the net international reserves fell. We have not even past the first quarter yet, so it is not possible to confirm that this would happen in the first quarter of 2009, given visitor arrivals for cricket, but it is also possible, that is why we have said we have to be adaptable.

I also saw a reference to banking deposits falling in 2008 for the second time in our history. That is what the Honourable Member for St. Peter said. Mr. Deputy Speaker, facts are that the deposits of the banking system did not fall in 2008. This is incorrect, it is more accurate to say that they grew at a slower rate in 2008.

4.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter is not interested in terminological exactitudes. As I said, he has sacrificed his economic training on the alter of political expediency. We saw it on This Side. It is a pity there are people over there who have not seen it yet, but when the cou-cou punch is delivered, we could as well not have any sympathy for the persons who have not opened their eyes to what is happening in their own Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were other allegations as well. I am going to quote him specifically because I took the speech verbatim and up to 2.00 a.m., I had it transcribed, because I expected better of the Honourable Member for St. Peter. Sir, I know he had to be up to something, that is why he is not in here today, and you are not going to see him for the rest of this Estimates debates, because the Honourable Member for St. Peter is not interested in the Estimates. He is interested in the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East undoing any potential enhancement of her standings, hoping that things would go sour and that the people would say, let us send back for "How Great Thou Art".

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is what the Honourable Member for St. Peter said yesterday:

"Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, yesterday when the Leader of the Opposition spoke, she would have seen the most recent report of the Central Bank only on the day itself and might have told the House..."

Hear what he is saying now, that she misled the House. The Honourable Member for St. Peter went on:

"Might have told the House." Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter was here but he said, "might have told the House..."

The Honourable Member went on:

"...by way of setting context for this debate that during the course of last year, the reserves fell by \$472 million."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what he is basically saying in that sentence is that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East did not know what she was talking about but he put it in very skillful language. Those were his opening words. He is basically saying, in a very polite way, you are chatting nonsense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the latest figures of the Central Bank, as I said, put the decline in the reserves at \$202.2 million in 2008 on an International Monetary Fund (IMF) basis and \$359.4 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter then went on:

"I want, as I start my presentation in the House, Sir..."

Let us listen to the language again.

"to really correct the situation..."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you understand what the Honourable Member for St. Peter is really saying about the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. The Honourable Member for St. Peter is saying that he had to come here to correct the situation.

He goes on to say how big the reserves grew in his time.

"And last year, 2008, the reserves increased in the first quarter of the year to \$2.7 billion, but then they fell, Mr. Speaker, in the last nine months of 2008. They fell from \$2.7 billion to \$1 billion, \$192 million."

As I said, the Net International Reserves of the Monetary Authorities and commercial banks total \$2.25 billion at the end of 2007 and \$1.89 billion at the end of 2008. That is the only way you can compare it. The additional \$215 million held by other public bodies at the end of 2007 had grown to \$256 million by the end of September 2008.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, he goes on:

“They fell, Sir, in nine months, not by \$472 million but by over \$700 million.”

He did not quote my figures on the reserves, he did not quote my figures on the import cover. What did he pick out to contradict the assertion by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East? He targeted everything the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East did and unpicked every thread. He goes on:

“We know the reserves generally build up in the first quarter in normal economic times when the world economy and tourism are growing and then they fall in the next three quarters.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter has measured the reserves from the highest point in the year to the end of the year. This way always provide a larger fall in reserves than end of year to end of year comparison.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, using his basis of measuring reserves, from the highest point in the year to the end of the year, the reserves in 2004 would have fallen by \$464 million, if we use his analysis, rather than \$287 from December 2004 to December 2005. If we use his method in 2005, they would have fallen by \$169 million, instead of \$131 million, from December 2004 to December 2005. In 2006, they would have fallen by \$52 million, instead of increasing by \$78 million. The Central Bank's External Assets at the end of 2007 were \$1.24 billion and at the end of December 2008, \$1.04 billion or \$209 million less. At February 2009, they had increased to \$1.09 billion but fell back to \$1.04 billion by March 13th, 2009.

The number of weeks import of goods and services that our international reserves can cover, at the end of December 2008, is 15.2 weeks. It was the same as 15.3 weeks at the end of 2005, or nearly the same as 15.7 weeks at the end of 2006. Our reserves fell in 2008, not only because of a slowing world economy, not only because of precipitous drops in the stock markets of the world, to the extent of 40 to 50 per cent and thus in people's wealth, as well as steep falls of 20 to 30 per cent in the value of the Pound Sterling and the Euro against the US dollar, but also because of the astronomically high oil prices which added \$300 million to our import Bill. But those oil prices have gone back down and so will our import Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is nothing to panic about in relation to the way the Honourable Member for St. Peter came in here. He went on:

“And that begins to set the context within which we must begin to discuss these Estimates, and that is why these debates are so serious. But it has to be an important failure of the people who have prepared these Estimates and who

expect the local banking system to finance them, not to recognise that for the second time in our history...”

This is the Honourable Member for St. Peter speaking. He went on to say:

“That deposits in the banking system in Barbados in 2008 fell.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know that domestic deposits increased in 2008 by \$218 million? Sir, it increased from \$7 billion, \$344.4 million at the end of 2007, to \$7 billion \$560.3 million at the end of 2008. Foreign currency deposits which had fallen by \$127 million in 2006, increased by \$672 million in 2007, but fell along with the world economy.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House in relation to deposits. Sir, the Central Bank's Report for February 2009, at page 30 entitled: “Commercial Banks, Total Deposits by Depositors”. Table 5.15 says:

“At the end of December 2007, the grand total of all deposits in Barbados was \$9 56 385 000. At the end of December 2008, it was \$8 934 988 000. It showed a decline therefore, between December 2007 and December 2008. There was a similar decline in 1990, when it moved from \$1.832 billion to \$1.761 billion in 1991. Sir, I am not sure what the Honourable Member is speaking to, but these Tables which come from the Central Bank at page 30, heading: “Total Deposits by Depositors in the Banking System in Barbados” state it clearly.

4.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I never said total deposits. The Honourable Member does not understand these things and should, therefore, call for help. She should call 911 because there is an emergency in the House. Sir, I said domestic deposits and I was referring to what the former Prime Minister said. The deposits in the banking system in Barbados fell in 2008 and I was dealing with domestic deposits because his comment related to the level of domestic financing of Government's programme.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I told you to call 911 because we have an emergency in the House. Sir, I ask the Minister of Health to make sure the emergency services are in good standing at the Accident and Emergency Department.

Sir, you know they had also fallen in 1997, they fell in 2000 and they fell in 2003 and 2006. It was a fall in

foreign exchange currency deposits that would have caused the fall in total deposits in the banking system in 2008 but, Sir, I was not dealing with those deposits when I started. I was talking about deposits in the domestic banking system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I go on. The Honourable Member for St. Peter said this:

“You have a situation where the deposits in the banking system are not growing. They are falling and there are deposits held in banks in Barbados at the Central Bank of Barbados have fallen from \$900 million to \$540 million.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the commercial bankS deposits with the Central Bank of Barbados fell from \$619 million, at the end of December 2007, to \$597.3 million at the end of December 2008 or by a mere \$22 million. In 1997, they fell by \$61 million in 1999, they fell by \$60 million in 2004 they fell by \$381 million and \$47 million in the year 2005.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The only thing you need to do is to call 911. Do not ask me to repeat anything else I have said. Sir, listen to the Honourable Member for St. Peter again:

“There is no way that you can go to a local banking system where the deposits are not growing and where they are drawing deposits from the Central Bank of Barbados and ask them to carry out new credit creation of \$743 million.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thought he would know that commercial banks only carry approximately 33 per cent of total Government debentures. Sir, that is well known and he is a former Minister of Finance. Then he launches his usual attack on the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance. He wants him to come to the House and give evidence because as he said:

“What is before us is so stark that in January of this year, you know who helped financed Government’ operations in Barbados? The people of St. Vincent, the people of Grenada, the people of St. Lucia; the people of Antigua.”

Mr. Speaker, he said that \$44 million in debentures in January of this year had to be taken up by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank to help us finance our operations in this country. Sir, no one in this Government or the Central Bank of Barbados, asked the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) to invest in Barbados’ Government debentures. Sir, if they had done so, they would have done so of their own free will because they thought it was a good

investment. However, the truth is that the ECCB did not buy our debentures in January and the Central Bank of Barbados has no record of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank having bought any of our debentures.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am saying to you that the Honourable Member for St. Peter said that the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank took out \$44 million in debentures in January of this year. Sir, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, according to our Central Bank of Barbados did not buy our debentures in January. They have no record of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go again now...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber again. On page 62 of the February 2009 Central Bank of Barbados’ Report, Government of Barbados debentures under the heading Eastern Caribbean/Central Bank, \$44 000 000.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I am not responding to any more asides, because I am going on what my memory tells me the Honourable Member for St. Peter said and I took a very careful record of what he said, and it is clear that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and mine record clashes and collides. The Honourable Member cannot come in here and purport to quote from a document and say it is a document that somebody else was quoting from.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know what the Honourable Member for St. Peter was quoting from, but it could not have been statistics from the Central Bank of Barbados. It could not be statistics from the Central Bank of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is where he goes now again trying to give the impression that we do not bring the BOLT to account. He said that the Leader of the Opposition had already spoken in terms of other things and it may be brought to account. Sir, he is now pointing out what she forgot. Sir, understand the speech. The Leader of the Opposition has already spoken in terms of other things that may be brought to account, so he is now saying that he is the great “I am”. I am identifying the things she should have spoken about and he asked about the BOLT and the Justice Building. He said that the payment for this building was scheduled to start this year, but that it had not yet been shown in the Estimates. He said he was not sure, that he was not going to stick his neck out, but that he had searched carefully to see if other BOLTS had been shown in the Estimates. He said he noted with great concern that the rental of property vote, under the Ministry of Housing,

has fallen from \$30 million to \$22 million and that is where he would imagine the BOLT would have been paid for.

Sir, this is an economist talking about where he would imagine something would be done. This is a technical person that should have the skills to know how Estimates are constructed, but he is going on his imagination. He said he thought the Coast Guard was supposed to be a BOLT, but that it might now be a loan.

Mr. Speaker, this is the Honourable Member for St. Peter that put all those arrangements in place and left us to pay for them and to bring them to account. Sir, we brought Supplementaries in here to deal with all of that but he was not in the Chamber. The leases for BOLTS are treated as finance leases and thus the lease payments are carefully and fully captured under Debt Services partly as principal and partly as interest, and therefore, the BOLTS are treated as debt.

Mr. Speaker, it was this speech, delivered yesterday to create fear and panic in here to undermine our economic system and to undermine the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. Sir, the two were achieved at the same time and the protagonist is now washing his hands like Lady MacBeth, "Out, damn'd spot!,out I say!" but he cannot get the spot out. It is in some rest-room somewhere.

Mr. Speaker, it is tragic to see a person that so many had respected fall to this level.

4:50

I have to ask the Honourable Member for St. Peter, what is his daily prayer? What does he pray for on a day? I am not trying to be like a Pharisee. I am not saying that I am not like him. It is not for me to say what for pray, but I have to ask what the Honourable Member for St. Peter really prays for. My only advice to him is, physician heal thyself.

Sir, it is unfortunate that our focus on the 2009 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure had to be diverted in this manner. It was my hope and desire of all Barbados for us to emerge from this debate with a much clearer blue print for moving Barbados forward. Fortunately, we have a few remaining days in which the Other Side can redeem themselves by going to the ant, considering her ways and becoming wise.

I reaffirm on this occasion the commitment of this Government, to adopting a practical and pragmatic approach to the management of the finances of this country. There is no reference to a document for dealing with the challenges that we confront. None of us in this Chamber anywhere else in this region, has been exposed to a financial calamity of the size and character as the one that

is currently affecting the world economy. There is none who has walked this way before. On this occasion I draw inspiration from the words of the Independent Member of Parliament, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, who appealed to Honourable Members in this Chamber, but particularly on the Other Side, to look at the bigger picture.

Barbadians are looking to the Chamber for inspiration. Caribbean nationals are looking to this Chamber for inspiration. Caribbean Leaders are looking to this Chamber for inspiration. Members of the Barbadian diaspora are looking to this Chamber for inspiration. We have a duty, in my view, and an obligation to raise the standard of our game in this Chamber and to rise to the challenges.

Sir, we are 15 months into the term of a new Government. The experts tell us that we have at least another 36 months, minimum, of this turbulence to endure, such as the ones pulled by the Honourable Member for St. Peter yesterday are unfortunate, but can be forgiven. I urge Honourable Members to use the remaining days of this debate to focus on aspects of our social and economic agenda that are designed to advance the cause of our people. A crisis is too good an opportunity to waste. Our people are looking to us for answers. Let us not fail them. Let us not disappoint them.

Sir, I have every pleasure in moving the second reading of this year's Appropriation Bill.

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

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

On the separate motion of Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON, seconded by Hon. R. D. JONES, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is now in committee of Supply.

HEAD 38

MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LANDS (AS AMENDED) \$58 252 640

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: The Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, it gives me great pleasure to move this Head. First, I want to express my

gratitude to the staff of the National Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the cooperation and hard work, and indeed, the assistance they gave me through the financial year and also in preparation of this programme.

Sir, included under the Head for the Ministry of Housing and Lands are Sub-programme 0535, Lands and Surveyors Department, sub-programme 0536, Land Registry, sub-programme 0537, Acquisition and subprogramme 0538, Legal Unit and subprogramme 0539, Property Management.

Sir, first let me state to this Honourable Chamber that the objective of the Ministry of Housing and Lands, is to provide quality and affordable housing, land and office accommodation solution for its clients.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: May I apologise to you Mr. Chairman.

Sir, the objectives are to enhance the quality and standard of living of Barbadians through providing improved housing, to make available such lands as may be required for public purposes and to ensure the satisfactory settlement of compensation, claims and acquisition, and certainly, to provide technical support for the formulation of housing policies, to ensure that persons are housed in a safe physical environment, to improve the quality of life for tenants, especially the right to own real property, to provide surveyors' services, to administer such services within the island and to provide suitable office accommodation to departments of Government and stated international agencies.

Sir, let me outline the plans for the year 2009-2010 of the Ministry. I speak to sub-programme 7090 in relation to the plan for that programme for the budget year. This deals with the improvement in IT Services. The Ministry will continue to address issues relating to the delivery of timely information for management decision-making through the land acquisition information system, the implementation and use of the geographical systems.

Sir, if I may also refer respectfully to subprogramme 531 which speaks to the Housing Planning Unit. Again, I also want to congratulate the staff in the Housing Planning Unit, and by extension, the staff of the National Housing Corporation and Legal Department. These were the Departments that assisted greatly in developing the Rent to Own Concept. I believe this debate would also take on that Rent to Own Concept, which I said last night was a revolutionary piece.

5.00 p.m.

Sir, the plans for the budget here, in relation to the Housing Planning Unit, is to promote affordable housing as an instrument for economic empowerment and poverty alleviation. This is why we conceptualise the rent-to-own concept. I guess when we get to speak generally about the National Housing Corporation and low income housing, we will have a debate centered and locked into that rent-to-own concept.

As you know, last night the Honourable Member for St. George North claimed that they had rent-to-own. I did not see it for the last 14 years, but all of a sudden now, they also laying claim to the rent-to-own concept. Sir, we will get into that debate as we go on.

Again, to use the words of the former Minister of Housing, that is the Honourable Member for St. George North, he said that at one time, this is after him, that the Ministry of Housing and the NHC, were just limping along. In fact, I have his record here and we will look at his record, because his record in relation to the other Ministers, we say, very outstanding. In fact, he was the best of them.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: The record reflects that, Mr. Chairman.

I could only thank, again, the staff for assisting me in that rent-to-own concept because to me, it lifts the particular person at the bottom of the ladder, that low income level, who cannot afford a mortgage, who, if given the opportunity to go on the private market, would never own a piece of land or own a house in this country. Mr. Chairman, that came from within the bosom of this Government, the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the National Housing Corporation.

Again, Mr. Chairman, in relation to the sub-programme 531 - and there was a lot of talk about whether or not this Ministry is continuing with the transfer of lands under the tenancies' programme from over there - but we planned for the Estimates, Mr. Chairman, to continue the process of title transfer within plantation and privately-owned tenancies, through social investigations, Mr. Chairman, community meetings, advertisement, using electronic media, and also information.

Mr. Chairman, what we found is that we are not getting the public coming forward, in terms of seeking to get their conveyances, or to get title within the tenancies.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, I want to say that I have never seen so many files, in relation to tenancies that were left unsigned. I had to go through them one by one to sign those Form 1 notices. A lot of them were on the desk. Sometimes I spent a whole week trying to sign them, as the

Minister of Housing, and it is a very tedious task. If you are there for the empowerment of those who are seeking to own property, then that commitment will come readily. Basically, you would commit yourself to ensure that a particular section of the society, become property owners in this country. Sir, that is the remit of this Government.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, if I may speak again, I will also respectfully submit that in relation to the plantation tenancies, the programme has facilitated some 4 831 qualified tenants. Indeed, 72 per cent of the 6 698 lots surveyed in 332 plantation tenancies, they received their titles, under the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, Cap. 329.

Mr. Chairman, I would also submit to this House that for the 2009-2010 financial period, provision is made to facilitate the survey of lots, which were created subsequently to the original surveying being undertaken of the tenancy. I would also submit that it is my experience, Mr. Chairman, that based on past experience, activity will also include the re-surveying of lots, in cases where lot plans are missing.

Mr. Chairman, there is a list of tenancies, and the Honourable Member for St. George North will be interested in this. In fact, in his Constituency, I believe it is the Glebe, we have visited with various personnel in his area. Of course, from looking at the files, there is some eagerness for the people from the Glebe, to receive title. They were waiting very long for getting title in the area of the Glebe in St. George North. The Honourable Member would attest to that.

And so, we are currently working on that and I will assure the Honourable Member for St. George North that within the financial year, we will try to get those conveyances and those titles out to those people at the Glebe. Sir, it is all about empowerment, so that they can even journey to a bank, with those conveyances and get a mortgage to improve themselves.

Further, Mr. Chairman, if I may turn to the area of acquisitions. Again, Mr. Chairman, during the year, we are hoping that Barbadians will be able to access the \$5 per square foot lots, as outlined in the Manifesto.

Mr. Chairman, I want to report to this Chamber that it was only recently that we have completed the purchase of land at Woodbourne in St. Philip and Branchbury, St. Joseph. Indeed, I will also report that the landowners have already received compensation. Those lands fall within the \$5 per square foot programme.

Mr. Chairman, again, I want to congratulate the Members of that Committee. I am not permitted to call names, but I see some of them here. They really worked hard, many days in the hot sun, many days touring with the Town Planner, asking for permission and seeking permission from the Town Planner.

5.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, as outlined by the Honourable Prime Minister, where there are lands in existing tenancies that already have the sites and services, we will acquire the front part of them. In fact, in some cases, where the land can be used for future developments, we will take up the whole portion of land. In relation to Clifden in St. Philip and Guinea in St. John, the conveyances have been forwarded to the vendors' attorneys-at-law for signature. Mr. Chairman, it is not bear talk, it is about delivering.

Mr. Chairman, I was challenged in this Chamber to identify the areas. Mr. Chairman, I am here respectfully to identify them. Mr. Chairman, I have already said that we have purchased the land at Woodbourne in St. Philip and Branchbury, St. Joseph. Mr. Chairman, we have gone to areas like Applewhaites and Roach Village in St. George. Those areas should be familiar to the Honourable Member for St. George North. At Roach Village, St. George, there are remaining land for future development. The officer has informed me that he has met recently with the landowners and they have agreed to this programme and they are going to allow the Chief Land Surveyor to go on to these lands and then we would negotiate by private treaty. They have already received their letters of the Government's intention.

Mr. Chairman, the Chief Town Planner has always stated that the two areas that we really have to look to in terms of lands will be St. Lucy and St. Philip. Mr. Chairman, I see the former Permanent Secretary is here, but I would not mention him, but when we journeyed to St. Lucy with the Member of Parliament for St. Lucy he had us out the whole day. I was under the impression, Mr. Chairman, that he wanted to tell us to take up the whole of St. Lucy.

Mr. Chairman, I must report to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that we have started negotiations, for the area of land in Colleton in St. Lucy. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy whispered to me about half an hour ago that he wants to take me to St. Lucy to show me some other lands.

Mr. Chairman, these lands will form part of the \$5 lot programme. We are hoping that we can speed up the process. What we now have to do is to vest the lands in the National Housing Corporation, so that we can transfer those lands to Barbadians who cannot afford to purchase lands on the private market because of the cost. Mr.

Chairman, this project is geared towards first-time homeowners.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say to the Honourable Member for St. George North that we hope that we could include Dr. Hamblin's Land in St. George North, that is still there lying in the Ministry of Housing and Lands. Mr. Chairman, that is subject to the lawyers getting together and whether some amicable resolution can be met.

Mr. Chairman, on the other side of Hamblin's Land there is a housing development that was started and completed by the Honourable Member for St. George North. Mr. Chairman, on the other side, we cannot get the permission for housing developments. It is amazing that the Honourable Member for St. George North was given permission to construct a number of houses on one side and then when the National Housing Corporation moved in or sought to get permission, they were turned down. Mr. Chairman, that is land that we can use to further assist those seeking an opportunity to become landowners in this country.

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, I also want to speak relative to the National Housing Corporation. In these Estimates, there is provision for the electrical upgrade of the housing estates. Mr. Chairman, that electrical upgrade started at Bonnetts. We made that commitment to tenants that we will ensure that they occupied their units in a comfortable manner, that they would be safe and that we would try to really and truly make sure that there are no more fires, as experienced in your Constituency, Mr. Chairman, where you had a fire as a result of faulty wiring.

The Government Electrical Department has instructed that upgrades be carried out. The National Housing Corporation is now mandated to start the upgrades, which has started in Bonnetts and we hope that we could complete that programme. It would take some time, but at least we have started and we have made a commitment to make those houses safe for the tenants residing in them.

Mr. Chairman, the National Housing Corporation's 20-year programme has also started. We are seeking to ensure that those persons who live in the National Housing Corporation units for 20 or more years, and whose rents are paid up, will receive their conveyances. The challenge, Mr. Chairman, - and the Honourable Member for St. George North knows about these challenges - is that persons have made extensions to the units, and yes, they look good.

5.20 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, when I went to address your constituents, I recognised there was a lovely extension and that it fit in well but the problem was that I believe that is against the Town Planning regulations. Sir, we certainly have to grapple with that problem, we have to ensure that we meet or that we come to a position, so that those persons, some of whom have qualified, could receive their conveyances. That is one of our commitment to making persons property owners in this country.

Mr. Chairman, I would also report to you that in relation to that programme, more than 1 600 persons have qualified. In fact, we expect to have that programme completed, once we receive the cooperation of all the relevant agencies. Let me say that we have started the conveyance process at Bonnetts. Sir, I want to say that under this programme, more than 2 000 tenants have qualified for ownership and that to date 1 697 have signed the agreement, and are no longer required to pay rent. That is what we call social justice, that is what we call empowering the masses. Sir, all we need to do now is to speed up the process of delivering those conveyances to those persons.

Mr. Chairman, let me say that during this Financial Year, 2008/2009, as we know, there is a great demand for housing. Sir, that demand is so great that we have to build additional rental units. In fact, I had one of the most chilling experiences in my Constituency office, where a young mother, who is living with two daughters in a house as she describes it, without a proper floor, proper siding or proper roofing, where one of her daughters received a bite from a rat, while that child was asleep. Sir, the amazing thing is that the house is out for rent and every Friday the landlord would turn up for his rent money, yet no repairs are being done to the house.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should wind up. Your time has expired.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, I know this has already been outlined by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, the need to get landlords to provide habitable surroundings. Sir, all I can say is that we need to construct additional rental units to help solve that problem. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I want to say from the outset that we could talk on the question of housing in these Estimates, because the demand for housing is real. Sir, Honourable Members on Both Sides know too well that we live in this country and would have seen both political parties contributing, from time to time, to the housing supply to meet that demand. Sir, in our time, we were able to do a lot, as we would have thought, in providing housing solutions. We were also able to acquire land.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say from the outset that at some point in time, we all become historians, we all look back at what we would have done. Sir, when I came to office in 1994, I found a situation where the demand for housing was extreme and so, as Minister of Housing and Lands, every night I did not leave my Constituency office or my office at the National Housing Corporation until past midnight, because of the fact that I was trying to deal with those number of cases.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say from the outset that there are still a number of persons who are living on little income. Some of these persons cannot pay their rent, some persons cannot even pay the National Housing Corporation rent, which is at the lowest, may be \$30 or \$40. This is very real and on numerous occasions we have had to intervene, on the behalf of those poor persons, who live in National Housing Corporation units who cannot pay their rents.

Mr. Chairman, we know there are also a number of persons in Barbados who are finding it difficult in paying their mortgages. Some cannot find the money to buy the material to repair their homes. Sir, this situation is real and on a number of occasions the Minister of Poverty Alleviation would have to intervene.

Sir, when we go from here, whether it would be five year's or ten year's time, the Government of that day would want to know what happened in our time. Sir, the demand for housing is a continuous situation and so whatever we do today, we may have to do next year or in the next 10 years.

Mr. Chairman, I heard it said that we have spent a lot of money to upgrade the housing units and that there are still problems. Sir, I would want to say this will continue so long as the demand for housing continues.

Sir, I want to salute all those persons who have played a role in helping to alleviate the housing problems for Barbadians. Surely when you look at Barbados and compare it with other Caribbean islands, one can say that we have a fine housing stock. Sir, people come here and envy what we have, they cannot understand what we are doing. If you would look at the London Bourne Towers, there are persons there who pay rent of less than \$400 a month. There are also persons living at Flat Rock, Lammings and across Barbados, some of whom can afford to pay. Sir, the point I am making is that the quality of housing we provide for our people, is very important and that the Barbados Labour Party has done it.

Mr. Chairman, I have promised myself I will not spend my time looking at numbers, to say what we have done or what you all have done.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I can go back to tell you that within my time, I have done more lots. In fact, up to 2002, no Government before had ever done more lots than that. I can tell you that. I can go back to the Record to point out...

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House and is flying in the face of his Party Leader. Sir, everybody in this House knows that if you look at the Records when his Party Leader - and I am not talking about the Leader of the Opposition - was Minister of Housing and Lands, that Honourable gentleman brought more pieces of legislation to acquire land. Sir, I do not know if the Deputy Minister at the time is also including those acquisitions as being part of his, but it could not be true.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I have made the point so the Honourable Member for St. Lucy needs not get up on a point of order. I have said I am not going to go through a debate about the numbers, because the numbers speak for themselves. Sir, the point I want to make is that we have to provide more lots for Barbadians, low-income lots and lots that are very cheap for people to build their homes. We have to provide more middle-income homes as well and we have to provide better solutions.

Mr. Chairman, I have been at pains to point out to the Minister and point out to this House on numerous occasions that housing is more than providing lots, blocks, stone, wood and so on. Sir, housing is about providing financing for housing; housing is about providing sustainable and durable solutions, and affordable housing. Sir, I could go on and talk about these things, but I want to speak first about the Housing Planning Unit, because the Minister introduced the topic.

Mr. Chairman, the Housing Planning Unit was established several years ago in order to provide a mechanism, to look at housing solutions for poor income persons especially. The Housing Planning Unit was set up as a unit to monitor and to bring new programmes for the Government of the day, basically, to find solutions.

Mr. Chairman, in the 1980s, the Housing Planning Unit was then manned by eminent professionals so that to work within the Housing Planning Unit, you must be a professional, that is, you must be well trained. Sir, I must say that unit still continues to provide wonderful ideas and good ideas for the Government. Sir, I have heard about a new concept, which the Minister has brought and they call it the "rent-to-own concept".

Mr. Chairman, I have made the point before that you could go back to the 1960s and talk about a new concept in housing. You could go back to the 1960s and talk about where persons used to have what is called “sweat equity” in those days, where persons would provide the labour and the Government would provide materials. Sir, that is a concept that was developed. We also developed in the 1980s, the plantation tenancies programme, which we thought was a revolutionary piece of legislation in order to provide land for people, because we recognise, and the Minister pointed out, that when you get a title in your hands, you can go to the bank, get money to build a home and own something.

We felt in the 1980s that in order to bring people out of poverty that the title to your property is important. Sir, the Minister and Government can continue to throw money at people and give welfare, but that does not move people out of poverty.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that to alleviate poverty, you have to give people opportunity to work...

His Excellency Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I cannot accuse the Honourable Member of blasphemy but the Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I do not understand, but the Honourable Member for St. Lucy will have his chance to speak. Sir, all I am saying is that the provision to give people land and the ability to own property, helps them to move above poverty.

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

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I would like to forgive the Honourable Member for St. Lucy because he is being contentious where there is no contention. All I am saying is that we have to be able to provide these house spots and provide property for people. Sir, we were able to provide houses and lots for persons and not only lots for persons, but we were able to provide lots at a rate that the poorest of the poor could afford.

Mr. Chairman, the 10 cents per square foot lots in the plantation tenancy helped to move persons above the poverty line. If you look at what has happened in St. John and in St. George with the tenancies, you will see that persons have been able to move themselves above the poverty line where they could not before. This happened all across Barbados, and Sir, the \$2.50 per square foot land also helped.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying that it is the Planning Unit that monitors these things. It is the Housing Planning Unit that is responsible for the monitoring of these things.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I am also saying that when you look at what is happening in housing today, I could argue that there is a need to provide more resources for the Ministry of Housing. There is a need for institutional strengthening at the National Housing Corporation. In fact, we recognised this several years ago when we conceptualised it, and went to the IADB for funding when funding was not available to countries like Barbados. We had graduated from the IADB funding, but we were able to convince the IADB that we wanted US\$80 million to help upgrade neighbourhoods across Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I said to the Minister in one of my first speeches in here that you have to provide institutional strengthening for the National Housing Corporation, because the National Housing Corporation is the entity that helps to deliver and monitor what is happening in housing in Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, we have started this and I would like to see more work done on the Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme of the National Housing Corporation. Sir, I understand the various concepts, because one of the things that could happen to a Ministry is that you could have a lot of ideas, but you may only be able to implement one or two good ideas at a time.

Mr. Chairman, we will have to look carefully at what is being offered and how we are going to take up the funding from the IADB, and what funding you would be putting in place. Sir, in these Estimates, I have seen Government put funding of \$6 million in that unit for the IADB Programme. I would like to discuss this within the framework, not really of criticism, but of trying to get to the bottom of it, because we want to see Cat's Castle, Allan View, Greenfield and Garden Land started and a pilot project that was started several years ago. We want to see these things implemented.

5.40 p.m.

If we do not start now it will not get there.

I will return as time permits.

Thank you.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am very happy to see new wine in old wine skin. It would appear to me on hearing the Honourable Member for St. George North, no one of us who would have been in Opposition would believe this is the same Honourable Member, the former Minister of Housing, whom we tried to convert and clashed with every Tuesday. It is clear to me that evening that he is on the road to Damascus and he has seen the light.

Sir, too often in this Honourable House we have tried to educate the Honourable Member about the social and cultural needs of Barbadians, pointing out to him that the housing policy they practiced, was destroying all the cultural fabric of Barbadians. I am now hearing the Honourable Member this evening admitting that he agrees with that policy.

I said on many occasions in this House - and I must admit one thing, it would be dishonest of me if I did not admit it.

The Honourable Member for St. George North never agreed to any houses being built at Mount Poyer. I must say that for him. Sir, when he saw the houses at Mount Poyer he asked what madness is this. He said to me that they did not agree with this. We agreed that there should have been lots. So it tells me that under the old scheme, and I am talking about Mount Poyer Stage 1 and not Stage 2, the Honourable Member for St. George North never agreed with houses being built there, but he was not man enough, as the Cabinet Minister in the Ministry of Public Works at the time, to tell the previous Minister that the Honourable Member was wrong.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. As I said from the outset, we can all be historians. When my time is past, I go on.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: What is your point of order?

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: The point is, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. First of all, I never told him whether I agreed or disagreed, because the Minister of Housing has the authority, and the power, to change the programme. The Cabinet of Barbados can change the programme. Even if in my time I had set out a policy for housing or lots, the new Government can decide to change it, as has happened. Sir, Constant and Fair View have been changed. A lot of changes have been made. What am I going to do? Come back and be a historian? They have changed.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I apologise to the House for everything I said about the Honourable Member before, because it is clear to me that he now carries a double standard. When the Honourable Member can get up and tell me that he never said that to me, while driving through Mount Poyer and Harrises to a road in Spring Garden, when he told me that he did not know the roads in St. Lucy were so bad. I cannot believe that the Honourable Member could say anything to me after today that I would believe.

Sir, the point I want to make is, that the National Housing Corporation, and I want to repeat it, I never said it in this session, but I said it in three other sessions, has to understand that its mandate is to deliver house spots to the people of Barbados. Poor people cannot afford to buy houses. If you understand the cultural and social setup of the masses, you will understand that whenever you go into a district and you build a house, you are creating enemies for the person that you are selling that house to. Let me explain.

Sir, there are masons, plumbers, carpenters and labourers living in those districts who can help build those houses. When you sell CAN Programme to that district and that programme has to be serviced, it creates problems for the person owning the house. The first thing the artisan says is, when you had the money to build the house you did not come to me and now you have your minor jobs you want me to do it. That is a very serious point.

There are many people living in Barbados today with minor plumbing, tiling, masonry and carpentry problems and they cannot get them done, because when they had, according to the artisan, the big money, they went to contractors, but now they are turning to them to do the minor jobs. That is a serious social problem.

If we do not correct that, we are going to create slums in this country. The truth is, the contractors do not return to do minor jobs. I have said this before to this Honourable House and I want to thank the Prime Minister for that. He has already said to the Minister of Housing, not St. John or St. Lucy. If he wants them in St. Philip, he can carry them to St. Philip, but not St. John or St. Lucy. We have already fought in this House for house lots and we want house lots.

Sir, I can understand the position of the MPs for St. Michael. They need completed houses, but in rural Barbados you cannot come and do the same things that you can in certain areas of Barbados, like urban, because the conditions are different.

Sir, why should I, as a sitting Member of Government, use the people of Checker Hall to build a house for me, and then tell poor people that they should get

a contractor? It would be dishonest of me. I am saying that the same way I can use my friends to build my house, poor people should save some money for that purpose too. We have to stop looking after contractors and others around about Election time. That is the problem in this Honourable House.

Sir, we get in here and talk about social policies looking after poor people, but most housing projects previously were predicated on that 5-year term. I am saying that is not for poor people. We have to look to deliver the lowest cost to those persons, in order for them to share in the national cake of this country. That is why I congratulate the housing policy of this Government, and I am prepared to stand by it as is stated now. I cannot promise that if the Minister gets up one day and decides that he wants 17 housing units to be built in St. Lucy, I would make this same statement because I have constituents to represent. I know who are the masons, plumbers and the other artisans in St. Lucy and they too must get work.

I am not in here to represent the interest of the 'too few' and I cannot curse that practise while I was Over There and then come Over Here to sing a different tune. That is not how I practise my politics. That is why I want to thank the Minister of Housing for living up to those standards so far. Sir, I need not warn him because the Minister understands well, what was said to him by the Prime Minister and what he heard while he was in Opposition. I am saying that the aim of this Government, is not only to deliver house spots at a reasonable price or subsidised price, but also to create opportunities for the houses to be delivered at the lowest cost.

Sir, if the Minister of Housing listens to this, not only will he be the most successful Minister of Housing now, but no other Minister will be able to compete with him. All will be done based on cash flow. The sale of land turns over money quickly and can be used to help people. If you attempt to go into joint ventures, you are just creating problems for the National Housing Corporation. The record is there to show it. This Honourable House went against my advice, when they agreed to the joint projects. I told them they could not deliver the houses at the prices quoted, rather, they could not be a liability for the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, whenever you look at the record of the National Housing Corporation, you will see that those joint venture projects created more problems for the National Housing Corporation than if they had listened to me previously. Sir, it is rather strange that whenever the Barbados Labour Party is in power, you have this problem.

In 1994, when I sat on the Board of the National Housing Corporation, you would not believe that the Government of Barbados used to give them the land, which

they turned over to private contractors, who sold the land to poor people, but we had to change that. Now it is your turn, we will have to change that again, because this Government is the one with the social side and that Government was the Government for the 'too few'. As long as I am in this Honourable House I will look after the interest of the masses in this country.

5.50 p.m.

This Government is the social side Government and that Government is the Government for the 'too few.' As long as I am in this House, Sir, I have to look after the interest of the masses of people in this country. I know there are areas that will have to get terrace units. I have no problem of you getting terrace units in your Constituency, but I do not want to deprive you of any terrace units Sir, because I do not want any. I want house spots for my people.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Now, I hear the Government which was promoting the terrace units, saying they do not want one. But I want the house spots and I will show the people how to get house spots and how to get a cheap house. Not only that, I will show them how they could come together and help each other. But if you, Sir, go and sell a completed unit, all that will happen is that you will find yourself having a house that you have to replace as soon as you have purchased it Sir. We saw it in Apes Hill. We saw some of the problem even in Mount Poyer.

Sir, about these houses, I see here that between 1998 and 2003, that the Honourable Member for St. George has the record in his Cabinet for delivering the most housing solutions. But I also saw that at Bakers, the Honourable Member is responsible for delivering 13 match boxes.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I have never built a match box, and the Government has never built a match box. The National Housing Corporation has standards and the National Housing Corporation is still building the same houses they were building before. Because I see the same sized houses built at Constant, St. George and I am not quarrelling.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, if you go to the records of this House, you would recognise that when these houses were built at Bakers, I took a measurement of the houses at Bakers, and I went to the first slave hut I found, and when I measured the slave hut, the slave hut was bigger than the houses at Bakers.

Asides.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Thank you, Sir.

You all could joke about this but I am serious, Sir,

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The same size houses were built at Bakers, West Terrace, Oxnard and the people expand the homes. The same size houses are being built at Constant in St. George.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, if that is true, when the people at West Terrace got their houses, I never heard them complain that when they brought in a fridge, bed, refrigerator or even a chair that they had to take down the partition to get them inside. But I can tell you Sir, that they unfaired the people at Bakers.

I believe Sir, that the cost of pulling down the partition to get in the equipment, should have been refunded to those persons by National Housing Corporation. Sir, at least if you are delivering a House to a person, you should allow them to get in a bed.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for the City.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, as we debate this Head on housing, and to agree totally with the Honourable Member, as he introduced this Head, when he pointed out to this Honourable Chamber that he would have found scores, perhaps, even a few hundreds of Form 1 notices, left unsigned, by the Barbados Labour Party Ministers of Housing. Sir, I can substantiate this position.

Mr. Chairman, this Honourable Member has been called on more than one occasion to act as the Minister of Housing and in my approach, that when I am called upon to act, I actually occupy the offices of the substantive Minister. I can say that as I acted as the Minister of Housing, I saw with my own eyes, Mr. Chairman, these scores of Form 1 notices, many coming from the Urban Development Commission, waiting for the Minister. By law the Minister of Housing has to sign off on these.

The negligence of the Barbados Labour Party was appalling, because these are people who, in the Urban Development Commission Transfer of Title Programme where tenancies are Rivets Land in the Nelson Street area in Bridgetown or other parts of urban Barbados, where people have been renting from the private sector, and the

Government came in, through the Urban Development Commission, and give them concessionary rates that they could own the land on which their houses stood.

Here it was that the Barbados Labour Party Government cared little about these people, and due to bureaucratic bungling and negligence, these scores of Form 1 notices were left somewhere within the Ministry of Housing that the Barbados Labour Party Ministers refused to sign these notices to carry forward the process, in a timely fashion. Mr. Chairman, who suffered as a result? The poor people of Bridgetown and other parts of urban Barbados. Shame on the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, I congratulate the substantive Minister for taking the bull by the horns and sacrificing time, to ensure that these notices are properly signed off on. Therefore, this Government will invite the residents in these urban tenancies, to note that they will be getting access to purchase their lots, as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Chairman, I am surprised to hear the Honourable Member for St. George North trying to ridicule the Honourable Member for St. Lucy about the match box houses, that the Barbados Labour Party built.

I again, Mr. Chairman, can agree with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy because in the City of Bridgetown, you know that under the Barbados Labour Party Government, residents of Church Village, next to the Central Bank, were relocated to Lower Burney, and you and I saw, Mr. Chairman, for ourselves in the media, newspapers and television, these replacement houses at Lower Burney being woefully inadequate.

Sir, the residents from Church Village did not have enough room to put their living room suite or dinette set in the replacement houses. The furniture had fitted comfortably in their original houses at Church Village. They got no sympathy from the then MP and the Barbados Labour Party. The residents were accused of buying new furniture. Sir, I visited their homes, saw these residents and I know they were not telling lies. Their replacement houses were supposed to be no smaller than their original houses.

Mr. Chairman, this Honourable Member ventured up to Lower Burney and saw these replacement houses. Yes, the living room, dining room area was one area and the resident had to choose, because if they put their living room suite, the dining room suite could not fit or vice versa.

Mr. Chairman, inadequate ventilation was found there. In some instances, the toilet was situated right next to the kitchen. Sir, can you imagine this in this new millennium.

Mr. Chairman, when you looked at those replacement houses, you also saw a situation in which - I remember a resident showed me that when they opened the fridge it could not open completely. The kitchen was so narrow that the fridge door would knock onto the stove. Could you image that? Mr. Chairman, would you not call that a match box?

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Lord, have mercy. Anything smaller would be called an ant box, not a match box.

Mr. Chairman, it goes further. I remember the Honourable Member for St. George North talking a lot about the Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, but the Democratic Labour Party Government had to come and rescue that programme.

Sir, for years, the Barbados Labour Party promised the people in Green Field and Cats Castle in Bridgetown that their neighbourhoods would be upgraded and those residents were so fed up, they lost total faith in the ability of the Barbados Labour Party Government to deliver, because they were hearing about that for donkey years, and nothing happened under the Barbados Labour Party Government, to the extent that they were convinced otherwise.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, this Honourable Member, even before being elected to this Honourable Chamber, while the Barbados Labour Party Government was in office, attended those town hall meetings in relation to the housing and neighbourhood upgrading programmes in the yard at the National Housing Corporation, at St. Mary's School and at the Salvation Army Church at Reeds Street.

Mr. Chairman, in some of those cases, the Press were kept out. It was top secret. You had to be a resident to get in. Sir, your humble servant actually lives in the Cats Castle area, so they could not keep me out. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party Government Member of Parliament did not even grace the residents with her presence at those town hall meetings. In some instances, junior civil servants had to manage those meetings. Mr. Chairman, while at those town hall meetings, this Honourable Member heard with his own his ears.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Do not mind the little heckling, that would not deter me from making the point.

Mr. Chairman, this Honourable Member heard with his own ears, this is no gossip or rumour, from those

officials at those town hall meetings in relation to the housing and neighborhood upgrading programme, that the then Barbados Labour Party Government was about to change the Town and Country Planning Act, to enable the Barbados Labour Party Government to legally build smaller than the current standard minimum houses that the National Housing Corporation could build by Law. Do you understand that, Mr. Chairman? The intent was there by the Barbados Labour Party to squeeze the people of the City and urban areas in Barbados into matchboxes. That was the approach of the Barbados Labour Party Government.

Mr. Chairman, this Democratic Labour Party Government put an end to that and I congratulated the Honourable Member for St. Philip North when he said that no way will the working class people of Barbados be treated in such an undignified way.

Mr. Chairman, I want to speak about the housing and neighbouring upgrading programme. As I said, this Democratic Labour Party Government has rescued it.

Mr. Chairman, you have heard the Minister publicly outlining that within this programme, thousands of dollars in subsidies would be available to first-time homeowners and persons who may not have full funding. The Government would be able to match them with thousands of dollars in subsidies all under this housing and neighbourhood upgrading programme.

Mr. Chairman, within days of assuming office, the Honourable Minister went with Members of Parliament like the Speaker and your humble servant, to some of the areas earmarked for the neighbourhood upgrading programme. This would be proper upgrading where roads would be widened, drainage improved and utilities put in place, so that emergency vehicles, be they fire trucks or ambulances, can access these peoples' homes. People with pit toilets will also be able to get water-borne toilets and bath facilities. We will upgrade the working class areas of Barbados. This would come to a great reality under this Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Chairman, to further demonstrate the sluggish approach of the Barbados Labour Party regime in relation to this programme, as part of the execution of this project, the residents in Greenfield and Cat's Castle would have had to be relocated temporarily so as to enable the upgrade of their neighbourhood to be done.

Mr. Chairman, yes, the area identified by the Barbados Labour Party Government for the temporary housing of these residents, was none other than the Country Park Towers. Mr. Chairman, you and I know that up to the time when the Barbados Labour Party Government left office, they left Country Park Towers with a lot of steel that was rusting. They had abandoned that project.

Mr. Chairman, clearly, if the temporary accommodation for these persons in Cats Castle and Greenfield was abandoned by the Barbados Labour Party, then you know that donkey years more would have elapsed before the Barbados Labour Party Government would have come around to relocating those persons and upgrading their neighbourhood.

Mr. Chairman, it is the Democratic Labour Party Government, with the Honourable Member for St. Philip North as Minister of Housing and Lands, who grabbed hold of Country Park Towers. That project is now well underway. Therefore, the Honourable Member for St. George North should humble himself and really ask the residents of Barbados for forgiveness for the wanton neglect of the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Chairman, in talking about housing for working class people, I remember that when the residents in Emmerton complained about the stench down there, the Barbados Labour Party Government was slothful in terms of addressing their urgent needs.

I remember the then Member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown at a town hall meeting at the Emmerton Community Centre, telling the residents that at long last she was able to finally get the then Minister of Housing and Lands, the former Member of Parliament for St. James South, down there. It took her a long time before she was able to get her parliamentary colleague, the Minister of Housing and Lands at the time, to come and talk to those residents of the City.

Mr. Chairman, while being seriously spoken to by those residents of Emmerton, the then Minister of Housing and Lands, the former Member of Parliament for St. James South told the residents - again I heard it with my own ears, this is not second hand - that the Barbados Labour Party Government was going to build a combination of wood and wall houses at Barbarees Hill.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable Member had to strongly condemn that action and called upon the Barbados Labour Party Government to build concrete replacement houses. Mr. Chairman, I am very happy that we were able to stand firm, and therefore, the Democratic Labour Party can be attributed to ensuring that those persons did not get the bumble bees and the other silly matchbox houses that the then Barbados Labour Party Government paraded in the National Housing Corporation yard.

Mr. Chairman, this is my personal view. I believe that since Barbados is a hurricane prone area, earthquake prone these days, that we should seriously, as a country in this new era, not encourage the National Housing Corporation to build wooden houses. Mr. Chairman, I know the cost is a concern, but with the rent-to-own

concept now, it is realistic for working class people over time to own their own homes where the rent paid can now go towards mortgage payment.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that this is the modern way to go in terms of fire security. Senior officials agreed with my concerns that we need to get into totally wall housing. Wooden housing is a fire hazard. I have seen green heart houses rotting, so do not tell me, Mr. Chairman, that they would not rot. Furthermore, I have noticed that we have some thin low cost siding which is made of a combination of mesh, metal and concrete that would be more durable and definitely fire proof, so this is the way, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I may come back on another occasion. In winding up, I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip North as he has publicly indicated that Mason Hall Street, where currently there is a cleaning firm, will be the site of the Democratic Labour Party building high-rise housing units to service the poor people of the City, who have been abandoned by the Barbados Labour Party Government over the years.

Mr. Chairman, I have identified a number of other areas within Bridgetown which I would be pressing for further housing developments, be they duplex or high-rise units.

I thank you.

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

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, I know that it is late in the afternoon and we do not have a lot of time based on our present plans, but I just want to intervene because I notice that my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew is in his seat and for the first time since I have been in this House I actually was a bit angry by someone's presentation. That is with respect to the presentation yesterday with respect to our accomplishments to date in housing.

Mr. Chairman, on my way home last night I thought I would drive through a bit of St. Philip, St. Philip South in particular, to see the accomplishments or the lack thereof of the Barbados Labour Party in St. Philip and St. Philip South.

6.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, according to my records, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew came to this Honourable House in 1994. He was Minister of Housing for four years. He was then fired, thankfully, in 2000, and between March 2000 and February 2008, he said nothing in this Honourable Chamber and paid little or no attention to

the affairs of the people of Barbados, particularly to housing. Therefore, I would forgive the Honourable Member if he made certain errors yesterday afternoon but he said it so convincingly, that I thought I would use this opportunity to correct some of his errors, lest the people of Barbados go away believing that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, while as Minister of Housing, had provided this number of solutions.

Mr. Chairman, my information is that under the stewardship of the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, as Minister of Housing, for four years there were 127 houses built by the National Housing Corporation. Sir, according to my mathematics, that translates to about 35 houses per year.

Asides.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew criticises our present Minister who has built 44 houses in my Constituency in Work Hall, in less than one year.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, I did not want to interrupt the Honourable Member, because obviously the afternoon is late, and I believe that he is short of material and obviously would like to make an impression. Sir, in the first place, the Honourable Member said that I entered this House in 1994. Sir, it was in 1991. Sir, in terms of the houses built and the housing solutions, because housing solution encompasses a lot of things, during the period I was Minister of Housing...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member...

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: No, I have to correct...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: No.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: He said there were three thousand...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, hold on. You cannot say that because I am speaking. Now, I want you to get to your point of order very quickly and to the point, and I do not think you are doing that. So please get to the point so that we can move on.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Yes, but on my point of order, I speak slowly, so I cannot get to the point.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: No, I want you go get to your point of order.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: No, you cannot tell me to get to it quickly, I have to...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, hold on.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: With respect, I have to speak. You cannot make me speak fast.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, if the Chair says to you to get to your point succinctly and quickly, you cannot say to the Chair that it cannot say that. The Chair can say that to you and if you do not want to, we can move on, so you choose what you want to do. I am saying to you, get to the point succinctly, so that we can move on. My position on points of orders is that I am not going to sit here in the Chair and allow Honourable Members, and I have said it on Both Sides, to proceed on a speech. I am asking you to proceed to your point succinctly or I shall move on without your point of order.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, you do what you have to do, but I am not going to be hurried up. I am not going to be hurried up.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I am asking you then to take your seat.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: I am not going to be hurried up. You could ask me to take my seat and I will take my seat if that is what you are asking me.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Philip South, please proceed.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, is this the manner in which you are conducting or want to conduct your position in this House?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I am asking you to take your seat. I have ruled, take your seat.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: You have ruled.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Is this the way how you want to conduct? Is this a kangaroo court?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Philip South, please proceed.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Mr. Chairman, my point was, I never said anything about housing solutions. I said during the tenure of the Honourable Member for St. Andrew there were 127 houses constructed.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. There were 3 000 housing solutions

during my tenure and not 163. The Honourable Member was not in the island when I was an Honourable Member.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, obviously there is a difference between housing solutions and houses, because I have heard Honourable Members in here describing housing solutions as when they have added a toilet, et cetera. I am speaking about houses and I am saying that according to my information, 127 houses were constructed.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please refer to the Chair.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry. I am a bit emotional. As I said, I am a bit angry about the misinformation yesterday. Mr. Chairman, in any event, the record of the Barbados Labour Party in St. Philip is not an admirable one. It is a disgraceful record. Sir, I am advised they bragged, for example, at Rices, and I am glad to see the Honourable Member for St. Michael South is walking in, because I am advised that when the Honourable Member represented the people of St. Philip, he had asked the Honourable Member for St. Andrew to develop Rices for housing for the people of St. Philip and the Honourable Member for St. Andrew had said, no. The Honourable Member said no, he will not do it. He said he will not do any favours for the people of the Democratic Labour Party, the people of St. Philip.

Mr. Speaker, we do not believe in placing people in houses because they are constituents of the Barbados Labour Party or constituents of the Democratic Labour Party. We believe they are the people of Barbados as a whole. Sir, the record of the Barbados Labour Party, in terms of housing in St. Philip, is a disgraceful one.

Mr. Chairman, I go further. As I said, I drove around trying to find houses. I found another ten in Marchfield. Sir, five of these were done by the busiest Minister of Housing, one Henrietta Thompson, who incidentally only did 95 houses during her tenure as Minister of Housing, the other five were done under the last Minister of Housing and Lands, a Minister Farley. Sir, in all, I found 37 houses in St. Philip that would have been constructed in 14 years during the Barbados Labour Party tenure. Sir, that is why I was angry yesterday, I was angry because our Minister is being criticised for doing 247 solutions in such a short space of time.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading this

Honourable House. Sir, the record on Rices will show that prior to 1993, the Democratic Labour Party charged economic rent at Rices. Sir, economic rent meant \$3 per square foot. It was this Barbados Labour Party that charged the people \$2.50 per square foot at Rices. Sir, that is a fact.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please proceed.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, so that we are clear, I am only speaking about the construction of houses for the people of St. Philip, who I love dearly. Sir, I repeat my point because the Other Side has identified that they must discredit the Minister of Housing and Lands. Sir, his performance to date cannot be validly criticised, so by misinformation and otherwise, they have decided that he must be taken down. Therefore, I thought I would spend a few minutes this afternoon in putting the record straight, based on facts and based on evidence that has been given to me. Sir, this is evidence which I am sure my friend from St. George North has.

Mr. Chairman, if I can give my friend, the Honourable Member for St. George North some credit, I would have to say that under his tenure, land was acquired at Work Hall in 2002, but that between 2002 and 2008, not one house was built. Therefore, when I hear them talking about their housing solutions and how much land they would have acquired, the people of Barbados wanted land or houses and they gave neither. Sir, that is the part that riles me most. They gave neither. If they had said to me, here is the solution that they had given, I would have been a happy man today. Sir, that is why the need for housing is and remains so important today.

Mr. Chairman, I feel very emotional and attached to this because I am very close to the work the Minister is doing and I want to give him as much encouragement as possible. I would also like to encourage the Honourable Members on the Other Side to give "Jack" his jacket, and I am giving the Minister his jacket for providing housing solutions to the people of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I want to make a number of other points with respect to St. Philip, because I am eager to ensure that housing solutions are provided for the people of St. Philip. Sir, I know I have said it in the past, but I want to say it again, many of the people who come to see me cannot afford housing solutions, and unlike the Honourable Members on the Other Side, who said they are not interested in terrace units, I want housing solutions for the people in St. Philip South.

6.20 p.m.

I want to encourage the Minister to utilise the lands at Rices to provide rent-to-own solutions, so that some of

the people who come to see me, that I could look them in the eyes and say to them that we will take care of them. Sir, I want to encourage and I want to keep on keeping on, as the people would say, and provide solutions for our people.

Mr. Speaker, it is late and I know some of us want to run to other places, but I want to make one final point. Sir, I also want to encourage him to ensure that whenever solutions are being done in St. Philip South, that artisans, like my friend from St. Lucy would say, plumbers, masons, carpenters and labours, have a chance to earn a living. I am consistent in urging us not to be like the other side and to ensure that more Barbadians share in the pie. It makes no sense providing housing solutions and the same old contractors of yesteryear are the ones we are using. I want to see a new cadre of builders, of workmen, not the same-oh, same-oh from the past, and see their skills utilised so that we could have new millionaires in this country.

Sir, I am not afraid to say that because they created millionaires, they awarded contracts to people who had no history and who, as a result of which, now the Government of Barbados owes them \$50 million. That is what the Honourable Member for St. Andrew did. I am not saying he did wrong. I am saying that we must also give people a chance.

Mr. Chairman, I will have a chance to speak again. I thank you.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Chairman, I think it would have been remiss of me not to have entered this debate, at least, if only to place on record my appreciation for the outstanding work done by my colleague, the Honourable Minister of Housing. Sir, this is not to make him larger than life, because the reality is, all that we have heard today, over the past days, and indeed, over the last year about the failings of the Barbados Labour Party Government in relation to housing in this country, even if the Honourable Member had only built ten houses, he would really have been seen like Superman.

Sir, I encourage him to take a bow because he has really taken this major social issue in Barbados by the scruff of the neck and is putting in all his the energy. Sir, not only the energy, he is not only talking the talk, the Honourable Member is walking the walk.

Mr. Chairman, it is important, because I have said in this Honourable House before, as I will say again that, in my view, the biggest social issue facing Barbados and Barbadians today is the issue of housing, access to housing, ownership of housing and the provision of housing solutions. This is a big fancy term that somebody came up

with a few years ago, "housing solution", and it was bandied about all over the place. Let us put it in simple language that you would hear in Black Rock. Sir, people want a house to live in or they want a spot to put up something and to do so in a manner that provides them with shelter.

Mr. Chairman, it has to be the responsibility of any responsible Government to provide food, clothing and shelter, and Sir, we are trying our best to provide food. We all know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central would love that we do not touch any piece of agricultural land enough and we respect his view on that because we have to provide food. We have to bring down the food import bill, which I believe is somewhere in the vicinity of \$400 million, and Sir, it is too high. We are trying to provide clothing even though quite a bit of it is imported, but somewhere along the line, Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have dropped the ball.

Mr. Chairman, I say "we" because we take collective responsibility for it, even though we know where a large part of that responsibility should go. Sir, that notwithstanding, we all, as leaders in this country and persons provided with the opportunity of carving out a pathway to progress for our people, have dropped the ball.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Chairman, I could say a better life for people, but when I say that, the Democratic Labour Party means all people in Barbados, but when the Barbados Labour Party says our people, Sir, they mean a particular type.

Sir, the point is that we have to find innovative ways. The Honourable Member's task is made even more difficult in the context of a global economic recession in which we have heard that Barbados is likely to be impacted upon, revenues are likely to be sluggish, and therefore, we have to consider that we have lost a golden opportunity when over the last 14 years, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South so eloquently put it, with, as they like to say and brag about, two-thirds majority, throughout the three terms, more money in Value-Added Tax and other revenues than ever in the history of Barbados and today, we could be faced with this major problem that I believe, unless we tackle with some level of deliberation and seriousness, will cause potential social unrest and dis-cohesion in this society of ours. Therefore, it behooves all of us to buckle down to the task of identifying solutions, genuine solutions that help all categories across the economic strata and social stratification of Barbados as far as providing housing is concerned.

When we speak about the lower middle class or the upper middle-class, you have to make financing available

to those who could afford to go to financial institutions. For those who cannot, the Minister has brought an innovative concept. It is not an original concept because there are other countries in the Caribbean that have done it, but when we look in the Social Policy Committee of the Cabinet, at the rent-to-own concept, the first thing that came to the mind of all the Members of that Committee, was why it was not done before. It seems logical and it seems so obvious, that you would try to move people out of their landless existence and their propertyless existence into one into which they could own, as we would say proverbially, a piece of the rock, and that the Minister has now been able to properly articulate and define how that policy will work, is a tribute, not only to his intellectual agility, but certainly to the commitment of the Democratic Labour Party to be a leader in social development in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, if there is nothing else that we can be known for as a Government, whenever our time comes to leave office, it has to be, in my view, that we have been able to make a major dent in this problem. Sir, when you talk about the thousands of applications, there may be 17 000, 18 000 or 20 000. God only knows how many applications there are, but people come to me on a weekly basis asking

6.30 p.m.

for a house, and when you ask them how long they applied at the National Housing Corporation, some people can tell you 15 or 20 years. It is unbelievable. They have gone back and up-dated and re-updated and yet, no visible hand of Government has been able to touch those persons. We need to correct that issue. We are not going to do it in a year. This is a matter that has to be done over time, but we have to desegregate and disaggregate that lot of persons, that list, to ensure that we identify those persons in most critical need and target them with almost clinical precision. Those persons we are going to have to go in and treat to.

Sir, I will tell you a lot of those persons are single females with children and some of them with grandparents.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. Sinckler: You ever heard about delayed telepathy?

Sir, a lot of females who have young children, I see them in my Constituency, who need a helping hand because we expose them by our action or inaction to uncomfortable situations where they have to be, as we would say in Barbadian parlance, 'scotching' at somebody's place, and sometimes it is even family Members who want them out of the house more than if it were a stranger. Therefore we have to look at it.

Sir, we have to segregate that particular element of our population and ensure that those females, because many of them do not have partners or consistent partners with which they can combine salaries, to reach the level of going to a bank and getting a mortgage, so we have to find them. Sir, if we need to build more terrace units - and somebody advised the last Government that they should not build terrace units. I do not know who did it. Sir, I am saying that it seemed as though that was the case, because there was a deceleration in the amount of terrace units that were being built.

Sir, we are a small land challenged society, land is scarce. Everybody in Barbados cannot possibly own a plot of land. Therefore, we have to find a way to build and go up to ensure we can accommodate people in this society. I was very disappointed to know that we did not press the accelerator because that is a segment of the population that needs to be treated.

Sir, in the Urban Development Commission, a lot of that pressure that the National Housing Corporation has not been able to handle has now fallen into the Urban Development Commission, and the Commission has literally been struggling. That is why these Estimates increased the amount for the Urban Development Commission and Rural Development Commission.

I will tell you an interesting story about the Rural Development Commission. The last Government, for its best purposes and known only to them, took a decision to eliminate stock, bring to an end, the Housing Repair and Replacement Programme in the Rural Development Commission. I cannot find any logical reasoning for why it was done. Then we had a backlog of cases and the Commissioner's employees had to go into the Capital Account, the roads account, to take money out to at least try to meet the burgeoning demand that was being placed on the Rural Development Commission. This is a fact.

Indeed, my first act as Minister of the Rural Development Commission.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I just want to bring you back to this.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I am talking about housing.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: No. We are dealing with National Housing Corporation, not Rural Development Commission. I do not want to open the debate to the Rural Development Commission.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Sir, the linkage here is that, the pressure placed on National Housing Corporation that they could not handle has ended in the Urban Development Commission and Rural Development Commission. That is

the point I am making. If the National Housing Corporation was building the houses, you would have that load on the Commission, because the Commission is there to help people out of poverty. What we are having now is, people turning up asking for houses. That is what we are talking about. Sir, the demand is great and the supply in terms of National Housing Corporation became constricted for whatever reason. We have to correct that matter and we have to do so expeditiously.

The other point I want to make in relation to the National Housing Corporation, and the staff is here, and I want to congratulate them on the work they are doing. I am going to congratulate them before I criticise them.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, you cannot do that. It is not allowed in the rules.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I want to acknowledge the work of the staff of the National Housing Corporation. They have been doing a reasonably good job in difficult circumstances.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes to wind up.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: They have had to suffer through some bad Ministers in the last Government. That alone would put a damper on anybody.

The point is, we have to take a very serious look at how the National Housing Corporation is functioning. I know the Minister has promised a restructuring of the Corporation. It needs restructuring. It needs strengthening. It needs redirecting. In other words, as the Minister has repeatedly said, the National Housing Corporation needs to return to its original mandate of housing Barbadians. All of this business about office complexes...

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I am not talking about Al Barrack. The Honourable Member who just left built an office complex on a cave. I have said I do not want to be in there when it comes down. The point is, National Housing Corporation is under pressure and we need to help it. We need to give it the resources to work and those resources have to go towards ensuring that we maintain high levels of maintenance.

I represent a Constituency with four housing areas. As you do, you represent a Constituency with housing areas too, and part of the problem is that the level of maintenance - and you would have experienced it, the complaints about the Corporation not being able to maintain. That has to do with resources. So we have to find a way to deal with all those resources that were diverted to

things other than housing. The Minister has given us the assurance, and we take the Minister at his word, that we will find a way to strengthen National Housing Corporation's maintenance department so that they can continue to maintain the estates that exist within their remit, and that is being done. The electrical upgrade has started. I need it badly in my area, particularly in The Farm where you have a lot of problems with wiring, old wiring from the 1960s, people having washing machines and all kinds of big equipment that cannot fit with that.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should wind up now.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: I return to this matter because I think it is important that we take this debate about housing seriously. It is going to cause us too much down the road if we do not fix the problem now, and the Democratic Labour Party is determined through its policies to treat to every segment of the population, to ensure we can provide that basic thing that all Governments must provide, food, shelter and housing.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

6.40 p.m.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be suspended until Monday, March 23, 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Let me inform the Honourable Members that when the House is on suspension, we start on time. There is no grace period. The rules of this House will be invoked.

The question that the House be now suspended until Monday, March 23, 2009 at 10.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

Thank you.

6.42 p.m.

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EASTMOND, Mr. R. C. (St. James North)
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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

Q1. Opening. The source opens without the convening sentence (Pursuant to the adjournment ... met at ...). The date is taken from the heading of the source.

Q2. Order No. 11, Mr. D. D. Marshall and Hon. F. J. Stuart, take-slips 3:00-3.10 p.m.. The source carries two reporters' versions of the same passage, from the end of Mr. D. D. Marshall's speech (international business, the Scotland District, the Manifesto) to the opening of Hon. F. J. Stuart's speech, each followed by a take-slip of 3.10 p.m. The second version, which runs on into the rest of Hon. F. J. Stuart's speech, is printed and the first (about 1,230 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q3. Committee of Supply, Head 38, take-slip 5.00 p.m.. Hon. M. A. Lashley's sentence on the plans for the Housing Planning Unit is typed on both sides of the 5.00 p.m. take-slip; the shorter first copy (about 25 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q4. Order No. 11. The heading gives only 'ORDER No. 11 (RESUMED)' without the title of the Bill; the debate is the second reading of the Appropriation Bill on the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2009-2010. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Committee of Supply, Head 38. The Member for St. Philip North is called under the label 'Mr. S. A. LASHLEY' (the Chairman of Committees) rather than 'Mr. CHAIRMAN'. No question on Head 38 is recorded before the suspension, which is moved to 'Mr. Speaker' while the House is in Committee and recorded as carried out by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Suspension. The motion is to suspend until 'Monday, March 23, 2009 at 10.00 a.m.', but the procedural sentence reads '10.00 p.m.' Printed as in the source.

Q7. Prime Minister's reply, reserves. The Prime Minister gives the 2008 fall in the Net International Reserves of the monetary authorities as \$205.5 million and, later, the decline 'at \$202.2 million in 2008 on an International Monetary Fund (IMF) basis and \$359.4 million'; a deposits figure appears as '\$9 56 385 000'. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Take-slips and labels. A paragraph reads 'Estimates - House A34, Sequence 110, 12.50 p.m.' followed by a take-slip 'Friday, March 20, 2009', and '12:00 noon' and '4:50' appear as paragraphs. A line within Hon. C. P. Sinckler's speech begins 'Hon. C. P. Sinckler:'. Mr. D. St.E. Kellman is labelled 'His Excellency'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on Friday, 20th March, 2009, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair, for the third day of the debate on Order No. 11, the second reading of the Appropriation Bill on the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2009-2010; Mr. Deputy Speaker presided in the afternoon. The Minister of Community Development and Culture, Hon. S. D. Blackett, said the National Cultural Foundation's allocation had risen by \$1.2 million, that the \$23.9 million refurbishment of Queen's Park had been put on the back burner, and that China would finance the restoration of the Empire Theatre at about \$20 million. Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe, Minister of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, set out a 'green economy' agenda, a Third National Commission on Sustainable Development and an Environmental Management Act.

Mr. R. C. Eastmond listed unmet Manifesto promises on housing and VAT, noted the fall in reserves from a peak of \$2.709 billion and a projected deficit of \$822 million, and called the Estimates a 'holding pattern'. Hon. R. D. Jones traced the crisis to 'raw, naked capitalism' and said school meals would not be cut; his remarks to a Member as a 'puffed-up foolish fellow' were objected to by Mr. Eastmond as unparliamentary. Hon. E. G. Hutson defended the reverse tax credit and free bus fares for students, which cost over \$8 million. Mr. R. St.C. Toppin criticised the Government's 'bitterness', withdrew 'the plot is thickening' on the Speaker's ruling, was ruled out of order on the Constituency Councils already passed, and cited declining tourist arrivals from a Caribbean Tourism Organisation document, drawing a point of order from the Minister of Tourism, Hon. R. L. Sealy. Hon. R. L. Sealy praised the housing programme, described tourism measures and laid a CTO update of his own. The House was suspended at 1.21 p.m.

After the suspension Mr. D. D. Marshall argued that falling property transfer tax, stamp duties, import duties and corporation taxes showed revenue projections had not been met, and that the professional services vote for international business had been halved; Mr. D. St.E. Kellman twice rose on points of order. Hon. F. J. Stuart

said the Government's priorities were to help the employed keep their jobs, protect the most vulnerable and restore law and order, including the condition of police stations.

The Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, replying, devoted much of his speech to the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Peter's figures, stating that the Net International Reserves fell in 2008 by \$205.5 million, that import cover stood at 15.2 weeks and that domestic deposits rose by \$218 million. The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, rose repeatedly on points of order, which the Deputy Speaker ruled were not points of order. The second reading was agreed to without division.

In Committee of Supply on Head 38, Ministry of Housing and Lands (as amended), \$58 252 640, Hon. M.

A. Lashley reported 4 831 qualified tenants under the plantation tenancies programme, the rent-to-own concept, land purchased at Woodbourne and negotiations for land at Colleton for the \$5 lot programme. Mr. G. A. Clarke spoke on the Housing Planning Unit and the Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme; Mr. D. St.E. Kellman criticised joint-venture projects and the size of houses at Bakers; Hon. P. M. T. Todd described replacement houses at Lower Burney and the Greenfield and Cats Castle residents; Mr. A. D. Brathwaite's figures drew a protracted point of order from Mr. G. W. Payne, who asked whether the Committee was 'a kangaroo court'; and Hon. C. P. Sinckler spoke on housing for single mothers. On the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones the House was suspended at 6.42 p.m. until Monday, March 23, 2009 at 10.00 a.m.