
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, November 17, 2009.

PRESENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, M.Ed., B.A., Dip. Theology (Minister of The Environment, Water Resources and Drainage)

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE, LL.B. (Hons.)
(Chairman of Committees)

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

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

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

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

Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Minutes of Tuesday, November 10, 2009.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Sir, I beg to move that the Minutes of the Honourable House of Assembly for its Meeting of Tuesday, November 10, 2009, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I have with me the Accounts and Statements for the month of May 2009, as prepared by the Accountant General.

PAPERS

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

1. Annual Report of Needham's Point Holdings Limited for the year 2008.
2. Annual Report of Needham's Point Development Incorporated for the year 2008.
3. Arts and Sports Promotion Fund (Amendment) Regulation, 2009.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 5 – RESOLUTION THAT THE HOUSE RESOLVES ITSELF INTO COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY TO CONSIDER THE GRANT OF SUMS OF MONEY FOR THE SERVICE OF THIS ISLAND

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, before we take Government Business, I beg to move that the Representative for St. Michael West Central be appointed temporary Chairman of Committees for today's Sitting.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. R. D. JONES, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, The House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. J. D. PAUL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$68 017 018 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2009-2010,

AS SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 2, 2009-2010 WHICH FORM THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION AND THAT THE

EXPLANATORY NOTES TO HEAD 62 BE AMENDED AS SET OUT IN THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION.

HEAD 62

MINISTRY OF FINANCE, INVESTMENT,
TELECOMMUNICATION AND ENERGY

\$16 727 003

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, under Head 62 in the sum of \$16 727 003, which is part of the provision of subsidised diesel to manufacturers, farmers, fisherfolk, public service vehicles and the Transport Board, you will remember that this was part of my budgetary presentation and the policy has continued. It is to give effect to those subsidised energy prices.

Sir, if I were in the kind of mood that I am normally in, I would point out that it is now 10.30 a.m. and not a single Honourable Member of the Opposition is in their seat in this House of Assembly. One is now trickling in. Sir, the public over the past few months has been told how anxious the Opposition is to have an economic debate.

The last time we had a Supplementary, I spent two hours on my feet setting out the entire fiscal position in Barbados, again, to the absence of the majority of Honourable Members of the Opposition, including the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, who said that it was necessary for the House to be given the full picture, so that the Opposition could engage in an economic debate.

I think it is absolutely appalling that at this hour in this House in the year 2009, that the Honourable Members of the Opposition could be so derelict in their duty to their constituents and to the nation, as a whole. Sir, that will not stop me from pointing out that everybody knows that the world is going through an economic crisis, the parameters of which are more significant even than the last Great Depression that took in the world over nearly 80 years ago. Based on the current global outlook, it is projected that economic recovery among Barbados' main trading partners will probably be very modest. As a result, our own GDP growth in Barbados will be negative throughout the remainder of 2009 and well into 2010.

H A49 10.30 a.m. Sequence 3

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

House A49, Sequence 04, 10.30 a.m.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, by the end of this year, we expect a decline of about 4 per cent of GDP, with a possible recovery in late 2010.

Mr. Chairman, this forecast, of course, hinges on the performance in our tourism sector during the Winter Season that is now coming, which in turn is dependent on what happens in those countries from which the majority of our tourists come, our major source market, so we need to be conscious of that.

Sir, every day we are monitoring the situation and working assiduously to ensure that the most up-to-date, relevant and timely information is available for our tourism planning. This would mean that all of the sectors that provide ancillary services to the tourism sector are also expected to face similar negative growth.

The construction sector, for example, which would have been a major driver of expansion in our economy, is expected to struggle in the short to medium-term in Barbados, particularly in relation to foreign investments which are experiencing great difficulties, both in the funding of their projects and in the appetite for their projects, in other words, getting people interested in purchasing at this time.

There are some investors we have found who can get the funding and can complete the projects, but they do not have the buyers for them. There are other projects in which interest by the buyers is high, but the buyers buy at the end, and the financing is what is short, so these are different kinds of challenges that are faced by traditional foreign investors in our economy. In lieu of that, Government has decided to step up its Capital Works Programme and this should provide some relief to the construction sector.

The rate of inflation is on a downward trajectory and it is expected that will continue, in the situation that presently prevails, Mr. Chairman, with respect to the external current account, that is, a lower import bill, coupled with falling exports and travel credits, in our view, should continue for the remainder of 2009. However, in 2010, it is anticipated that this situation is likely to reverse with export travel credits and import values rising moderately.

The capital and financial account, on the other hand, is not expected to return to the previous norms in the short to medium-term. Furthermore, with the expected repayment of a US\$100 million bullet loan in 2010, the surplus on this account would, in fact, be even lower in 2010. Even though the gaining revenues experienced so far in 2009, should be roughly maintained to year end - and that is a positive sign for us - foreign reserve losses are forecasted for next year.

Given the uncertainty with respect to the foreseeable end to the current recession and this environment that we are facing worldwide, expansion in the level of credit to the non-financial private sector is expected to be minimal in the short to medium-term, so we do not expect deposits to accumulate significantly, and the liquidity situation is likely to be similar to that already experienced in 2009, going into 2010. However, this means that Government should not have a lot of difficulty in sourcing financing for its operations from domestic sources.

The tax revenue is expected to slip even more by year end and into 2010, which is as a result of the current economic condition that we are facing and the likelihood of higher expenditure outlays to assist in stimulating this economy, as well as to provide welfare support is probably going to be that the fiscal deficit is not likely to improve substantially for the remainder of 2009 or 2010, so that the deficit for the end of this fiscal year would be significantly higher, in my view, than the deficit for 2008/2009.

The deficit for 2008/2009 was 5.9 per cent and based on that information and our forecast, our deficit is likely to be higher and, therefore, the Ministry of Finance over two months ago - for those who are suggesting that we have not acted in a timely manner - had asked Ministries to find savings, or to cut back their expenditure by 2.5 per cent of their total allocations. It is expected, in addition to this, that we will keep all supplementaries to a minimum, during this financial year. Taking these factors into account, the Ministry of Finance is actually targetting a deficit at 7.8 per cent of GDP.

Mr. Chairman, I thought that it would be instructive if I pointed out to you that back in 2005, at almost the height of the economic boom that Barbados was experiencing, and the rest of the world was also experiencing, a similar economic boom, one of the rating agencies, Standard and Poor's, revised the outlook on the Barbados economy from stable to negative. Again, that was at the height of the economic boom and that is 2005.

In 2002-2003, the fiscal deficit hit 5.4 per cent at a time when the world economy was recovering from the 2001 recession, which was, in any case, much milder than this recession.

In 2007, when the Barbados economy was supposedly doing so well, the deficit according to Standard and Poor's was 6 per cent and not 3 per cent, after taking account of the off-balance-sheet expenditure that had to be booked, once Government went to the accrual accounting, which would then have been the responsibility of the new Government.

In 2002, unemployment averaged 10.3 per cent and GDP fell back by 2.6 per cent. GDP will fall by more this

year, but the unemployment rate is not expected to be worse than in 2002.

Mr. Chairman, low commodity prices in a contracting domestic economy have reduced the Import Bill, which in turn contributed to a smaller external current account deficit. However, unfavourable international conditions caused by a slump in net private capital flows would have led to a foreign reserve loss, were it not for the fact that the Government was able to go on the international market for a bond issue, as well as the allocation of additional SDRs to all member countries of the International Monetary Fund. The boost to the net international reserves of the monetary authorities given by the latter events that I mentioned, resulted in a gain of \$241.6 million by the end of September, 2009.

By and large, apart from the foreign borrowings, Government raised financing on the domestic market to fund its deficit, which over the first nine months of 2009, reached about \$525.3 million. This position represented a deterioration over 2008, when the deficit was \$374.2 million and was mainly on account of rising expenditure and waning tax receipts. I believe that the Governor of the Central Bank has, by and large, dealt with most of these things.

Our tourism sector, of course, has borne the brunt of the still fragile global economy. We have had increases out of Canada, in particular, in the region of 11 per cent which was extremely positive and for which the Minister needs to be congratulated for his work in increasing both the airlift...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: ...and our presence in the Canadian market, but we have registered declines from the United States of America, the United Kingdom and CARICOM, in particular.

House A49, Sequence 04, 10.40 a.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The agricultural sector has experienced positive growth with the sugar industry, non-sugar agriculture and the fishing industry growing, as you would know, Mr. Chairman. It is not tremendous growth, but we are seeing, as you would know, investments taking place in the agricultural sector, particularly as a result of the initiatives arising out of the 2008 Budget. Also, what I sense is a new commitment, partly out of food security issues, as well as from an environment where people see opportunities to either have a secondary source of income, or where they have lost their primary source of income.

The manufacturing sector has not done well at all. It plummeted by 11.8 per cent as declines were registered in all of the sub-sectors. Generally speaking, the tight credit conditions being experienced internationally would have a negative impact in relation to our tourism-related projects and, therefore, construction and mining would have been brought to almost a standstill in relation to growth.

Mr. Chairman, the Central Bank of Barbados has set out their nine-month review, including the international business sector. The statistics in relation to licensing of new offshore vehicles of one type or another, are very clearly set out in that document, and I do not propose to repeat them here.

Mr. Chairman, the slow-down in the economic activity has had a negative impact on employment levels as reflected in an unemployment rate at the end of June 2009, of 9.9 per cent, compared to 8.6 per cent at the end of June 2008. The greatest concentration of job losses is being experienced in the construction sector, quarrying, transportation, communication and the general services sectors.

However, Mr. Chairman, since the release of the Central Bank of Barbados' review of the economy for the first nine months, preliminary information made available to me suggests that the decline in long-stay arrivals has slowed in October, and that there has been an overall increase in cruise arrivals for the first 10 months of the year in the order of 6.7 per cent, particularly in October.

Mr. Chairman, Government is currently implementing further marketing in the tourism sector to enable Barbados to stop the decline in tourism arrivals, and to get some growth in those particular numbers as the recession begins to end in the developed world markets from which most of our tourists come.

In the international business sector, this is since the nine-month review, activity has picked up and the total new licences of international business companies were 14 per cent below last year's, while insurance and banking licences have all registered increases. Our renewals continue to be ahead of 2008.

Preliminary information suggests that unemployment would have increased slightly in the third quarter to 10.5 per cent as compared to the second quarter of 2009, and the third quarter of 2008. The increase in the unemployment rates since mid-2007 mirrors the increases that have occurred in the United States of America. The United States of America went from an unemployment rate of 4.8 per cent in 2007, to 10.2 per cent at the end of October, 2009, which is the highest unemployment rate since 1984. Likewise, the United Kingdom and Europe have also experienced higher rates of unemployment.

Mr. Chairman, expectations by the International Monetary Fund are that the United States of America's economy is going to decline by 2.7 per cent this year, the United Kingdom by 4.4 per cent and Canada by 2.5 per cent. The single largest market for tourism and foreign direct investment to Barbados is the United Kingdom, which itself is facing the largest declines of all the industrialised countries.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the situation in relation to revenue and expenditure has already been provided. The information from the Accountant General indicates that between April 1 and September 30, revenue was \$1 18.4 million which is a decrease of \$80.5 million, or 7.3 per cent from the amount recorded for the corresponding period of 2008 to 2009. The actual revenue for April to September 2009, was \$205 million, below the projection for that period.

Mr. Chairman, taxes on income and profits realised \$349.3 million, which is 11.9 per cent more than collected for 2008-2009, and \$7.4 million more than the original April to September projection for this financial year. This is mainly due to the fact that \$29 million less in corporation and income tax refunds were paid this year.

In addition, withholding tax collected for the period under review was \$45.3 million, which is \$5.8 million more than the corresponding period last year. Property taxes increased by \$12.7 million over last year's to \$31.6 million as a result of the earlier collection of land tax this financial year. The amount collected is \$7.5 million more than the original projection for the period under review.

Taxes on goods and services decreased by \$118.6 million, which is 20.8 per cent. The original projection was \$607 million for the period April to September 2009, and we collected \$451.4 million. VAT receipts declined by \$97.4 million, which represented, in our view, a run down of the inventory and higher refund payments of \$5.1 million. Excise duties recorded \$72.3 million, a decrease of \$14.5 million from the outturn for 2008-2009. Import duties decreased by \$22.6 million. This represented a decline of 20.4 per cent more in keeping with the other declines.

With respect to expenditure, Mr. Chairman, current expenditure, exclusive of amortisation, which in itself is \$182.7 million, increased by \$15.3 million, or 1.3 per cent from the 2008-2009 figure. Wages and salaries increased by 28.2 million. This was due mainly to the increase in salaries and wages based on the negotiations held in 2008.

Expenditure on goods and services increased by \$12.5 million to \$177.7 million. The original projection for the period was \$204 million. Current transfers decreased by \$10 million over last year's. Total debt payments in the

first six months of this fiscal year amounted to \$348 million with interest payments of \$165.3 million and debt amortisation of \$182.7 million. Interest payments decreased by \$15.2 million and amortisation decreased by \$4.8 million.

Our capital expenditure, Sir, which is very important for the period under review, was \$91.6 million compared to \$72.9 million for the corresponding period 2008-2009 and an original projection of \$79.7 million. The total expenditure for April to September 2009, was \$1 490.4 million compared to \$1 461.3 million for 2008-2009.

Mr. Chairman, I undertake, should the Leader of the Opposition, the Shadow Minister of Finance, make it to the House of Assembly today, to give her a copy of these figures since she is not currently in her seat.

Mr. Chairman, the current balance for the period ending September 2009, was negative \$380.4 million. By comparison, the current balance for the period ended September 2008, was negative \$289.4 million. The original projected current balance for the period under review was negative \$270.5 million. This would represent a deficit of 4 per cent of GDP at market prices of \$7 279.1 million. The deficit for the corresponding period in 2008-2009 was \$174.9 million, which was 2.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product at market prices.

House A49 Sequence 5

10.50 a.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, the original projected deficit for the period under review was \$210.8 million.

Sir, I know there has been a lot of debate about the calculation of the Gross Domestic Product, and it seems that should we recalculate it and factor in these new figures, and I believe the recalculations have been underway. The matter is to go to the Economic Policy Committee shortly and I believe would be factored into any analysis of Barbados' economy next year. Sir, that does not in and of itself solve any problem.

Mr. Chairman, even if we were to recalculate the Gross Domestic Product, or adjust it, based on what I have heard, it would still mean that our debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio would be far higher than is the accepted norm. Therefore, I do not believe that simply for the sake of achieving and passing those kinds of tests, that we should undertake the most supercilious analysis.

Sir, I heard one commentator - I do not know who was the person - saying that a discussion of issues in relation to the Gross Domestic Product is not sexy, so maybe that person wants to make the discussion sexier. Sir, how do you do that in the context of the current scenario that Barbados faces? If we do the recalculation and it proves that the Gross Domestic Product is higher and that our debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio changes, does that mean that the Minister of Finance should now go and borrow more, so that our debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio would be what we projected it to be this year?

Mr. Chairman, that is the kind of argument I find difficult to accept. Sir, even though I think there is a case for the recalculation of it, and even when we were in Opposition we raised that issue, so that in and of itself is not new. That, in and of itself is not going to make a significant difference to the scenario as I have currently described it.

Mr. Chairman, likewise, in relation to the rating agencies, the advice that I was given in the last Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals by no less a person than the economic guru on the Other Side, the person who is the former Minister of Finance, who they say is responsible for the transformation of the Barbados economy, was to ignore the rating agencies. That is the advice we were given.

We were told that during these economic times that we should ignore the International Monetary Fund (IMF). We were advised to ignore the rating agencies. Sir, now as soon as somebody makes a comment that is viewed as being negative of the Barbados economy, they extract that and that becomes the heart of a criticism of the Barbados Government, in relation to economic policies. Sir, whether it is an entity that one part of the Opposition said we should not listen to, or it is an entity that the other part of the Opposition said that we should listen to.

Sir, I am not sure whose advice I should take and I do not want to say what my proclivity would be in that regard, because it is not my job to set any cat among the pigeons. I will leave that where it is, but the point is, as I said, that was the specific advice we were given.

Mr. Chairman, what have we done to deal with the question of the deficit? Sir, it was not done yesterday, so we see the argument of timeliness in Government's actions.

Sir, two months ago, we started to identify savings in expenditure, other than expenditure for staff. We are continuing that process to eliminate waste and non-priority spending in fiscal year 2010-2011. Sir, for example, ministerial travel has been significantly cut. I believe the Cabinet is of the view that we are not going to travel unless

we see some significant material advantages to Barbados. We are not going only to be registered.

Mr. Chairman, where Ministers go to do one thing, they are going to have to double-up and do other things that may be necessary in that particular part of the world. Therefore, all Ministers who are currently travelling are going to have to work with the Diaspora Groups on the Friends and Family Programme.

Minister Hutson has to sign a number of treaties while he is in Europe. He also has to do other work that is not specifically related to his portfolio, but we have indicated that once Ministers are travelling, that they have to meet those particular commitments.

Mr. Chairman, we expect also to improve tax Administration in Customs, the VAT Office and the Inland Revenue Department, which should yield some improvements in 2010-2011. These should reduce the deficit by, at least, 1 per cent in 2010-2011, since we project a scenario of no growth during 2010.

Sir, although financing for Government operations are provided primarily from domestic sources, from January to September 2009, Government raised an additional \$232.1 million on the Trinidad and Tobago capital markets, the proceeds of which were received in the third quarter of the year.

Mr. Chairman, I have dealt significantly with the external sector and I do not think it is necessary for me to further address it. The big question is, what next in relation to the Barbados economy? We have had to do a balancing act between waiting and seeing the extent of the economic recession, as well as trying to be proactive.

Fiscal stimulus programmes in the context of the Barbados economy, Mr. Chairman, can have a dangerous side effect, because it has been determined that I believe between \$0.76 cents of every dollar of stimulus will be spent on imports, based on our last five years of trends, therefore, we might try to implement a fiscal stimulus and find that it has a very negative impact on the external position. Therefore, essentially, we have to wait. We have to put measures in place. We have to look to see how tourism is recovering and until tourism is on a secure recovery path, we need to conserve our foreign exchange reserves, just in case things do not improve as we expect.

Mr. Chairman, if recovery comes next year and proves to be robust, we are of the view that employment would begin to rebound, but that is by no means certain. If economies in the United Kingdom and United States of America, in particular, fail to recover sufficiently, or if they fall into what some economists call the "double-dip recovery", in which you have a small recovery and then

another dip in economic activities, we do not want to find ourselves in a situation where our reserves are depleted as a result of any fiscal expansion and then we are still facing job losses in tourism.

Mr. Chairman, that is why fiscal stimulus is unwise right now. It is true that we are going to have an increased fiscal deficit, but we have tried to plan this more efficiently and more effectively. Mr. Chairman, in addition, we are introducing a more integrated process of joint policy-making by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and the Central Bank, based on shared information on:

1. current economic performance;
2. an 18-month projection on foreign reserves, tourism performance and other real Gross Domestic Product indicators, the balance of payments, the fiscal balance, debt service projections, inflation, interest rate, bank liquidity and employment; and
3. a five-year projection of real Gross Domestic Product on these economic indicators.

Mr. Chairman, the progress of our economy will be monitored constantly, with daily, weekly and monthly updates. Sir, timely policy adjustments will be made to protect foreign reserves and other targets. In that regard, the Ministry of Economic Affairs is also involved in a project to develop an early warning system that will be able to monitor certain indicators in the economy.

11.00 a.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, like Barbados the rest of the Caribbean has adopted two kinds of measures in relation to international institutions to seek assistance for the export sectors in tourism, to help preserve their competitiveness in a shrinking market and secondly, to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Sir, Governments obviously would like to do more, but they need to borrow in order to do so and, that of course, would worsen debt service ratios, which are already a cause for concern. The Caribbean has, therefore, been pressing for greater access to special crisis-related funding from the IMF and the World Bank.

The Social Partners have established a working group. Sir, that working group report was presented last year at this time. They will be back in Barbados to review those who are living here, but who live with the institution to review the performance of the Government in implementing in a timely manner the measures set out in the Working Group's Report. I am certain the Government would get, to my mind, a positive response from the social

partnership, because many of the reforms have already been implemented. Government also established a Council of Economic Advisors.

I have asked them specifically to look at the areas of entrepreneurship and new initiative that can be developed in the Barbados economy to give young people, and even retired people, who have resources, an opportunity to develop businesses that can create jobs and also self-employment.

Mr. Chairman, I have noted comments about the timeliness of fiscal consolidation in the Barbados economy. Sir, what does that mean in simple terms. It means that the Government did not cut its expenditure to respond as quickly to declines in revenues. Of course, it is not the role of rating agencies to tell us what expenditures to cut, but I am following the Honourable Member for St. Peter who said to ignore the rating agencies, for the purpose of this argument, but even if I did not ignore them, nobody has said what areas of expenditure should be cut, except the other Members of the Opposition. They said we should cut free bus fares to school children. They said we should cut the summer camp programme. They said we should put on hold the introduction of diplomatic representation in two major economies in the world.

Mr. Chairman, imagine, Barbados, the NO. 1 developing country in the world and for 14 years we heard about reforms and restructuring, and we could not find it possible, in the time of economic plenty, to establish a diplomatic mission in China, the second largest economy in the world and we are having to do it now. Sir, people talk about what you are going to do to get out of the economic circumstances you are in but you do not have diplomatic representation in China, and we have it in other parts of the world where the economies are not as big and not as significant.

Mr. Chairman, we have had a lot of lip service for 15 years about relationship with Cuba. Sir, there are Barbadians studying in Cuba and there are economic opportunities for Barbados in Cuba, particularly in the area of our cultural industry, but there is no diplomatic representation. Sir, I think the worst of all is Brazil, the largest economy in this neck of the woods and there is no diplomatic representation.

Mr. Chairman, we are having to do that at a time when we do not have the resources, but I am not going to sit down and fold my arms so that, at the end of the day, people can say we have done nothing. We are going to establish the Missions and we are going to be pursuing new economic relations with those countries in a variety of fields, not exclusively related to Barbados, but also the Caribbean as a whole.

I believe the Inter-American Development Bank has published a country strategy for Barbados and I directed that a copy be sent to the Opposition. They might pretend they have not seen it, but I do not really listen to what they say, because you have to declare who you are listening to, to which part of the Opposition, because there are so many conflicting views and, I cannot give or take away creditability from anybody but, Sir, I have friends. I know that when they say things about me they are likely to be believable. Sir, that is the problem with people who are close to you. When they say things about you, they are likely to be believable so, Sir, I do not listen.

Mr. Chairman, we have a country strategy for 2009 to 2013. We sat down with the IDB. The Infrastructure Committee met over two full days last month to plan medium-term capital programme for Barbados and settled on a number of things that had happened. The Government itself was involved in the Caves Project which had been stalled. I do not want to say when and how at this stage. Sir, The Boardwalk project in Holetown, all those projects were halted and have been given priority by this Government, Sir, projects in a range of areas like the Competitiveness Programme, which is very important.

Mr. Chairman, many of these projects have been on the drawing board for a long time and the files in the Ministry of Economic Affairs would show that there was no impetus to get those projects going, and we had to, therefore, bend our backs to get that part of the IDB Programme going. Sir, in relation to the World Bank, some interest has been shown again in degradation of some countries in the Caribbean and we have been working with them on that at their pace. We know what we would like and I believe we have set it out.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that, by and large, we have been able to pursue economic development. I thought the most laughable thing that I saw in the past week was to compare the Barbados economy with the Guyana economy, not because I had any problem at all with Guyana. I think that Guyana has the greatest growth potential in this Region, but the kind of things that would affect the Barbados economy at this time would not have an effect on the economy of Guyana. Sir, even so, Government expected phenomenal rates of growth and had to revise them downwards because of the current economic environment.

Mr. Chairman, when you are looking at the growth and development of an economy, you have to look at where you are coming from. Where is Barbados coming from, economically, and where is Guyana coming from economically? Where is Haiti coming from economically? Where is Jamaica coming from economically. If you are going to compare, then compare apples with apples and do not let people give you wrong information.

Mr. Chairman, what I can say is that none of the senior public officer who have assisted with economic policy have changed in Barbados. Those are the same people and if other people trusted their advice for 15 years, should I stop trusting their advice now? The problem is for the Opposition is that they now have new advisors. You have to really wonder if the advice that is being given is the correct advice.

Therefore, Sir, as I have said, I saw some of these comments, but I thought today that I should give this particular background particularly as we are dealing with subsidies in critical sectors of the economy in respect of the cost of petroleum projects, which was an important initiative of the Government in 2008.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

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

H/A49/11.10 a.m. Sequence 7

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I listened with interest to the statement of the Honourable Prime Minister, in the context of this request for a Supplementary from the Committee of Supply in respect of energy and subsidies.

Let me say at the outset that I welcome the fact that he has provided what, in effect, is a six-month update, or half year update on this financial year to this Honourable Chamber. I, perhaps, had hoped that it would be in the context of a proper debate that would allow all persons in this Honourable House to participate in a full debate on what he has presented.

As we all know, the Rules of the Committee of Supply do not allow any Honourable Member to speak for more than 15 minutes at any one time, but in any event, there is a limit of three hours on this debate.

I welcome the fact that he will provide those out-turn figures to the Opposition, because it would help us equally to speak to issues in a sensible and critical way, but I say that this is not the opportunity fully in here, today, because of the Rules of the House that prohibit such full and expansive data in respect of a decision of the Committee of Supply.

I am not going to ask the Prime Minister, or any Honourable Member on That Side for any quarter. Therefore, accordingly, the Opposition will introduce a Private Member's Resolution to trigger a full debate, unless, of course, the Government is minded that it could

bring such a Resolution since it is now so willing to share the information. We would welcome the Government providing that opportunity for a full economic debate.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, on a point of order. I only had half an hour, by the Rules of the House. The Honourable Member can speak for 15 minutes more than once, and if the Honourable Member wants us to facilitate it, we would get somebody to get up and just say two words and sit back down, to give the Honourable Member the next two-and-a-half hours to speak in this debate.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I thank the Prime Minister for his opportunity, and I said to him on the Floor of this Chamber that I will take it. I hope that every Honourable Member will speak for one minute or two minutes and allow me then to speak out for the rest of the two-and-a-half hours, but it will not stop us equally ...

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Of course, that will not stop us equally from bringing a Private Member's Resolution for a full debate as well.

Sir, I believe that this Honourable Chamber is deserving of the opportunity to speak to the issues that are, in fact, the most fundamental issues affecting the Barbadian society and households today, and businesses. Therefore, I will start from that.

Sir, I do not know whether the Prime Minister's intention is, that I should be shared with the out-turn figures before the end of this debate, or for the future debate, but I would welcome the fact, and would simply ask that as I speak for the next two-and-a-half hours, that I will be given an opportunity at some point to see those figures, because my Deputy can, in fact, write them down so that I can respond to the specific declines, as I am on my feet.

I will not shy away from the challenge that he has put forward, because the truth is, we have been speaking to these issues for the last few months. It is the Prime Minister who has been silent and, certainly, silent in this Chamber since the debate on the Budget, in relation to the economy, and much has happened.

Sir, from what I can glean, he has painted an out-turn picture that has shown that the revenue performance of Government is down. That, I believe, from memory, I still have not seen his document, is down by some \$97 million. I think that is what he said. Import duties are down. The excise is down, and the only thing that is up is property taxes as a result of the decision of the Government, last

year, to burden the landowners and householders in this country, with new valuations in land taxes which would have placed tremendous pressure, not only on the ordinary households, but equally on business enterprises in this country, who would be forced to find from their cashflow increase payments, as a result of the increased valuations.

Mr. Chairman, the benefits that we, as a Parliament, sought to pass on while in Government, in relation to the land taxes, such that persons whose properties were valued under \$150 000, would not have to pay a cent in land tax, was wiped out for hundreds of people last year, with the revaluation that took place in the land tax.

We are not surprised that in the out-turn figures, property taxes are up, but we are concerned that every other major form of tax and revenue in this country is down, because it reflects the significant down-turn that is taking place across every sector of this economy.

Mr. Chairman, it is unfortunate that, as I said, we should have to treat to this matter in the context of a Supplementary for monies, and it is akin to the Government hiding behind this debate and hiding behind the fact that this is a debate that has a three-hour limit, because it does not want a full and complete distillation of the issues.

Now, I feel that this is unfortunate, because the Prime Minister has refused equally to accept the recommendation of the Opposition that there be a Joint Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in order to respond to the need for Both Sides of this Chamber, and indeed, both Houses of Parliament, to contribute in a constructive way, and to ensure that Barbados does not reach the bottom in relation to these economic difficulties.

Mr. Chairman, let us start at the Estimates Debate of this year. The Government brought a set of Estimates to this Chamber in March, 2009. They projected that the deficit would be in the vicinity of 5 per cent. They projected that revenue would grow, the same revenue the Prime Minister is now admitting has declined. They projected that the revenue would grow by 7 per cent, having grown last year by only 2 per cent when they projected to this Chamber last year that the revenue would grow by 9 per cent. What are the facts?

Sir, the revenue last year grew by only 2 per cent when the economy grew by 0.2 per cent. The Government came to the Chamber this year and said that they expect the economy to decline, but still want the Chamber and the country to believe that revenue would grow by 7 per cent. They presented a set of Estimates that was premised on revenue growing by 7 per cent, and we would have indicated then that it was an unrealistic set of projections, that there was, in fact, all likelihoods that there would be a

contraction in the revenue of this country, given the fact that the economy was likely to contract, they said, by at least 2 ½ per cent.

Now that we have seen it grow to 4.8 per cent for the first nine months of the year, I believe that is the figure, and projected to 4 per cent for the whole year. Now, that is unrealistic, and you ask the House to support expenditure, expenditure for the hospital, expenditure for Constituency Councils, expenditure for the police, expenditure across every area of Government, based on the revenue projection of 7 per cent growth.

Sir, even with that, you say that the deficit is likely to be in the vicinity of 5 per cent. Sir, while I have not received the out-turn figures from the Prime Minister for the nine months, but the International Monetary Fund's report shows clearly that revenue performance was down 9 per cent in the first fiscal quarter of this year, between April and June. I have every reason to believe that the figures which the Prime Minister just outlined will reflect a similar decline in the second quarter in relation to revenue.

H A49 11.20 a.m. Sequence 8

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

House A49, Sequence 09, 11.20 a.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The truth is, it meant that the Government brought to the country in March, an unrealistic programme for execution. If we did not even believe it at the time the evidence has come to light in the six months, as Government Department by Government Department has had to take ad hoc measures in order to constrain expenditure, which has still grown significantly over what was estimated at the beginning of March, in spite of the instructions for cuts. Sir, what is significant is where these cuts are taking place.

The Prime Minister, when the IMF Report came out, indicated that "been there, done that". He had already instructed that cuts should take place across every Government Department. Now, that is fine, and that is his right, and it is probably the responsible thing to do, but where he stopped short was in failing to outline to the Barbadian public where those cuts have been taking place, and discussing with the public what they believe to be essential expenditure, and what they believe to be non-essential expenditure and, Sir, let me deal with some of what he said.

We said, yes, that we believe Constituency Councils are non essential expenditure and that to spend \$6 million now, Mr. Chairman, in Constituency Councils at a time when the dialysis patients in the hospital were being cut back to two and one visit a week - Those people who had

\$400 could go and get it done privately, but those who did not have the \$400 per treatment could not get it. At a time, Mr. Chairman, when the police are being told in this country...

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is really misleading the House and those within an earshot. The dialysis patients at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the Honourable Member is referring to, for a few days there was the shortage of necessary inputs for them to be fully dialysed and the doctors took the decision that the number of dialyses should be reduced to twice per week, which in no way compromised the health of those patients.

Sir, to go on and give the impression that spending money on Constituency Councils was, perhaps, wastage and could have been spent on dialysis patients is grossly misleading. Dialysis patients at no point in time have been seriously compromised.

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

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I believe three minutes in this instance. The Prime Minister has offered me the full 2½ hours.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: According to the Rules, I understand that a speaker is allowed 15 minutes per speech so three minutes, please.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I took the Prime Minister at his word, and therefore, I am not condensing my speech, but I will sit down in between.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: What I am saying is that I understand that, and however, it is 15 minutes per speech, so I am advising you that you have three minutes more, please.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: I take the point that I would have to sit down ever 15 minutes for a minute or two.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: All of a sudden, Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Health now seems not to want to agree with his Prime Minister but that is not an unusual thing, since they cannot agree on the construction of a new hospital.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. When the offer was made, the Honourable Member said whether it happened or not, they will be bringing a separate motion, so they have not accepted the offer of the Prime Minister.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, as I am continuing, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy clearly does not understand what "accept" means but then again that is part of his own dilemma that he would have to resolve. I will speak for the 2½ hours as offered, subject to your guidance, in respect of the 15 minute breaks.

The point I am making, Mr. Chairman, and I am not coming off it, the Honourable Member for St. James South knows full well that the poor planning and lack of access to resources led to the dialysis patients being in trouble.

Mr. Chairman, instructions have gone to the Royal Barbados Police Force that the flexibility allowances, which were introduced in 2001, to allow policemen to work extra hours recognising that was the nature of their job, just like nurses, and they would be compensated for those flexibility allowances, they have now received instructions that they are not to get flexibility allowances for more than 40 hours a month.

The reality is, Mr. Chairman, that on average, the policemen were drawing flexibility allowances for 100 to 120 hours a month. Mr. Chairman, a constable who was carrying home \$5 500 because of working 120 hours, has now been told that he can only be paid for 40 hours a month. Sir, these are the facts. The Government may not want us to discuss it in the open of Parliament, but these are the consequences of the cuts.

When we say, therefore, that the Minister of Finance has a duty to discuss the nature of the cuts with the Barbadian public, it is because we are fully appreciative of the impact that it will have across many sectors and many people.

The same policemen have not drawn flexibility allowances, I believe, since July. The GIS and other Departments have not drawn travel since July. The reality is that the story is the same across every Government Department. Not only are services being affected, but people who are on temporary staff are being affected, people who are depending on travel allowances and other things to meet their budget are being affected, and people who are depending on flexibility allowances are being affected.

Sir, there is nothing that they can do about it, but what we do expect is that the Estimates of Expenditure, being the Schedule to the Appropriation Act, is a public

document, so that when you institute cuts across the Government, it is not a secret order society that you can keep to yourself, the nature to the cuts that have been executed.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I would advise you that your time has expired.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I will sit for the minute and I hope to resume shortly.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, it is regrettable that a Government that has done so well for 14 years can now have the second leading person in that Government arguing for a bonus for a worker, instead, Sir, of arguing that we have cut the salary of a policeman. In other words, Sir, the Honourable Member had the authority, being the Attorney-General to increase the salary of the policeman and make it fixed.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: But will now come to this House, 14 plus two years after, Sir, and argue about a bonus, because a flexibility allowance can only be regarded as a bonus. I have always argued that from the time I was in the sugar industry.

Asides.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. It is misleading this Chamber for the Honourable Member to characterise a flexibility allowance as a bonus. A bonus is not an entitlement. It is something that is given at the discretion of the giver. The flexi-allowances, Sir, represent a clear and certain entitlement by the police officers for time spent at work over and above the regular hours. It is theirs as of right. It is not any bonus.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, please continue.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, a flexibility allowance is a discretionary allowance. The mere fact that the Leader of the Opposition is now saying that they used to get 120 hours and now they cannot get that, Sir, it says that it is discretionary. I do not understand the argument. A man who has never worked in a field like this is now arguing.

I remember well, Sir, that in 1981 a union called, SISA (Sugar Industry Supervisors Association) opted to take a bonus instead of a salary increase. I was the only person who objected because I argued then, and I would argue now, that if you have anything for me that you give me, by adding it to my salary for the simple reason that every year you get an increase, it is added to it but when you have a flexibility allowance, it does not add to the real wage, Sir, so it is discretionary.

House A49, Sequence 09, 11.30 a.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of privilege. The Prime Minister gave an undertaking earlier, which I took in all seriousness. I accepted the undertaking. It has been done in the full glare of the House and the full glare...

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Hold on, please.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, let me make the point and you can rule. I am allowed to make the point. The Prime Minister issued a challenge to me and told me that he would facilitate my being able to speak for the entire period of this debate save and except that I would have to sit for a minute and get back up. You heard it, Mr. Chairman. You even commented on it, Mr. Chairman, just now and reminded me that I would have to sit for the 15 minutes. Mr. Chairman, I am really very upset because I took the Prime Minister at his word and I want to continue.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, hold on please, just a minute. I can only go through by the Rules...

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Just a minute, please. That depends though on the extent to which individual members of the House are willing to cooperate. However, to the extent too that other persons would want to contribute, I am sure that the manner in which they are contributing, they are trying to cooperate as much as possible, but I still have to abide by the Rules, and the Rule is that each Honourable Member has a maximum of 15 minutes, so it is not within my power to be able to control that. I would then ask the Honourable Member for St. Lucy to continue. Thank you.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I would ask both Honourable Members to please take their seats. I stated very clearly

what the Rules are and again, I must advise that the Rules are not being infringed. My ruling is that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy will continue.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I also heard that conversation, but the Leader of the Opposition said that whether or not it is given, they will be bringing a Private Member's Motion. I agree with what the Prime Minister said and I was prepared to give way too, but after I heard that, it did not make any sense.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I know that the Opposition is behaving the way they are behaving because they do not want the people of Barbados to know that this Supplementary is about concessions for our farmers, fishermen, the PSVs and all of those. They want to get every minute to speak against everything because they do not want the people to know that we are in here with a Supplementary to subsidise the productive sectors of this country, which I support because that is something I have always said.

Mr. Chairman, it is all right to say that the country is in an economic crisis and that the Government is not doing anything, but this Supplementary is now giving a lie, not only to the Opposition, but also to the advisors of the Opposition who give advice to the Leader of the Opposition and then says something quite different to what the Leader of the Opposition is saying. That is what it is all about, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, I want to make this point. I want the Prime Minister to understand that what he has done is the right thing and that he has to continue to protect the productive sectors. Sir, that is why I believe that we are now at the right time, because when the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited was formed, it was formed by the Democratic Labour Party, and the only regret is that quickly after the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited was formed, the Democratic Labour Party lost the Government and the Barbados Labour Party had 14 years of that organisation.

Mr. Chairman, the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited has some over capacity that they need to use in these times. It does not make sense for the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited, something I have said all the time, which I would repeat today, to have all of that equipment and not being able to use it wisely.

I honestly believe, Sir, that the equipment that can be found out of crop should be used to till the fields of those plantations that cannot afford to do it, and also for those small farmers. We have the capacity and we need to use it.

The time is right for us to reduce the cost for various plantations and small farmers of this country because it is agriculture, the service sector and tourism, that we need to ensure that we pump as much as possible into them, to ensure that this economy is brought back to the state it has to be brought back to.

Sir, the Government was also right when it introduced the programme a year ago, where young men and women were allowed to work, enhancing the environment of Barbados. Some people might call it debushing, but I would not call it debushing. I would say that they have the opportunity now to keep the environment of Barbados right and to enhance the aesthetics of this country so that persons like yourself and the tourists who come to Barbados, can appreciate what we have to offer.

We also have to understand, Sir, that we have to continue looking after the productive sectors of this country.

Sir, for 14 years, I stood in this Parliament and told the then Government that the problem with this economy was that we were too focussed on punishing the productive sectors and the productive people in this country, and we were too interested in propping up external economies

Sir, if you look at all of the tax policies of the last Government, you would see that they were skewed in a direction where we were exporting jobs and protecting products coming in and destroying products that have been produced locally. You, Sir, have an interest in the farmers and you would understand exactly what I talk about.

Mr. Chairman, I have argued, and I will continue to argue, that when we had all of this big talk about restructuring the tax systems in this country, all we did was to make local goods expensive and foreign goods cheap in this country. All we did, Sir, was to stop local people from having jobs servicing equipment and exported the jobs for people to produce the equipment to dump on Barbados.

Sir, that is what has caused the problem in this economy, so the Opposition cannot come in here now and behave as if this is a problem for this Government. They have created it. What we now have to do is to correct the mess left by them, and we have to do it quickly.

Mr. Chairman, any economist who continues to believe that this economy can grow and behave as if we are now 300 years ago, would be fooling themselves. This is a consuming economy, not a producing economy, so we cannot rely on those who work to prop up the economy, we have to rely on those who are consuming.

Sir, when I say consuming, I am not talking about human beings only. The computer has to pay too because

the computer has replaced man who used to prop up the economy. Man is now replaced by technology. Sir, we are punishing man and freeing up technology that we do not produce. That is utter madness, Sir.

Sir, for 14 years, the Barbados Labour Party has put this on our plate and we need to reverse it because we need to realise that employment in terms of man, would always reduce, but the total employment would be there, and that is a combination of technology and man.

Sir, we have to now tax the total employment aspect. In other words, we have to tax technology. Technology consumes too, so you cannot only tax a man because he is productive and free up technology, because when you free up technology, you are freeing up jobs for somebody else.

House A49 Sequence 10

11.40 a.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, we have to have a total picture. We have to have a scheme where we tax all the workers, and the computer is a worker. If we do not see the computer as a worker, we would always find ourselves in trouble.

Sir, that is exactly what is happening. Barbados used to be an economy where we relied on workers only. We had a tax system based only on workers. We now have a tax system where we have workers being replaced by technology, yet we are not focussing on that technology.

Mr. Chairman, it is as simple with what is happening with the Barbados Light & Power Co. Ltd. Every time they increase their utility charges, less people would come on to their grid. Sir, more people would produce their own electricity. Therefore, those of us who remain in the grid would feel the punishment. Sir, if you could understand that argument, then clearly you could understand the argument as it relates to the total economy in this country.

Sir, for 14 years, the Opposition Barbados Labour Party was given the advice, which they ignored, which has now brought us to this rut. Sir, the Prime Minister today has brought this Supplementary to ensure that not only technology and man would be compensated, but that we will be restructuring the economy in the right way, to make sure that the productive sectors can operate.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying that at least we know what we can get out of agriculture. I know that the Prime Minister's heart is in the right place because he understands. Sir, that is why, as fast as they were trying to get rid of the sugar industry, the Prime Minister has done

nothing to reduce the sugar industry in this country. Further, when one looks at the evidence, one can see that the Prime Minister was right about this.

Mr. Chairman, I was in this Parliament when I warned the Opposition Barbados Labour Party not to cut the sugar quota by 10 000 tons. I produced statistics. Sir, you could look at the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, and I showed how much money we would lose by doing so. Sir, every one of them ignored me. Now Brazil is doing exactly what I warned that Government about, because Brazil is now sitting 'pretty'.

Mr. Chairman, it is a simple thing. As many countries decide to fall-out from producing sugar, it means that there would be that greater demand for sugar. Sir, those who remain in sugar would end up having a unique product that is in demand, therefore, Barbados cannot blindly decide that it is not going to produce something with which they have done well over the years. Barbados has a good history as it relates to sugar.

Mr. Chairman, the point where Brazil is now at, we should have been there because we had the capacity and the know-how before Brazil. What we have not done, was not used that capacity, or know-how wisely.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, we are now in the right position to reverse that, and to correct those inefficiencies that were created for us by the former Government.

Mr. Chairman, we need to recognise the importance of sugar. We need to do an analysis of how sugar has served us over the years. We need to ensure that we use the Barbados Agricultural Management Company for that purpose for which it was set up. The Democratic Labour Party had set it up for the right reason and the Barbados Labour Party destroyed it. Sir, we need now to spend some time in correcting it.

Sir, the faster we could correct the Barbados Agricultural Management Company and put it on its right footing, the better it would be for this economy.

Mr. Chairman, I say to those persons who may speak on the Floor of this Honourable House or, to those persons in Barbados who may be behaving like speculators, seeking consultancy, who want to bad mouth Barbados, that we understand what is happening in this economy. We understand how they are shopping around for consultancy, but by bad mouthing this economy would not force the Prime Minister's hand to sign on to anybody to give them a consultancy.

Mr. Chairman, I would advice the Prime Minister to leave those persons as advisors to the Opposition. Let those persons continue to give bad advice to the Opposition. Let them create enemies with the consumers and constituents of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, before I resume my speech, I would like, in the spirit in which the Prime Minister made the offer to me that seems not to be there any longer, to be doubly certain by moving a Motion that this Honourable House comes out of Committee of Supply, to facilitate a Motion to suspend Standing Order 68, Rule 8. Sir, that will allow me to have the unlimited time in the rest of the debate, as promised by the Prime Minister, to ensure that what has just happened is not repeated.

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move the Motion that this Honourable House comes out of Committee of Supply, to facilitate a Motion to suspend Standing Order 68, Rule 8.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Mr. Chairman left the Chair, and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair.

11.50 a.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. D. MARSHALL, Mr. Chairman reported progress to Mr. SPEAKER and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Chairman of Committee has reported to me your desire to suspend the Committee and for permission to speak again.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister in his speech under Head 62, offered most kindly to the Opposition the opportunity to speak for a period in excess of the 15 minutes required under Order 66, Rule 8. In fact, he generously offered the Leader of the Opposition to speak for the remainder of the debate. Therefore, in order to be able to avail ourselves of that offer, it would be necessary to move a suspension of the Standing Order.

Sir, provision relating to the suspension of the Standing Order is Order 71, which says that a motion can

be made in any Sitting of the House and that the Speaker would rule, so long as he is of the view that it is not an abuse of the Rule.

Sir, our motion, therefore, is that Standing Order 66, Rule 8, be suspended for the rest of this Sitting. The undertaking - I believe it can be called that - given by the Prime Minister was that his Members would speak for one minute and then sit but, Sir, that is not happening because the Honourable Member for St. Lucy took his full amount of time.

Sir, in those circumstances, therefore, we want to move that Standing Order 66 be suspended for the remainder of this Sitting.

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, my understanding of this ancient and Honourable House is that the Prime Minister's power in relation to the procedures of the House is no greater than any other Member. Although, I have seen a Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the House tried to bend the Rules of this Chamber to the extent that it caused the loss of a Government in January 2008 and, Sir, I do not propose to follow that sorry spectacle.

Mr. Speaker, there is a way to do this. All I said is not that we would amend any Rule, because I do not think that rules should be amended to accommodate an individual. These are Rules of the House made by a previous Barbados Labour Party Administration, I assume, to ensure that each Member of this House is given their due.

Mr. Speaker, I offered that somebody would get up and speak for one minute or less, to facilitate the 15 minutes. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said she does not need any accommodation from me, that they would bring a Private Member's Resolution. She is asking for no quarter from me and, in that regard, it is up to the Member. Sir, all that has to happen is that Honourable Members on That Side can forego all their time, not speak in the debate and give it to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister is on a classic defensive posture this morning. Sir, not only was he defensive in his outlook, but on the economy, but he was defensive, having offered to me the right to be able to speak for the rest of this debate when I complained that a major economic outlook

statement was being made by him in the context of a Supplementary debate for energy.

He then offered to be able to give me the opportunity to speak for the rest of the debate. He got up on a point of order in my speech. I then said to him that I would accept it, but I would also still bring a Private Member's Resolution.

Mr. Speaker, the beautiful thing is that technology allows for recording because when the Prime Minister hears back himself this morning, he would realise that he made a major error in offering me that opportunity, because I would take it. Sir, now that he has realised the errors of his ways, he is seeking to resile from the undertaking and find as many excuses to be able to suggest why this is no longer practical and why this is no longer amenable.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can intimidate other people, but he is not going to intimidate me. I welcome the opportunity to speak fully in this debate and, therefore, we have asked to move this motion. Sir, not only will I continue speaking, I would also encourage the Prime Minister not to feel as threatened as he clearly feels.

Sir, all of a sudden, the Prime Minister does not now want to facilitate the very debate and, it is not an amendment of the Standing Order that the Honourable Member for St. Joseph has moved, it is a suspension. In case those who are not schooled in the Rules of the House forget, the beginning of every Session of Government's Business starts with the Suspension of Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is seeking to run and hide, but that is his problem. Sir, the Government can vote for, we hope, the Motion, or they can vote against the Motion, but that the Motion should take place is what we are asking for because we feel that the offer was given in what we thought was good faith. Sir, I thank him for giving me the outlook figure that was given in good faith, so I assumed that when he said that I should speak for the rest of the debate, which is three hours,....

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: No, it is more than 45. I can speak literally any time so that is a red herring. I do not need to ask Members of the Opposition to speak, that is a red herring. The Prime Minister knows, after 22 years in this House that it is a red herring. What is important is having given the offer in good faith, that we be allowed to be able to proceed in good faith. Sir, that is all the Opposition is asking this House to decide on with the Motion.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Motion moved by the Honourable Member for St. Joseph and ask the for the

suspension of Standing Order 66, Rules A, so as to facilitate by being able to speak for the rest of the debate in Committee of Supply.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members I draw to you the provision of Order No. 71. Of course, I am vested with the authority and the obligation to protect the rights of Members and that extends to any Member. I am uncertain whether or not the Honourable Prime Minister would have had the opportunity to consult with other Members. However, Order 71 says:

“A motion may be laid at any Sitting of the House by any member to suspend any of these Standing Orders, but such a motion may be made only with leave of the Speaker, who must not allow the motion, if it appears to him to be an abuse of the Rules of the House, or an infringement of the rights of a minority of the Members”.

I do not know who would want to speak and, to that extent, it has the possibility of infringing the rights of that member and that being the case, I will not allow the Motion.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Mr. Speaker, I adhere to your ruling, but I express a level of regret simply because...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you on a point of Order?

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: What is the a point of order because I have made a ruling. I would also suggest that a lot of time has been exhausted in dealing with the procedural matter which, in my view, is a minor one, so unless you are raising a substantive matter, please let me hear the Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, having moved the Motion that the House comes out of Committee of Supply to facilitate your presence, I now seek to move that the House resolves itself back into Committee of Supply as a result of Your Honour's ruling just now.

H/A49/12:00 noon. Sequence 12

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Mr. SPEAKER: That is not necessary, Honourable Member. Honourable Member, it is not necessary to move such a motion.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I could be allowed to finish my speech.

Mr. SPEAKER: No. You would not be allowed to finish your speech.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, you just Rulesd in here that you are protecting minority Members, and if, therefore, minority Members, they should be protected in all ways.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I am allowed to speak, but you Ruled against me.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I want to say that I have noticed that there is one Honourable Member who insists on challenging the rulings of this Honourable Chair in this way, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, and I will not tolerate it.

Honourable Members, the House was in Committee of Supply before that interruption, and to that we will now return.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and House reverted to Committee of Supply, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I would like to inform Honourable Members that we have one-and-three-quarter-hours more. I recognise the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I resume where I was continuing on the last occasion in which I contributed in this debate. I was speaking about the fact that it was argued in the Opposition, that the Government needed to alert the country to the nature of the cuts which are taking place. I was speaking on the last occasion about the cap, or flexibility allowances for police. The significance of that cap, is even all the more so, given the level of vacancies in the Royal Barbados Police Force. If we go Department by Department, we will see the same concerns.

There are people in the schools who are complaining that they have not been given enough materials to be able to carry out their duties in the school system, but yet we can see \$6 million being spent on Constituency Councils.

Now the Prime Minister tried to introduce a red herring, in my view, by suggesting that when we said that he could defer the opening of Embassies, not open them, but defer, in order to meet the expenditure constraints that he would inevitably have, he has sought, as is his wont, to make that substantive issue, but I only say to him that if they were seriously interested in building out business out of the second largest economy in the world, then he would not have reversed the decision to open a commercial office in Hong Kong, which was to have been opened in February, 2008, so I take that for what it is worth, a part of a political response of the Party in the context of the debate.

Sir, let me say what is of concern to us. In March when we spoke, we projected that the deficit this year would be close to 8 per cent. Mr. Chairman, the Prime Minister has acknowledged today that the deficit would be in the vicinity, he is projecting now, not a 5 per cent anymore, but a 7.8 per cent. Sir, we projected that the revenue would be down. In truth and in fact, rather than revenue growing by 7 per cent, the revenue for the first six months of the year has declined, not grown by 7 per cent.

Sir, what concerns us, while there are one or two things, we support some elements of the expansion of the capital works programme, but we feel that it has come a year too late. In 2008, when we were telling the Prime Minister, in the Estimates of March 2008, do not cut back on the capital works programme, that was when the Government needed to be creating activity to hold economic activity in the country, the Prime Minister's response was to increase diesel prices by 77 per cent in April, causing a major increase in cost for every enterprise in this country, failing to understand that the pricing of diesel was critical to the creation of jobs.

Mr. Chairman, that was followed no later than three months with a Budget that sought to extract from the economy over \$104 million in taxes and fees, at the very time when enterprises in this country and households could take no more, from rum shop fees to all kinds of licencing fees, to bicycle fees, to road taxes.

Mr. Chairman, there are people in this country, as recently as Friday night in the Constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, a young man has been laid off from a West Coast hotel until after Christmas. He indicated to me, at the basketball court in King's Village, that he has had to put down his car to take the bus, because he cannot afford to pay the road taxes and the insurance. I thanked him for the fact that he, at least, put his down, because regrettably, there may be others who might have been tempted to drive and they are a risk to people on the road.

Sir, that Budget in August, 2008, wrecked havoc on enterprises, and where are the facts that support it? The savings on the commercial and business sectors of this country declined by 15 per cent in 2008, declined by 15 per cent. It meant then that Barbadian businesses were, in fact, drawing on their own savings to keep their businesses afloat.

Now the Prime Minister suggested that he recognised the problem in the Budget of this year, but his solution about businesses having problems keeping themselves afloat. That is a fact. His solution was to bring an initiative with the National Insurance Scheme to offer people the right not to pay National Insurance this year, for it is to be converted as a loan and to be repaid over five years.

Mr. Chairman, it is my understanding that not a single business in Barbados, has applied for the right and benefits under that National Insurance initiative announced by the Prime Minister.

Sir, we said at the time that we thought it was inappropriate, that you were asking people to hold a line with their expenditure, particularly in relation to employees, in exchange for the equivalent of 10 per cent of payroll, and that it would be unattractive in order to help businesses in Barbados to stay afloat.

Well, the proof is there now. Almost six months later, not a single Barbados business has come forward for a benefit under the National Insurance Scheme. Sir, you may not want to listen to the Barbados Labour Party and to us, but he has certainly to listen to the fact that nobody has come forward.

The tourism industry needed funds. We supported it because we established something similar post 9/11 when the planes stopped flying.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, the Honourable Minister of Tourism, made a big deal in this House. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North well remembers, when he said that this is now going to be not just for hotels. He excited the expectation and the appetite of the ancillary providers in tourism, the taxi drivers, the water sports operators, all manner of providers of skills in tourism. Those are the facts.

The first tranche was \$15 million, and he told those people, do not lay off anybody, keep your businesses open, rally with us and the Government will meet all, if not a percentage, of the extent to which your revenue is down over last year, based on the difficulties that the tourist season is going through. People took that in good faith, as they are entitled to do when their Government speaks.

H A49 12.10 p.m. Sequence 13

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House A49, Sequence 14, 12.10 p.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: What are the facts? The first quarter, January to March, \$15 million was put in the Tourism Relief Fund by the Government. Mr. Chairman, there were \$39.5 million in claims. The people who claimed were told that they could only get a percentage of their claims met and that the Government would make up the difference in the next quarter. Those were the undertakings given by the Ministry of Tourism to the people who applied.

The next quarter came, April to June. The Government put another \$10 million in the Tourism Relief Fund. Do you know, Mr. Chairman, that the value of the claims on the Tourism Relief Fund for April to June, I am told, is in the vicinity of \$48 million, so that \$48 million in claims against the \$10 million that is there, bearing in mind that there was a deficit of almost \$25 million from the first quarter. So that the cumulative deficit in claims for the first six months of the year, against \$25 million in the Tourism Fund is now in the vicinity of \$64 million.

Sir, that is the scale of the pressure being felt by the providers of tourism in this country and what should be salutary. What should cause us to sit up is that Tourism enterprises that traditionally, even after 9/11 would not have claimed against the Tourism Relief Fund, are now making claims because of how bad the situation is, Sir.

I say this, not with any pleasure, but it causes me to wonder, and it is one of the reasons we feel there must be more debate on the choices that the Government is making. We feel that to spend \$45 million to do the capital works at the back of Sherbourne might secure 400 jobs, but what is at stake is 10 000 jobs in the tourism sector, and by the way, that is the same \$45 million by which you are in a deficit, with the claims in the tourism sector from January to June. Do you spend your money on one project that might create 400 jobs while risking 10 000 for the whole sector, or do you provide the funds to the productive sectors to help enterprises keep their heads above water?

Mr. Chairman, the one thing is this. When growth returns to the economy, you need to have productive enterprises functioning, and if you do not, it is going to take two to four years for a business to be able to establish and be able to function.

What is the human tragedy to all of this in tourism? You have people who are on two-day and three-day weeks. You have people like the youngster I met in King's Village Friday night, who up to this morning text me, hoping that

he could get a construction job at the Crane. He has not been able to do so and is looking for anything because he has three children. He is a Barbadian and you have other people who are on two and three days a week.

The Honourable Member for St. James South has a glib approach to everything such that it does not matter to him whether or not people are suffering because he is so well insulated from the suffering, that he does not need to consider it, and I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that there are serious issues confronting this country.

The Prime Minister spoke to the issue of the re-measurement of the economy. In 2006, it was clear to us that there were elements of the economies that were not being captured, economic performance. The base data has not been revised since 1974, and we are conscious that the results of that study, which we became aware of, were into the Government by reason of the IMF Exit Report in July, some five months ago, which said that the Government was already in receipt of this study.

Our simple point to the Government is this. The Study shows - according to the IMF Exit Report and I may quote from it and make it a document of the House again - that the work has revealed that nominal GDP was underestimated by some seven to 20 per cent over the past two decades. This is the July Report. By September, Mr. Chairman - and we have not seen the study and I would like to see it, having been the one who helped commission it but - the September Article 4 Consultation Report, reported that rather than the wide range, which they referred to in July of seven to 20 per cent, that in truth and in fact at page 11 of the 2009 IMF Article 4 Report - which I will make a document of this House again - this study implies that the 2007 nominal GDP - not the two decades now, they narrowed it down to 2007 - was underestimated by 15 per cent, mainly due to the under coverage of the financial and tourism sectors. I well believe there may be other areas and that is why I want to see the study, such as the informal areas that may not be fully captured there.

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

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

It then goes on to say that the Mission recommended that "the Authorities publish the revised data as soon as possible, as the corrected nominal GDP data would have important implications for a number of macro economic factors."

Mr. Chairman, that is just a fancy speech to be able to say that the debt to GDP ratio is likely to drop simply

because if you have a larger GDP, your debt as a percentage of GDP is likely to be smaller.

The simple point that we make is that the investment grade status is important to Barbados for one reason, mainly that it determines whether we can access borrowing and the cost at which we can access borrowing. If we fall below investment grade status to junk grade status, the reality is that certain institutional investors, like pension funds are prohibiting them from lending to us on the international capital markets.

The Prime Minister spoke of the efforts to get the de graduation of certain Caribbean countries. Once again, a fancy way of saying that we need to be able to allow Barbados to borrow from the World Bank again because we were graduated, since they felt that we were doing too well as a country and we had more of a middle income profile, so that the capital markets remain a critical source for us in order to finance our development, in the absence of that freedom of choice among the international financial institutions and that is why it is important.

I would like, as the Prime Minister sometimes, to be able to say that these people's views are sometimes a little off-coloured. It is true that they accused the Government today in the newspaper of not being proactive enough, and not being timely enough, but there are certain things that I would stand with the Prime Minister of this country on, as it relates to the international financial institutions and rating agencies.

Sir, what we cannot ignore is that until such time as we have the alternative to borrow to finance our development, that the international capital markets remain critical and in that context, therefore, maintaining investment grade status is critical. It, therefore, must be of concern that we had a downgrade in credit rating from BBB+ to BBB earlier this year and now a downgrade in economic outlook, which is different from the credit rating itself.

I say simply on this issue, Mr. Chairman, that if we can re-measure the debt to GDP to give the Prime Minister of Barbados a little elbow room, to be able to not only seek to subsidise the PSVs, the fishermen and the manufacturers, but all Barbadians, in relation to the purchase of diesel, then this Opposition Barbados Labour Party will support him.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member's time has expired.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Thank you, Sir, I will come back because there are critical issues in here that require a full debate from which the Government seems to be running.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, there are indeed some critical matters that need to be explained, but I am convinced that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East does not have the capacity to explain any of them, Sir, and I will, therefore, have to assist her along because there are some attempts to clearly mislead this Honourable Chamber, regarding some matters spoken to the last Budget presented by the Honourable Member for St. John, the Prime Minister.

House A49, Sequence 14, 12.20 p.m.

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Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: It was stated by the Leader of the Opposition that this Administration snatched from the pockets of the people of this country via taxation a total tax of \$104 million.

Mr. Chairman, what the Honourable Member does not understand is that budgets have revenue-raising measures and revenue-losing measures, therefore, if a proper analysis is done, one would have recognised that when there were \$104 million in revenue-raising measures, there were also concomitantly \$82 million in revenue-losing measures, therefore, there was a net impact of \$22 million. That is what I have to start to educate the Honourable Members about. It is a matter of basic arithmetic, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to spend a few minutes explaining to Barbadians particularly why it has been the words of both Standard and Poor's, and Moody's to indicate that the problems prior to the downgrades were not of the making of this Administration. The Honourable Member for St. John painstakingly in the last Budget read almost two or three paragraphs where Moody's made it quite clear that there was this massive build up in the country's public sector debt over the last 10 years. It was restated by Standard and Poor's.

Mr. Chairman, I always like to go to the numbers and I would want to show how the debt profile, and in particular, the fiscal deficit problem in this country now has evolved. Sir, that is why I like to go back to the old document.

Sir, I went as far back as 2006. Sir, I remember when we were in Opposition warning the Government that they were creating a situation where they were decreasing taxation in Barbados. They reduced corporate taxation, personal taxation and taxation from insurance companies. They were reducing, reducing, reducing, but they were not having any revenue-raising measures.

What is the evidence, Sir? I will go back to 2006. Sir, I am using revised figures. For 2006-2007, it was \$2.257 billion. The expenditure at the time, Mr. Chairman, was \$2, 662 million. I, therefore, move to 2007-2008 when the revenue was essentially \$2.36 million, no real change in revenue, and the expenditure was a whopping \$4 billion, an increase of almost \$2 billion in expenditure in one fiscal year. That is where the fundamental problem started in this country. That meant that on your Accountant General's basis, you had to look for that \$2 billion in expenditure, and that is where the problem started. Let any of them get up in here and refute it, or call the short man from St. Peter. These are the facts, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I will go forward and go to 2008-2009, and see what has happened. This Administration just took up office in January, coming on to the last rows of that financial year. Sir, the revised revenue was \$2.4 billion, no fundamental change.

Sir, this Administration, recognising the problem, reduced that expenditure by almost \$700 million on the Accountant General's basis, which was a proactive move, because we understood what were the economic throes that we had. We were trying even back then, Mr. Chairman, to contain the fiscal position. Sir, if the Honourable Prime Minister did not set up a series of revenue-raising measures, we would not have had a revenue accrual for 2009-2010 to the tune of \$2.8 billion. That is how you manage a recession when you have a fiscal deficit closing around your neck. We had no other alternative. That is the way it is done economically.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: I just read all of them from 2004, all up way up. You cannot get new figures. I can tell you that.

Mr. Chairman, let me go on to one other critical fact here that is bothering me immensely. If the Honourable Members on the Other Side would read, there are two accepted principles nowadays regarding how you deal with an economic crisis. The old Adam Smith approach, which was revised by the modern writer Freeman, utilised the concept that Governments do not get involved directly via capital works projects and other stimulus programmes, but would engage in creating the enabling environment for the private sector to grow their businesses and execute employment generation and so on.

That approach, Sir, is classical Reaganomics where you would ask for tax cuts and other types of situations for the businesses to develop. The other alternative is to do both, a tax cut approach concomitantly with a Government expenditure approach which is what this Administration has engaged in.

In the throes of the economic crisis, what did the Honourable Prime Minister do? Not only were we aware that the increase in salaries that were part of the collective bargaining arrangements would have had in its own effect a part of a stimulus programme - it put more monies in the hands of Barbadians to spend - we were aware what were the problems, but we had to carry that out.

In addition to that, Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Prime Minister removed the environmental levy on a sleuth of goods in this country so that poor people could get cheaper foods in this country. The Honourable Prime Minister also expanded the basket of goods that was zero-rated off the VAT. What also occurred is that while this was going on trying to make sure that Barbadians had a little bit more money to spend during the crisis, we also went into a fiscal approach, that is, accepting that Government had to take some responsibility to increase aggregate demand in the country and drive the economic growth.

We sought to enhance our capital works programmes, thanks to Michael Lashley. We do not talk about housing projects we have on books. We have Marchfield, Workhall, Constant and Greens. We have all sort of houses that are real houses up there, not houses on a drawing board, not houses in a land bank and all of that kind of thing, and no bumble bee houses and all sorts of foolishness. Mr. Chairman, we went further and started a series of road works in this country. I am thankful that St. John and St. Lucy are now getting the benefit of road works in this country. I am also thankful that the roads that they were planning to do in St. Philip to deal with me and Michael, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, are now being done.

House A49 Sequence 15

12.30 p.m.

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Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: The point is, these are not roads that are still on the drawing-board. We are an active Government. We do things. We do not talk about things. Sir, I am happy that Market Road that was bad for donkey years is now being done. I am happy that Nolan Main Road is now being done. We have Eastbourne, Cox Hill and Hamblin Roads being done. These are the stimulus programmes. We have men and women at work.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, in addition, we continued recognising that Government had to be part of this drive for economic development in this country. We have the new Carribean Examinations Council

building coming on stream. We have already broken the foundation for the new 10-storeyed building at Warrens, a second one will be built very shortly.

A new school at Staple Grove is on stream. The renovation to the Lodge School is on stream. Renovations on Harrison College have already started. This is a Government that is out there trying to maintain economic growth and development by spending money, so that there is construction work in this country. This is what we are supposed to do.

Mr. Chairman, I am hearing talk here tonight that they want to give Barbadians the impression that nothing is happening. Sir, I would want only to speak to the monitoring responses. Sir, there are some who believe that the Central Bank should be independent, that it should have no impact whatsoever, that it should not be oriented or related to politics at all, as though the Governor of the Central Bank and Economist of the Central Bank are not living in an economy that is run by politicians.

Sir, the Central Bank of Barbados has done wonderful work in recognising the importance of small businesses and micro businesses in this country. The Central Bank expanded its credit guarantee scheme, not only to include medium-sized businesses, but also to enhance the amount of money that it was prepared to guarantee.

Mr. Chairman, what they also did was to reduce what you would call the discount rate, which essentially is the rate that the Central Bank lends the commercial banks for loans. That was reduced from 17.5 per cent to 12.2 per cent. What was also significant was the reduction in the deposit rate, which was reduced by 150 basis points, within the last two years. Mr. Chairman, these are monetary policies that were designed to make sure that Barbadians had access to credit, that Barbadians had access to more money to be able to carry out their normal economic activities.

Mr. Chairman, it is all right for Honourable Members of the Opposition to rant and rave, but I am hoping that Barbadians are more sensible people and that they can understand exactly what I am saying. I think they understood quite clearly what the Prime Minister has said this morning. I am hoping that they would work with us, as we continue to put Barbados on the type of economic platform that is necessary for development.

Mr. Chairman, the last thing I would say is that there is something called "correlation" in Mathematics. Sir, when one thing goes up, a positive correlation is that the other thing goes up. When something goes down, a negative correlation is that one goes down while the other goes up.

Sir, I cannot understand the mouthings of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. Sir, if Barbados depends on the United States of America, if we depend on England, if we depend on Germany, if we depend on Canada, if all the world is in a bad economic recession, those economies are supposed to be doing good, their economies are supposed to be in the throes of a crisis heading down, but Barbados is supposed to go up, and we depend upon them.

Sir, this is mathematical absurdity. That is absolute foolishness. Sir, that is one of the reasons this Parliament is going to get very heated today, because one of the things that bothers me is when there are unreasonable comments that are devoid of thought. Sir, I am very serious about this. I will not sit down in here and allow the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East to mislead the people of Barbados, deliberately or otherwise.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, it is my duty, as Minister with responsibility for Economic Affairs, to correct the Honourable Member and I will do so with great distinction and with great honour.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

On the motion of Hon. R. D. JONES, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress to His Honour the SPEAKER and asked for leave to sit again.

Mr. CHAIRMAN vacated the Chair. Mr. SPEAKER assumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable Sitting be now suspended until 1.45 p.m.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 1.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.37 p.m.

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RESUMPTION

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

Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House resumed Committee of Supply, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is now in Committee of Supply. The Honourable Member for the City.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, I rise to support this Head before us and wish to say at the outset, that I am a little disturbed by what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East mentioned in one of her presentations on this matter, where the Honourable Member alleged that schools were being starved of resources to procure essential supplies.

Sir, as Minister of State within the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, I would wish to disassociate myself from such connotations because, Mr. Chairman, this Administration has been very professional and, indeed, I would include the hardworking public servants within the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, in ensuring that in making the necessary cut backs in expenditure, that we concentrate on discretionary spending.

H/A49/1.50 p.m. Sequence 17

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: We have just gone through the Estimates exercise within the Ministry where members of the Ministry worked beyond the call of duty two consecutive Saturdays, during the week from 8.30 a.m. to almost 6.00 p.m. meeting with the respective Departments in the various secondary schools and other Departments within the Ministry.

I must commend these public officers for ensuring that in making these cut backs we were not irresponsible in terms of starving the schools and the various units within the Ministry of the essential services that they provide.

Mr. Chairman, I can assure the public that this Administration is focussed on discretionary areas, be it travel. If schools customarily send staff members to conferences every year, we look to see if, maybe you can send them every other year, given the current prevailing economic realities. We noticed that, in some instances, travel allowance would be applied for members of staff who are accompanying school teams on bus tours, and it was argued that, these members of staff are better placed on the buses to accompany the children and to properly supervise them, rather than claiming travel allowance for using their own private vehicles to the various venues.

These are areas where we asked Members of Government to be realistic, given the current global economic downturn. These are the areas that we focussed on, not on essential supplies. We are not seeking to compromise the quality of the delivery of the educational services provided to the nation's children. I want to be clear on that at the outset.

Sir, let me continue to support the Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, where he is publicly, in recent days and today, calling upon Barbadians to tighten our belts.

I remember the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, making the point that some people have champagne taste with mauby pockets. We, as a people, must see the relevance of this today. The Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, made the point, and I support it, that discretionary spending with respect to family must be reduced to suit the current economic challenge facing us.

We must internalise this and make our individual efforts in the interest of the national economy, be it the support of foreign artistes coming in, but more than that, I support entertainment. It is very relaxing and is part of your cultural expression and so on.

I am saying that it is not necessary when a person wishes to go on a cruise or a public show, they must purchase, get totally new outfits for each event. There is nothing wrong with wearing an outfit more than once, Mr. Chairman. Do not try to adopt the lifestyles of the rich and famous that we see on the television networks in developed countries, where rich people may have that discretionary income. We must be realistic.

Sir, it is like keeping up with the Joneses. You do not want to be seen with the same outfit as somebody else at the same event. Obviously we would want to look good, but you do not have to go to the extreme, when in so doing we are compromising the provision of essential services to ourselves and our families, be it food, be it the payment of rent, or other utilities, which are electricity and water.

Sir, even the issue of what we buy. We do not have to buy the latest brand name gear, both male and female, shoes, jewelery, perfumes, so a simple perfume is not good enough, some people want to buy perfume costing hundreds of dollars when they really cannot afford it.

As I said, we must make that individual decision to play our part to reduce the expenditure on imported goods. When we import these goods we have to pay foreign exchange, hard foreign exchange for these imports. We need to dampen the demand for these luxurious imported goods and support local manufacturers.

Sir, we can go for the locally produced Ponche de Creme. I do not want to call these brand names, as opposed to the expensive Irish Cream, imported from abroad, also the local rum, those Barbadian brown rums, or see through. We do not know that Barbadian brown rum is a premium. It fetches a very high price in Europe or North America. If you look at the history, Barbados rum is the best in the world, so when we can enjoy a good Bajan rum and coke and have a good time, rather than going for the brandy imported from abroad, to prove to somebody that we are keeping up with the Joneses, champagne taste and mauby pockets.

Sir, I am saying that each and every one of us, regardless of political affiliation, must buy into this concept of being prudent in terms of discretionary expenditure, because we must provide our children, dependents and the elderly, their necessary means of survival. If you are going to compromise this at the expense of simply keeping up with the Joneses, this is not to be encouraged.

Sir, heavy expenditure on cellphones, we must instill within our children and others, that this issue of topping up every two minutes, getting a phone card, and just talking away this money we just cannot afford. We have to cut out this and stick to the essentials.

Sir, I go further and congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, and the Government in general, when we are looking to set up and fortify states, certain corporations to ensure that certain essential foodstuff is readily available, and to bring down the retail price, generally, so that working-class Barbadians can have a good source of protein.

I myself, I am not afraid to say that I grew up on chicken backs and chicken necks, corning hens, not cornish hens. Do you know those old layers that after a while they are not laying any more, you can get them from the chicken farm, a whole chicken for less than \$5. You just have to put a little paw paw to tenderise the meat, and that is a good source of protein, but under the Barbados Labour Party, turkey wings and chicken wings were hard to get. The Democratic Labour Party Government knows that the working-class people need a cheap source of protein, and we are ensuring that this is provided for them.

Mr. Chairman, I was surprised when I was patronising a retail outlet in Bridgetown, a little rice and stew, a little basic meal for less than \$20, and being a bachelor that I am for the time being, some young people were shocked. They said, "Wait, I thought Ministers had to eat in high-class restaurants. I did not know they eat in the same places that we eat." Sir, I am saying that we must not be so bourgeois in our outlook.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East talk about cars and so on, but what is wrong with car pooling, Mr. Chairman? When you have five cars in one household and the members of the family may be going to the same venue, and everybody has to jump into their car increasing the level of carbon monoxide to destroy the environment, while reducing the bonding among the family members when they can car pool, or your neighbour is going to your school. Car pool and reduce the traffic congestion and build a community spirit, as I am being reminded by a comrade on This Side.

Mr. Chairman, we must be resourceful as a people and be resilient, face the realities and play our part in reducing the expenditure, in terms of foreign imported goods where we have limited foreign exchange.

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House A49, Sequence 19, 2.00 p.m.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, let me go further to say that Barbadians must also be looking at providing legitimate sources of income for themselves and their families, and not necessarily waiting on the Government, or the private sector, to provide a job. Sir, not everybody will get a job immediately and so we must promote entrepreneurship where people are able to lift themselves up by their bootstraps, be resourceful, take initiatives, form cottage industries and be engaged in the distributive sector, retaining products, like manufacturing in the production of food stuff, cakes, pastries, condiments, sauces, jams and jellies.

I congratulate the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme. I was at the National Youth Awards just last Sunday and we had hundreds of young people being recognised for the important work that they are doing in national development, and at the end, we had displays of young people who are business owners, people who started businesses at age 12. This is a new entrepreneurial class that is taking this country forward.

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

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. Chairman, this must be congratulated. These people must be encouraged. People from Hall's Road in my Constituency are engaged in event planning. These people are thinking outside the box and providing legitimate sources of income for themselves and their families. They are not waiting on anybody to give them a job.

Sometimes you have a job but you are just “over broke” as some people say because you need more income to really survive, so some people may have a job, but then they are able to engage in other sources of income. Mr. Chairman, we are teaching people on this side to fish, rather than just giving them a fish, to be perpetually dependent on the State, or other agencies for survival.

Sir, when you are an entrepreneur, you are independent and nobody can fire you at a moment's notice. I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that I congratulate these entrepreneurs, young and not so young, who are being creative, in terms of the manufacturing of the textile industry such as embroidery, knitting, the production of batik, tie dye, and art, even joinery.

Sir, one time you would say a joiner was just a low level job and you are an apprentice to a one-man shop in a village but, Mr. Chairman, now we have seen furniture manufacturers, who have a shortage of skilled joiners who could make these sophisticated bed heads of mahogany and other hard woods, and living room and dinning room furniture.

Sir, you know the last Administration did not have much time for this, but this Administration is seeking to empower these people to propel themselves and, therefore, our country forward in this new millennium.

Mr. Chairman, that is why the Honourable Member for St. John, the Prime Minister took the initiative to rename our Ministry, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, where we seek to develop the human resource capacity of our country, to take our country forward.

Mr. Chairman, I close by saying that I noticed that in Britain, for example, many of the people who were displaced by the global economic downturn, who worked in the financial sector are now retooling, getting education qualifications and becoming teachers.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member's time has expired.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In concluding, I am saying that we, as a people, must be prepared to go back to school and garner skills so that we can be able to move from one source of income to another in a seamless way, to move forward ourselves and our country.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Asides.

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Chairman, I rise to make this brief intervention and in this respect, I need to make an observation on two pronouncements that came by way of this Parliament earlier today.

One longstanding and experienced Honourable Member made bold to say that the economy could do well with an increase in aggregate demand. He suggested that, based on the reality of the situation where there is an increase in local consumption, then that would trigger off an increase in local production, and then it would impact positively in favour of the country.

However, such an argument holds firm for closed economies, where if your level of production is much higher than your importation, then the particular observation to stimulate production locally would be a good thing, is very much in order. The reality of the situation though, Mr. Chairman, is that this economy is open and that in excess of 70 per cent of what comes in, is really coming in by way of imports, and that importation would definitely put pressure on foreign reserves. Sir, I just wanted to make a brief comment on that particular observation that was made earlier today.

The second observation, Sir, is also worthy of support, not just worthy of noting and that observation was the Smith Freedman Laisser-faire Observation. That needs to be commented on, and I am going to comment on it, taking into account the economic and social reality of Barbados.

Sir, we cannot determine policy in Barbados along purest economic lines to achieve economic objectives, without taking into account the social reality. We are a slowly evolving developing people and, as was just said, we are people ripe and ready for human resource development. In a situation where successive Administrations have placed a high premium on the growth of our people from a sociological, or societal perspective, then any notion of *laisser-faire* has to be ruled out.

Laisser-faire is not desirable in the context of a society and an economy that has the structure that the Barbados society and economy have, and successive Governments are going to have to continue looking to that ethos that has informed governance in Barbados since World War II.

A special ethos has informed governance in Barbados since 1945, and that ethos often from a jurisprudential point of view, involves the balancing of compelling interests. In this Barbados, we have to balance the interest in such a way that those who have, and their

interests are taken into account alongside those who have not.

In this post colonial society and an economy of ours, we cannot go too far supporting the very rich in a way where in going far to support them, we actually hold back, or retard the progress of the poor.

By the same token, we have to identify the poor segments and lift them up, educationally and spiritually, and we should try our best to find policies to achieve a greater measure of income re-distribution and if not income re-distribution, re-distribution of wealth, the purpose being to ensure that to those that have not, there is an opportunity for them to get.

I want to make those observations, Mr. Chairman, in the context of what really has been happening in Barbados in the last 22 months. I remember five weeks or so ago, I was on the Floor of this Honourable House - Mr. Chairman, I do not think you would forget - and one Honourable Member made bold to cite some independent international journal or magazine and my response was to pick up the local Barbados Central Bank Report and I did so, and said that I was doing it on the side of indigenous and local institutions and I was vindicated because the very next day, the outgoing Governor repeated precisely what I had read from page 104 to 109 of the Central Bank's Report for the year 2008.

House A49, Sequence 19, 2.10 p.m.

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Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: I therefore feel justified in the contributions I have made because that 2008 prediction had actually suggested what can happen in Barbados' economy in the year 2009.

We over here take no comfort at all in the fact that whatever the cause is, our tourism has declined. If our tourism has declined, income earned by tourism would decline, employment generated by tourism would decline, even things like corporation taxes by those entities that are incorporated in the hotel sector would decline and overall earnings of foreign exchange would also decline.

Let me just go off tangent somewhat, Mr. Chairman, to go back to this question of balance of payments and imports. Honourable Members have not been contradicting themselves. What Honourable Members have done is take a position consistent stand either with their experience with where they want to take Barbados, or consistent with their analysis. Let us take the question of imports.

Mr. Chairman, it is no point in me saying that we import excessively without making the pointed observation

that has to be made beyond the leakage of foreign reserves out of the economy. Mr. Chairman, beyond the fact that we stand to lose foreign reserves through high imports, we also have to pause and look at the nature and character of all the imports that come in here and then we would realise that a lot of what we bring in here we cannot produce. Mr. Chairman, a lot of it is technology and a lot of it also constitutes raw materials for investment in economic activity.

Mr. Chairman, if ever there is justification for importing particular commodities, there have to be justification for the importation of technology that can be invested in business, that can generate business activity, that can cause an increase in production, that can see people develop skills in operating the technology, and ultimately such technology can bare well for business activity and eventually in a sort of cyclical type of way, bring about the type of economic, structural change that we need.

One lament I have that as a Caribbean citizen is that we have Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and others and we have the University of the West Indies with different campuses. Our problem in the Caribbean is that an insufficient amount of investments and an insufficient amount of attention has gone into the development of research and the development of technology. Mr. Chairman, there is a crying need for us to wake up to the reality that there could be indigenous technologies that we can develop which would impact positively on our national input.

I also wanted to mention, Sir, in the context of imports, that there are certain things that we simply cannot produce. Certain tropical countries do not have it within their natural flora and fauna to produce particular things, and so we are going to have to continue importing factor inputs, raw materials and the like.

Our future fiscal and monetary policy must not be permitted to militate against the healthy importation of technology and against the healthy importation of raw materials. I, therefore as a Barbadian, would welcome any policy designed to make us more technologically rich and to make us produce more, but I would not favour a policy where we allow leakages of foreign exchange out of the economy through lavish and wild spending.

I was a little amused when one Honourable Member said that irrespective of our political persuasion, we often keep up with the Joneses. Mr. Chairman, I focussed on a particular Jones in here and I said to myself that it was rather ironic that somebody could say that non-partisan Barbadians, in looking to lead their lives, ought not to keep up with the Joneses.

I smiled at that one because I found that a little ironic because the Jones or the Joneses that we are familiar with are not known to be spend-thrift, nor to be flamboyant, arrogant, wild and profligate, so perhaps we could ask the Joneses that we know to go public and set an example and tell Barbadians not to focus on White Horse Scotch Whisky, or Chevas Regal Brandy, but on Miss Mary's Mauby.

I conclude, Mr. Chairman, by making an observation. Last week, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, through its radio programme, went back to the 1960s and 1970s, and twice in one day actually spoke to the question of music and culture as they were in the 1950s and 1960s, and reference was made to Barbara and the Rhythmaires, the Blue Rhythm Combo, Jackie Opel and such like, and I immediately started to think.

Mr. Chairman, nowadays, we have Rihanna and others. We have had Gabby, Red Plastic Bag and John King around for a long time. We have had an abundance of talent on display in this tiny 166 square miles. The advantage Rihanna has on all of them is that she was able to get to a big market. Some of our very talented people only have a tiny market here in Barbados and in a few of the islands.

Mr. Chairman, I was remarking about the success of some of our artistes in circumstances where culture is showing itself as being able to have potential to allow for greater economic activity. At the same time, the Registrar of Corporate Affairs would tell you that a lot of the newly funded businesses are businesses which are formed by entertainers. At the same time, a lot of young people are beginning to look at this whole question of education, training and practical living and such like.

Only Sunday morning, I was speaking to two remarkably young people and one of them was saying that the little girl in the family is already an academic and an intellectual, but that the little boy in the family was already talented and moving in the direction of giving vent to his talent.

I know some university professors out of England who do not take kindly to the idea that their salary is at one level and a footballer's salary is 15 and 20 times what they work for. Mr. Chairman, the reality of the situation is that those involved in entertainment who get to a good big market can make much of their living.

The reality of the situation too where small countries like Barbados need to maximise their export, is that all encouragement should be given by the authorities to encourage and to inspire our people to make the world their market. A lot of our indigenous and original business

people see the market as Broad Street and Swan Street, and possibly Roebuck Street.

Mr. Chairman, in this era with globalisation and trade liberalisation, and with the availability of fast ships, aircraft and such like, every Barbadian entrepreneur must transcend the narrowness of our small and tiny market and see the globe as being a stage where men and women act, and where there is potential for us Barbadians to benefit from the demonstration and the manifestation of the type of talent for which this country has been known in cricket and for which this country can be known in other areas of human endeavour.

With those remarks, Mr. Chairman, I am deeply obliged to you and I am currently residing in your debt. I thank you.

House A49 Sequence 20

2.20 p.m.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I enter this debate to speak to a few broad issues. Sir, it is significant for me, as I indicated, that this debate is taking place in the context of a Supplementary request of this Honourable House for approximately \$68 million. The truth is that the request that is before this Honourable Chamber will, in fact, approximate to almost another 1 per cent of Gross Domestic Product.

Sir, while Government is coming here for these requests, one assumes that the cuts that have been referred to earlier are taking place in other sectors. The question, therefore is, will this vote today for the provision of funds for the subsidies for the University of the West Indies and the other entities necessitate other further cuts beyond the 2.5 per cent that was required?

I ask this because the Prime Minister in his figures this morning would have indicated that the deficit this year so far is \$523 million, as opposed to \$374 million. Therefore, when one adds the approximately \$60 million, it means that the deficit is likely to be more around the 8 per cent that we projected in March, rather than the 5.9 per cent that was originally projected by Government.

Sir, before I come to the macro things, the truth is, on the matter that is directly before this Honourable Chamber in terms of the subsidies, \$16 million is being requested to cover Government's decision, which came after the 77 per cent increase as an after thought, to realise

that they had to provide some level of protection to the PSVs, fishermen, farmers and generally to manufacturers.

Mr. Chairman, the truth is, it was our contention then that to carry diesel prices up by that level, even in trying to come and carve out a subsidy for these four groups, does not insulate the economy from the level of the cost of living increases, neither does it insulate the particular sectors from the pressure of laying off people, or from being uncompetitive.

Sir, it is still the position of the Barbados Labour Party that the better approach would have been to moderate the level of increase in diesel, rather than seek to carry it up to that level. Sir, as we all know, when people carry up prices in the domestic market, they very rarely bring them back down, so there was an accumulative impact on the cost of living.

Mr. Chairman, it is not me who is complaining. If you go into supermarkets, you would see people now counting out the goods and begging the cashiers to count these first 10 items before they decide how much they are going to pay. Sir, that is the reality of people's experience.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I say that the noises from the Other Side have come because the truth is in the home. Sir, when I heard the Honourable Member for St. Philip West speaking about blame, the truth is that this Government needs to understand, as others have been telling them, that Barbadians are not interested in who you are trying to blame, Barbadians are interested in what you are going to do about the situation.

Mr. Chairman, we want to know what this Government would do. It is not the interest of Barbadians at this stage for anything else. The tourism people want to know what this Government is going to do about the fact that the deficit in relation to claims on the funds for the first half of the year are about \$45 million. The manufacturers want to know what you are going to do about the fact that manufacturing has declined by 11.8 per cent this year. The International Business Sector wants to know why the numbers are still down and what you are going to do to help them stabilise, particularly since countries such as Bermuda have been aggressive in putting alternative plans in place.

Mr. Chairman, the reality is that anybody who is concerned about the economy wants to know what the Government is going to do about the fact that our exports are down by 14 per cent this year, and that the exports in services, the travel receipts are down by 11.7 per cent, that unemployment, which stood at 8.4 per cent last year for the third quarter, now today, according to the Prime Minister,

stands at 10.5 per cent, an equivalent difference of approximately 3 300 people more without jobs in the third quarter of this year than in the third quarter of last year. These are the things that Barbadians want to know.

Mr. Chairman, I am not fazed by those who would seek to make comments. The truth is that even with an injection of \$376 million in foreign exchange loans into this economy, the reality is that the gain is only \$241 million. It means that there was a further drop of \$135 million in the foreign reserves of this country. Sir, what is significant is that by every index, the reality for ordinary Barbadians is not good because of the performance of the economy.

Mr. Chairman, it is not good enough for the Prime Minister to say that we are coming to develop early warning signals, as he said this morning. The Minister for Economic Affairs told us that years ago, and the early warning signals have now become late warning signals. There is no mechanism in terms of the medium-term plan we know to which they are sticking. If that plan introduced in December last year is not working, then Standard and Poor's have said today that the Government needs to introduce a medium-term plan.

Sir, I would have assumed that if the Government medium-term plan is there, that they could have shared it with Standard and Poor's. I would have assumed that they would have indicated that this is what they are committed to.

Mr. Chairman, in today's newspapers, we have the representative for the Region urging the Government to be proactive, timely, and to do something. Sir, we know that the productive sectors are feeling it and that at the end of the day they are the ones employing thousands of people. We know that the continued subsidy to the PSVs, which can only be delivered via the Transport Board, has meant that the gasoline stations in this country have been losing revenue and have been losing almost, they say, at the rate of \$1 million a month.

Sir, the subsidy that we are being asked for today is \$16 million. The majority of the subsidy goes to the Transport Board, PSVs. Sir, the majority of the benefit is not to the gas stations across Barbados, it is to the single entity that provides petrol at the Transport Board. Sir, that must affect the owners of gas stations in this country who have, therefore, felt a reduction in sales.

Mr. Chairman, as we do all of this, as we talk about cuts, this year Government voted \$23 million in the Estimates for the Transport Board. Last year, between what they voted and the subsidy, they got \$50 million. It is our understanding that the Transport Board has now applied for a loan of \$35 million from the Barbados National Bank, for

which Government is providing the letter of comfort, or letter of guarantee.

It, therefore, begs the question why that scale of loan at this stage, when Government has voted \$23 million in the Estimates. Is it true that the overdraft at the Transport Board is more than twice above the limit, which I understand is \$10 million? Therefore, what is Government doing to stabilise the situation?

Sir, despite the talk we are getting in here, we are not getting the complete picture in relation to the level of expenditure and the level of cuts in other areas. What are the facts? Sir, there are people waiting for income tax returns. Some of those who have begun to get are not getting back the full amount. There are people complaining about the Reverse Tax Credit, the \$1 300 that would make a major difference to members of our constituencies who earn under \$15 000 a year and who look forward to that cheque to help stabilise them. Sir, this is now November and they have not got those cheques yet.

There are Defence Force soldiers who, when we came here last year, the Prime Minister indicated that we had taken so long to deal with it that he is now bringing the Supplementary for it. Sir, it is now 22 months into this Administration and those people, who were entitled to pension under the Barbados Defence Force, are not yet drawing it.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Now, you can talk about blame and all those things but what people are concerned about, Mr. Chairman, is the reality of their existence today and whether they are getting the money or not.

Sir, a lady in her early 50s, who is entitled to her pension, stopped me in Holetown last week, going through a divorce, her ability to keep her house is going to be determined by whether she gets her pension or not from the Barbados Defence Force Pension Programme and, Sir, she was in tears. Mr. Chairman, these are the stories, week by week by week.

Sir, I say to you that it is not simply a case of a one side fix all prescription about a 2.5 per cent cut across all Government Departments because that would wreck havoc. Yes, we accept that the Government has the right to make cuts, but we say that the cuts should be focussed on non-essential expenditure and that when the Prime Minister tries to divert the public and say that they are not interested in you opening Embassies overseas, we have to remind him

that it was the Barbados Labour Party that took the decision to open the Embassies in Brazil, China and Cuba.

Mr. Chairman, what we have said is that if ordinary Barbadians are suffering, then you have a responsibility to phase the opening of those embassies in the same way that you took the decision to rescind the Barbados Labour Party's decision to open a commercial office in Hong Kong. Sir, we say that what is more important now is how do we keep the heads of ordinary Barbadians and Barbadian enterprises above water.

Mr. Chairman, one of the banks published their annual figures today and it shows a 10 per cent decline in deposits, a drop in deposits of \$200 million. Sir, that is the strongest evidence that Barbadians who have savings are relying on their savings to keep their heads above water.

Mr. Chairman, what the increase in unemployment by \$3 500 on the third quarter of last year does not show is that there are people who are under-employed, the ones on two-day week and three-day week.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has three minutes.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sir, all of this has to be confronted. The level of decline in the economy, the end of the third quarter is 4.9 per cent and we hope, like the Prime Minister, that the overall decline for the year could be reduced to 4 per cent, but for that to happen, it means that your 4th quarter performance is going to have to be better than the first quarter, the second quarter and the third quarter.

Mr. Chairman, I am not going to be distracted, therefore, by the list of woes called out by the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, or the blame games. In fact, the more I listen to this debate, the more I realise that this Government is totally out to sea in respect of how to handle this economic crisis.

It has been a completely defensive posture, it has tried to attack as the best form of defence. It does not matter because attacking on This Side does not change the reality of any Barbadian household at 6:00 o'clock this evening. Sir, attacking on This Side does not change the reality of any enterprise or business in this country. Attacking on This Side does not suddenly convert a tale of woe in terms of decline across almost every sector in the productive economy into, all of a sudden, growth.

Mr. Chairman, I suggest that a better approach would be to let us work together as a Parliament, let us create a joint committee of finance and economic affairs so that we get the benefit of all Honourable Members in this Chamber and in the other Chamber to ensure that the

economy hole into which Barbados finds itself, is not one that we cannot get out of within another year or two. Sir, I say this with all sincerity because, the truth is, that what is at stake is whether Barbados can contemplate a future of growth and prosperity.

Mr. Chairman, I was astonished, as was reported, when I heard the Prime Minister say last Wednesday at the University of the West Indies that he had doubts effectively about the one graduate per household, because you would be creating graduates without jobs. Sir, the startling admission in that for me and, the disappointment came, in that this Prime Minister was telling the young people of this country that you did not believe that you had the confidence to create sufficient jobs for an educated Barbados.

Sir, I disagree and I disagree fundamentally because there are alternative productive sectors which have to be brought to the fore. There are ones which we are working on, which need to be able to mushroom and I believe that it is a repudiation of all that we stand for, as a nation, in terms of the central importance of education.

Mr. Chairman, there may have to be elements of education skewed in terms of the applied arts and sciences and the one aspect of his speech that, perhaps, I felt there was a glimmer of lighting, is the recognition that the work at the Community College, the polytechnic and the Erdiston Training College may well have to be focussed in a major way so that we train people in the applied arts and sciences as does the UTECH, as does the University of Trinidad and Tobago and hence the plan for the University College of Barbados were intended to carry us in that direction. Sir, the reality is that more men are interested in being trained in the applied arts and sciences than they are in relation to the genuine academic degrees.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member' time has expired.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your consideration. I regret that I did not have more time but, as I said, I would bring the Resolution because I think that the economic out-turn for the half year, given by the Prime Minister, is worthy of longer and more serious debate.

Sir, I am obliged to you.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Chairman, I quite reluctantly find myself having to enter this debate to be very brief on a couple of matters having listened to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I am sorry to interrupt you, but we have 20 minutes remaining in this debate.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Sir, I did not anticipate that the response to the Leader of the Opposition presentation would have taken more than five minutes and, therefore, I am obliged to you for the time.

Mr. Chairman, given all that we have heard today, I really do hope that when the occasion arises for the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, to bring a Resolution to debate the economy that we really could hear at least one useful idea how Barbados and, indeed, the Minister of Finance of this country could do what so many other Ministers of Finance all over the world, perhaps with the exception of China, have not been able to do in the last 18 months to two years.

Mr. Chairman, we do not want to have a mere Sunday school recitation of the numbers pertaining to the economic performance of Barbados. The Government of Barbados has told us, we have heard them repeatedly and we know that the economy is in recession, just as the global economy and individual economies are in recession. Sir, the question is: how do you re-position yourself to take advantage coming out of the recession? What can you do when you are in a recession? Sir, Barbados is not like some other countries, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East knows this very well.

At least, we hope that the Honourable Member knows that the wriggle room, which Barbados has as an economy, both fiscally and otherwise, is so small and was made even smaller by the policies of the former Administration, which were so inept, in terms of the economic management, that they did not provide a platform to allow us, when times were good...

Asides.

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Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: The point is, you can come here and say all you want to say about how the economy declines when times are bad, but when times were good, this 14 years of bliss, this 14 years of happiness, money was put aside for a rainy day, and it was spent. The rainy days have come, and it is not there.

This Government came to office having to bring to book a whole set of off budget spending, that if you recalculate the Barbados economy and estimate as a percentage of GDP, how much money we have had to bring to book, It would have been about 1 or 2 per cent of

the same economy in terms of a fiscal deficit to GDP. So what are you talking about?

The fact that Barbados has been able to hold...I heard this thing about manufacturing exports. The Leader of the Opposition always makes the point that CARICOM is one of our most critical markets. Well, look and see what is happening to your second highest export market.

Your highest export market is CARICOM. They are in shambles. They are the laying off of people. They have an 18 per cent unemployment, 32,35,36 and 40 per cent poverty in some countries, so who are you going to sell your goods and services to? If you sell them only to your domestic market, that means you are not earning foreign exchange, one, and, two, you will be utilising foreign exchange because everything produced in Barbados has a foreign exchange usage component to it.

Therefore, wise counsel will say to any Minister of Finance, your options are limited, do not play fast and loose, because if the Minister of Finance of this country had listened to the Leader of the Opposition, the deficit in Barbados would be 11 per cent today.

When we were being told not to go and raise bonds to pay for oil and to obliterate the debt of BNOC, when you are not being told to put up a stabilisation fund, when we were told not to raise taxes on certain items, even though the Leader of the Opposition agreed that in the next year, revenues would decline because of the fact that the world economy was in recession, Sir, if we had taken this advice I cannot imagine where we would have been.

Sir, I want to say two things. Having myself been faced with a recession, fairly close up in 1991 to 1993, I am not one now to panic when I hear the word "recession", because that seems to be a favourite thing now to throw around the place. Just as it is now for some people to write every week about vision. The only people in Barbados that have vision are the Members of the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, what we have to do is to take care of the things that we know are critical. I am satisfied that this Government is doing that, that the Minister of Finance has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to keep this economy going and to ensure that we recalibrate our efforts, in a way that will allow us eventually to take advantage of that.

The second point is, in all that we have done, we have sought to protect the social safety net in this country in education, health care, social welfare and in all of the other social care Ministries in this country. Very few countries in the world have been able to do so, and that must go to the credit of a Government that is caring and chooses to put people first. That is what we will try to do in

the circumstances. Barbadians know that when things are tough they have to make tough choices right from the Government, down to the individual. Those choices will be made when we have to make them.

I believe that it is really divine intervention, perhaps, that the Democratic Labour Party has been once again called upon to shepherd Barbados through a recession, because people know that, at the end of the day, this is a responsible Party in Government, and we will continue to do so.

Sir, with those few words, I want to say to the Minister of Finance and to the people who have the responsibility for carrying this economy, that you have done well so far, times are tough, we know, choices have to be made, but we are making them sensibly and responsibly within the context of an economy in which there is some difficulty globally and, of course, in our Region.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to wrap up this debate and thank all Honourable Members who contributed to it.

The first thing that concerns me about this debate today is the readiness, and I should add, the ease with which the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has continued on a path of seeking to create as much panic, doubt and questioning in the population of Barbados about the state of the Barbadian economy.

It is one thing for a leader to sympathise with personal circumstances that people are facing. If the Honourable Member wants to make us believe that she travels on the bus and sees people and they tell her things, fine, or if she has suddenly started to buy fish in a fish market, after 14 years in Government, perhaps, there are some who might believe that.

If the Honourable Member wants to make us believe that she is working in the sugar cane fields of Barbados and that she sees all of these people who are facing this hardship, I have no problem with that. That is a typical Opposition tactic, and reciting all of these instances which so rant her heart, to recognise these things, today, which she never recognised before, I am not opposed to that. Everybody has to have their Damascus experience in life and their apotheosis. I believe that the past few weeks in many respects may have been an apotheosis for the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

However, it is unforgivable for somebody to want the Barbados economy to fail, to predict that we would have had 15 per cent unemployment by now, to say that Air Canada is reducing its service to Barbados when, in fact, it has increased it, to say that BMI stopped flying out of London when, in fact, it never flew out of London and when, in fact, on the date that BMI was taken over by Lathansa, I was meeting with Sir Richard Branson a year ago in London, then after Lehman Brothers collapsed, he said if there is a problem with BMI, that Virgin will look to provide a service out of Manchester, and they did it.

We have an additional service out of Canada. To announce that we have lost services out of Europe that were seasonal, and only come during the season, and be it with such glee, to point out every area in Barbados where something is not being paid, that the police are not receiving flexible allowances, that has nothing to do with cashflow. It has something to do with the way the Royal Barbados Police Force is administered and those resources are paid.

No Government Minister intervenes in how police are paid a flexibility allowance in this country, at least, not in our time. I do not know what happened before, but I know it has not happened since we came to office. All of this litany of things, shopping list - I am not a shopping list politician and I have never been. Therefore, I am not going to get into that scenario.

Sir, it would have been better if we could have had the constructive debate that it was alleged, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East wanted. It is true that the Honourable Member for St. Peter showed no interest in this House of Assembly but, at least, he would have added some weight to an extremely weak economic argument on the Other Side.

Sir, what are we to argue over? Whether it is true that the police get a flexibility allowance or not? Whether it is true that somebody cannot pay their mortgage? Is that what we are to debate without the facts? We are not a Court of Law.

Sir, what I can say is, over the past, say the year 2000, the average rate of unemployment in this country has been 9.36 per cent.

HA49 2.50 p.m. Sequence 23

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House A49, Sequence 24, 2.50 p.m.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, what I can say is that since the year 2000 the average rate of unemployment in this country has been 9.36 per cent, and the medium 9.60

per cent over the past decade. We are in the midst of the worst economic crisis that the world has seen in 80 years, and our unemployment rate - and the Honourable Member has the updated statistics - is at just more than 10 per cent. The Honourable Member is giving the impression that a holocaust has been visited on the people of this country.

In the year 2003, unemployment was at 11 per cent. We were in Opposition then and we understand the economic circumstances that led to that. At the height of the boom, unemployment was hovering at about 9.1 per cent. The lowest point was 7.4 per cent in 2007.

Sir, I suppose the greatest compliment that could be paid to this Government is that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East recently said that she had some doubts about the unemployment statistics. She did not have any for the nine years that I am talking about. They were all correct. It is only now that it is not at 15 per cent that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has some concerns about unemployment statistics in this country.

Sir, given the magnitude of the current global economic recession, the question that any sensible House of Assembly like ours will be asking is, why unemployment is not higher? This is what should be asked, and we have to do two things in this debate.

The first thing is that we have to compliment a vast majority of the private sectors in Barbados for continuing to carry the load through these difficult economic times, because the figures are incontrovertible.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, added to that figure, if the Honourable Member says that companies have not taken up the National Insurance Scheme relief that is offered, but unemployment has not substantially increased, it means that the private sector has come to its own determination that it will continue to finance employment in this country which, at the end of the day, helps the Government. Sir, if that money is not used by the NIS, it is not available for me to take it up and spend.

The Honourable Member is giving the impression that the NIS Programme was an alternative to spending money, that if the Barbados Labour Party was in office, they would take that money and invest it in the economy.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I was not giving any such impression. My simple point was that the Prime Minister heralded this initiative as one of the key initiatives in his Budget. It is appropriate for us to reflect on the fact that in the six months since the

Budget, not a single enterprise in Barbados has applied for the initiative that he established. That is the simple point.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I am glad that the Honourable Member reiterated the point for this reason. What the Honourable Member cannot do is contradict the fact that 137 companies in Barbados applied for the half payment of the interest and penalty waiver.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: No, that is no different programme. Sir, let me tell you a simple story. We went through 14 years of Budgets under the Other Side. In the mid 1980s, the late Right Excellent J. M. G. M. (Tom) Adams introduced in this House of Assembly, a Foreign Exchange Tax Credit. The Barbados Labour Party spent the entire time they were in office up to 1986, talking about how great was this initiative.

The initiative went through eight years under the Democratic Labour Party and in the eighth year, they had not yet worked out how people could benefit, what formula would be used for people filing Income Tax returns to benefit from that Tax Credit. Sir, not a single person had benefitted from it for those 11 years.

We come now to the year 2008, and when you go through all the Budgets that were delivered for the 14 years, there are some initiatives in those Budgets that nobody has ever applied for, either if it is a tax benefit, or rebate, not a single company or citizen has ever applied for it, or alternatively, concessions that were granted that nobody has ever applied for yet.

Sir, that is not new in Barbados and there is a multiplicity of reasons for that. People sometimes do not understand the system. They do not understand the benefit. They find it complicated to apply for it, Sir, and one of the reasons we simplified the Income Tax system was so that people could understand it. Sir, from all the concessions that were offered, many of which people never applied for so I am not duly worried about that and I am confident that there will be persons before this year ends, who will apply for the benefit of the loan.

Mr. Chairman, the next point that I make is even more significant than the one to do with unemployment, the question of the fiscal deficit. The average annual fiscal deficit in Barbados over the past decade has been 5 per cent of GDP. Sir, you would believe that we were having fiscal deficits of 1 per cent, or fiscal balances over the past 14 years. The average fiscal deficit has been 5 per cent of GDP and, therefore, as part of the fiscal stimulus, you run a slightly higher fiscal deficit.

In 2002, what was the fiscal deficit after 9/11? The Honourable Member for St. George North might know, because he said the speech of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West was a great speech, so he was following proper statistics, having heard his leader.

When the Honourable Member for St. Philip West sat, he said, "great speech", and I really enjoyed that. It is that level of debate that I think is desirable in this Chamber. The deficit was in double digits at that time.

I would say, Mr. Chairman, that the Barbados economy is performing reasonably well in the circumstances. I do not propose to book anybody's time to have an economic debate with them. We are supposed to be here at 10:00 o'clock every Tuesday, and there is no basis on which I am going to change the structures of this House that I have functioned under for 14 years, with not a change to change anybody's proclivities.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: If the Opposition Members want to set up a council as we have done in Government to advise us on economic issues, they are free to do so. The best brains in Barbados are currently working on the economic crisis in this country, across Party lines, business people who have never ever supported the Democratic Labour Party, people in the economic field who have never ever supported the Democratic Labour Party, but we decided to deploy all of those brains because we felt that was necessary, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is entitled to do so.

Sir, you cannot tell me that a Party that said it has four economists in it in the last Government, all of whom were supposed to be brilliant, cannot deploy the four of them at this time, in the interest of putting alternative views, or having a serious discussion about the future, so you cannot have your cake and eat it too. Sir, I expect a level of responsibility.

This idea that we have to discuss cuts with the public, this is not the first time in the history of Barbados that the Government has cut expenditure. It happened in the 14 years. It happened in 2001 and 2002, and there was never any discussion with the public.

Then, for the past two years, the Minister of Finance never came on the Floor of the House, so you could not discuss anything at all with him because he was never here. All of a sudden, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, I knew she wants me to say that I am saying that on her behalf Sir, that is why I am saying that we are not putting anybody on the defensive.

House A49, Sequence 24, 3.00 p.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The previous Government, on the directions of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, set up a commercial office in Hong Kong and was paying one person \$40 000 a month.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, when I see the Prime Minister behaving like this, I know that he is hurting. The reality is that I made no such appointment to anybody either in Hong Kong or elsewhere. The decision taken by the Cabinet of Barbados was to open an office in February of 2008. His Government chose to reverse that.

His Government chose to terminate the services of a lady who had been working for the Government of Barbados for nearly 10 years, and who was not employed by myself, but who in any event was helping the international business sector in Hong Kong, only to be replaced by a political lackey that reports only to the political advisor of the Prime Minister. He knows that the CEO of Invest Barbados is walking about Barbados complaining about that same appointment that has replaced the lady in Hong Kong.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I repeat, there is no Ambassador that is paid \$40 000 a month, or there is no Prime Minister who is paid \$40 000 per month. I doubt that the highest paid executive in Barbados gets \$40 000 a month. I came and found somebody in Hong Kong earning \$40 000 a month under the previous Administration.

Mr. Chairman, yes I terminated it, and if I had to terminate it again I would do so. There was no business out of Hong Kong justifying paying somebody that amount of money, so do not let the Honourable Member try to extricate herself from that particular argument. The Honourable Member knew that the person was being paid that amount of money. We have no office in Hong Kong. We had no business coming from Hong Kong and yet somebody was being paid \$40 000 a month.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Prime Minister really must not show his colours so when he is upset. The reality is that the Prime Minister is misleading the House. For the Prime Minister to suggest that I knew what a person was earning is a gross misrepresentation. If the person was earning money, I can assure you that the money would have been approved by the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation and then Invest Barbados.

For the Prime Minister to suggest that a person was earning BDS\$40 000 a month, which is £15 000 or £10 000 at the time, is inappropriate and is for him to mislead the

public of Barbados too. Mr. Chairman, I understand that he is on the defensive, so I would not bother with him today.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I am not defensive about anything. The public will ask you for some explanations. You will have to defend a decision to pay somebody \$40 000 a month.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am not going to go through the list.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Prime Minister cannot accuse me of hiring anybody when the facts are not true. I challenge him to bring them. I challenged him already today and he backed down.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, when we came to office, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was the Minister responsible for Invest Barbados, the entity that was paying the \$40 000 a month. A Minister is ultimately responsible for the decisions, even on statutory boards and companies under their employ. I know that the Honourable Member for St. George North must be shocked about that.

We were accused of cutting a capital works project. The only thing we cut from the project was the flyovers. The Government did not cut the capital programme last year. We completed the projects. Sir, it is against this background, as I said, of seeking to create panic and confusion in this economy, a very systematic attempt at it. The Honourable Member is very good at that and can continue. As I have said, we know where the real economic debate would come from, because I have seen it happened before.

I have seen the Honourable Member silenced in her seat in the last Budget, followed by a speech that totally undid every argument that she had abduced during the reply to the Budget, every one systematically. The argument then, Sir, was that we need to engage in a higher level of discussion. That is one of the reasons certain people do not come into this Chamber. I do not know if it is laughable or not, but this much I know is that the response today is laughable, if it were not so inspired or would be laughable were it not so inspired by an attempt to create panic, confusion and doubt.

This country can stand up to its obligations. If you believe that I am going to run Barbados into the ground and create pain and suffering in this country simply to maintain an investment grade, then we have to have a bigger discussion in here.

I want to make it abundantly clear that the investment grade is great and we would seek to save it, but we are not going to do it at the expense of the quality of life in this country, or at the expense of jobs in Barbados. If Barbados has to step down a peg to step back up 10, we would go down first. We would rise back up, we would survive and prosper. Mark my word, Mr. Chairman.

I beg to move that Head 62 stand part and that the Explanatory Notes be amended as set out in the Schedule.

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

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

HEAD 19 - TREASURY

\$5 431 629

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 19 stand part.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that Head 19 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 54

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

\$45 858 386

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to move that Head 54 stand part.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that Head 54 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. R. D. JONES, seconded by Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Money Resolution in Committee of Supply and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motion of Hon. R. D. JONES, seconded by Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, the Resolution was read a first and second time and passed.

House A49 Sequence 25

3.10 p.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

ORDER NO. 4 – THE HEALTH SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2009.

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

Hon. D. O’N. INNIS: Mr. Speaker, this Bill seeks to amend the Health Services Act, Cap. 44 to give the Minister responsible for Health the power to make regulations provided for the protection of persons, particularly minors, on the consumption of tobacco products and the exposure to tobacco smoke.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe this debate is one that should be very contentious. I think all Honourable Members will dig deep within their conscience and their souls and recognise that we have a duty as a Government to continue to embark upon measures that will protect, particularly our young and vulnerable in this society.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill would have had its genesis, perhaps, a few years ago when Barbados signed on to the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control in November, 2005, but beyond the formalities, demands and dictates of international conventions we signed on to, the harsh reality is that we as a Government, have a commitment to protect our youth. We have a commitment to protect them from some alien cultures, as we have done and begun to do, in terms of behaviour on public transportation, and certainly moving into the realm of health care.

We also believe this is part of our commitment, one we made back in our last Manifesto leading up to the last Election, where we committed to sensitising Barbadians to the harmful effect of some of their lifestyles and behaviours. Therefore, our preventative aspect of health care strategy is manifested herein today, as we seek to bring this Bill into Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with this Honourable Chamber some harsh realities and facts in respect of the prevalence rate of tobacco consumption in Barbados, and what we are faced with in Barbados, the Region and the globe. Sir, too often we think that some of these issues are not major issues. Who bothers about smoking any more? What are the real harmful effects of smoking? Sir, a lot of people do not really understand and appreciate, therefore, it is important and instructive that we share with the public whatever research that has been done over time on such sensitive issues.

In 2007, there was a behaviour risk factor survey undertaken in Barbados, which showed that the prevalent rate for smoking in Barbados is approximately 8.5 per cent. Approximately 8.5 per cent of our population are deemed

to be smokers, and I have no reason to believe that has changed much over the last few years.

Sir, by international standards, Barbados is not one of these locations where smoking is certainly a big thing among most people in the population. Of that amount, the survey would have shown that about 15 per cent of males in Barbados smoke, and approximately 2 per cent females, and the average amount of cigarettes smoked a day was 9 per cent. Sir, these statistics really need to be translated into whatever effects it takes upon the toll of our citizens and the economic impact upon our society.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in this Honourable Chamber would have grown up, over the years, hearing and seeing the advertisements that spoke to the harmful effects of tobacco smoking. Advertisements would have been generated in the United States of America, some very sensitive and sexy advertisements that would have showcased the harmful effects of smoking.

Sir, in recent times, in Barbados we would have had some medical practitioners and groups such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados and other non-governmental organisations that would have come to the fore. These organisation would have been driven by their own compassions and commitment to the cause, to sensitise Barbadians to the harmful effects of smoking.

Sir, I laud them all because I believe that moral suasion has worked well to help us reduce the prevalence rate of tobacco consumption in Barbados. Therefore, it is not just about placing new Acts on the Statute books, but also embracing those who are committed to the cause, to help us get the message out there what we need to do right in this society.

Mr. Speaker, tobacco smoking is considered the most important risk factor in the development of coronary heart disease and stroke, which are the first and fourth leading causes of death in Barbados. We all know and appreciate that tobacco smoke contains many cancer-causing compounds, as well as many other toxins that are deemed harmful to all of us. Sir, it is not just smokers who certainly are at risk. There are also those non-smokers who are within reach emanating from tobacco smoke who are also at great risk.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Barbados is one of the few countries in the world that does not have a Law that prohibits the sale of tobacco products to minors. I think that in modern Barbados, and Barbadians certainly today would want us to correct that by making it illegal for vendors to sell tobacco products to those under the age of 18.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, it goes beyond just quoting the statistics. The reality is that this is another step

in the direction of this Government to seek to protect our young and vulnerable citizens. It is not just the act of smoking, but also the fact that we have a lot of young people who are bowing to peer pressure, which has been around for a long time. We have some cultural influences that are strange to Barbados, and if we do not nip them in the bud, they would continue to permeate this society.

Sir, beyond that, the recognition is that today, individuals may start out smoking cigarettes and tomorrow they may move to something else. The evidence is there that tobacco smoking is often the first step towards using harder drugs that are already illegal. We, therefore, have a duty to do whatever we could, as a responsible Government, to protect our young people from the effects of cigarette smoking.

Mr. Speaker, one interesting statistic that has been shown, both in Barbados and around the world, is that 75 per cent of adults who smoke, started as teenagers. Certainly that, in itself, should make us stand up and realise that given the challenges we have in the health care sector, where a lot of these illnesses and diseases flow from tobacco consumption, in the first place, that we are duty-bound to do whatever we could to curb the level of smoking in this society.

Young children, as we all know and appreciate, would start today with “looseys” or singles, then as times progress, they start getting the packs and sometimes would smoke one or two packs a day.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly have a duty to protect these individuals and the intention or expectation is that by doing that, we will gradually avoid a large amount of those from becoming smokers.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this Bill gets the full support of all, especially those on the Opposition Benches. I do not believe this should be a partisan matter. We are talking about the health of the nation and we all appreciate the fact that the health of the nation is the wealth of the nation, and this is certainly a Bill that we can get the full support on.

Let me say here, I know this is an issue that has been raised before, and that the stakeholders have often contacted our office and asked about it. Sir, though the prevalence rate is low, we will not rest on our laurels. We have to continue to do what we have to do, to protect not only smokers and to enlighten them to the harmful effects, but also to protect those non-smokers who are often exposed to the dangerous effect of smoking.

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

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

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable Member for St. James South indicated, as far back as 2005, the Government of the day had been directing its mind towards the question of the effects of tobacco and the question of the control of tobacco.

Sir, prior to 2005, there used to be a physician living in Fitts Village called Dr. Gale, who spent a considerable amount of his time in educating the public about the harmful effects of tobacco. Sir, around the time that Dr. Gale was trumpeting his counterblast against tobacco...

Mr. Speaker, I am putting it in its historic context because James I, who was King of England, wrote a counterblast against tobacco, attacking its harmful effects even then, and we are talking about the year 1603 and onwards.

3.20 p.m.

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Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Dr. Gale was sure that this thing called tobacco produced deleterious effects. There were those who joined with Dr. Gale in indicating that one of the things about tobacco is that its use, through smoking, led to harmful effects on almost every member of the human body. Sir, that emerged during the debate on the effect of tobacco on human beings that tobacco bore potential to affect every part of the human body.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. James South correctly mentioned that the Heart and Stroke Foundation did look at this question of tobacco and its effects. The Honourable Member also mentioned that the multiplicity of chemicals in tobacco has had an impact such, that a lot of cancers derived from the smoking of tobacco.

Mr. Speaker, to take the Honourable Member's mind back in history, there used to be a time in Barbados when there was a tobacco product called "snuff". I do not know if "snuff" is still available, but persons would bring this "snuff" usually in a tin, sometimes in a package, rub the "snuff" in their nostrils and it would make them sneeze. It seemed to be a situation where "snuff" itself became addictive.

Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that "snuff" was not smoked, but snuff, rubbed under each nostril provoking olfactory reaction by way of sneezing, seemed itself to be

carrying deleterious effects. The people who used "snuff" became a dying breed in more than one way. In fact, there are those in Barbados who say that smokers nowadays are very much a dying breed, meaning two things, that those who smoke are decreasing radically in number, and, therefore, dying out, and it also means that when you smoke that you die.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to allow any personal factors to override my judgment, but for the benefit of those who might be interested in where I am today, put it this way, I am abstemious at this hour and I am going to live with this now for ever and ever. If I can achieve in the "thens that found the nows", what I am achieving now, then I should be safe and I would hardly have to evoke the help of the Honourable Member for St. George South, or the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, Sir, in which case I can be correctly accused of practising the ancient adage "prevention is better than cure".

Mr. Speaker, it was mentioned that "prevention is better than cure", in that after a medical person, after many a psychologist, after many a religious leader looked at this whole question of the use of tobacco and the use of other substances, it has now been a good 35 years that persons who are interested in preventive health, when it comes to the use of narcotics and other mood-altering substances, that taking into account all that has been happening, there is now the tendency for people not to say anything about tobacco, marijuana or rum in isolation, but the current trend is to speak of something called substance abuse. Sir, we are into an era where we speak now of "substance abuse" including using E.S.A. Field Rum, Alleyne Arthur Rum to excess, or Mount Gay White Rum to excess.

Mr. Speaker, we are into an era where there is a lot of focus on substance abuse and we have to support all those who stand in the forefront of the fight, of the militant struggle against substance abuse. The Honourable Minister of Health made the correct observation that many persons who eventually become addicted to substances actually got their first exposure as a teenager and, Sir, that cannot be denied.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of teenagers tried substances through a process of experimentation. They try it to see what it is like and then they continue to try it at the urging of friends and others and, therefore, then try it under the influence of peer group pressure. Sir, there is experimentation and then the substance itself has certain inherent qualities that lead to addiction.

Sir, we in Barbados have to wake up to the reality of the nature of addiction. Sir, addiction has its own driving force and addiction is a very, very serious process.

Mr. Speaker, when a person becomes addicted, it is not a one-off experience, but addicted behaviour among the victims of addiction, represents a continuum, and one aspect about addiction is that the addict is usually the last person to discover that he or she is hooked.

Mr. Speaker, another aspect about the addict is that, like Mark Twain, the addict would say that he could quit any time. We are all familiar with writer Mark Twain, when he was confronted about his smoking, he said he had quit a thousand times and that he could continue doing it. The thing about it is that, with substances, a lot of people go abstinent for two weeks and then go back on. Mr. Speaker, some not only go back on, but some people who come off substances to give the body a chance for reprieve to return, go back on and make up for the time they were off. In other words, they double and triple the quantum that they were using.

Mr. Speaker, there used to be a psychiatrist in Trinidad, now dead, called Professor Mickey Bourbourn. He led the fight in the 1950s and 1960s in the Caribbean Region against substance abuse and up until the 1970s and 1980s at St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, there used to be seminars on this whole question of substance abuse and some of our nurses in the field have been to those seminars.

We actually have people in Barbados who, in great measure, understand the process of addiction and can render help. However, as I said earlier, the person who is hooked and addicted, is the last person to realise that he or she has a problem but, even more significantly, Sir, one of the characteristic features of active addiction is something called “denial”. Mr. Speaker, the person who is hooked on substances denies that he or she has a problem.

Mr. Speaker, when a person is influenced by denial, that person is going to be unable to own up to the fact of the problem that they have with drugs and, Sir, that is one of the complexities of this thing called “drug abuse” because, an otherwise, sane and sensible human being in other areas of his life, or her life would be able to make sensible choices, but where the person is hooked on any substance, especially their substance of first choice, that person is purblind to being able to appreciate what other people would be telling them about their condition as a person hooked on substances and addicted to various things.

Mr. Speaker, you get some irrationality that prevents some people from being able to recover. I remember not far from Top Rock, about 12 years ago a character saw me and told me that he had just left a rum shop and that he had gone into a rum shop to protest. I said to him that I did not know you could go to a rum shop in Barbados to protest. He said he sat in the rum shop for three hours, but did not

buy anything. He felt that he had achieved a conquest because he was able to go to the rum shop, not drink anything but come outside and proclaim the greatness of marijuana, which he said was a vegetable.

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Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: He said that rum underwent chemical changes. It is, therefore, not fresh. It is not good and it has bad qualities, but that marijuana, in his judgment, was a vegetable, and that he used it and became a vegetarian. That is what he is saying. That is the type of behaviour that addicts practise.

Sir, one other feature about addicts is, addicts are full of ex post facto rationalisations. Any person in the health services will tell you that they will confront a given individual, whose life is complicated through substance abuse, and that individual will go into the yard, and even when the doctor is able to pull information out of the individual, that he or she is using, they start back-peddling saying, “Oh, its my mother’s fault. Its my boyfriend’s fault. Its my husband’s fault. Its my employer’s fault”. I have never heard it said in Barbados though, it is my constituent’s fault. I have never heard that said in Barbados in all my time, at least not yet.

Sir, do you know what that means in the world of addiction? In the world of addition term it means, you are eligible to. So any person who picks up the first unit, this is how it starts, Sir. Any person with a tendency to be hooked and addicted, who is exposed to the first unit of addicted substance will take it and continue, will have no control and will go on taking it until every lie is told.

The Honourable Member for St. James South was careful to mention that teenagers exposed to tobacco will probably try out other substances down the line. That is a fact. One problem that Barbados has had to deal with, and this is a problem that dates back to 1968/1970, at that time there were people who were otherwise educated, who insisted that Collie, Millie and Jane, who took a whiff of marijuana were in itself not addicted.

Sir, there used to be arguments posited in Barbados that marijuana was not addicted. What they do know that tobacco, in the form of cigarettes, has always been addicted. What they do know now is that marijuana has seen some of its users, meaning frequently, and if a person uses something to a point where they would go overboard again, that is a sign of addiction and, in my judgment, a lot of fellows have to have this thing.

Sir, a fellow might hit a “rock” and feel a certain way “hickory”, I am talking the language of the world of

drugs, without myself not being involved. There is a fellow who might “hiss” a piece of crack and see if he can get a high, and when that high wears off, he goes into paranoia. Therefore, the term “paro” comes from the word “paranoia”. The “paranoia” being the condition that follows the “hickory” feeling, and the paranoia in the addict’s brain can only be solved if they get another round to lift him out of that “hickory” feeling.

Sir, marijuana lasts for about six hours in the user’s system, and then when it wears off the person actually goes into a low, which can be lifted by more marijuana. Sir, cigarettes represent a crazy addicted time-line of a substance. Some people might not want to call tobacco a narcotic. Some people might not want to call tobacco a drug of the same strength of marijuana, rum or anything so, but the fact of the situation is, the tobacco in the system of the user lingers on and on. If the user uses his or her last cigarette at 10.00 p.m., with a certain level of nicotine in the bloodstream, when that person sleeps for 5 or 6 hours and wakes up, that level of nicotine in the bloodstream, as it wears off and moves to withdrawal, actually makes the smoker crave more nicotine to top up, and a vicious cycle develops.

This Parliament cannot go too far in its support for measures designed to make sure that this country of ours does something about all substances which have the deleterious effects on the users.

Sir, then a responsible Parliament has also to consider the social cost, and a lot of instances that can be prevented, including instances connected to drug abuse, if they are checked and corrected in time, will see Government actually saving, but if people continue smoking tobacco and then become victims of hypertension and diabetes, which are chronic, sometimes going on to use other drugs, hospitalised with cancers repeatedly, at a high cost, then certainly we really have to bear such high costs.

We are really fettering away scarce resources, and seeing that there is no unlimited amount of money, or a pipe through which money on top of money could fly in the support of a hospital programme designed to assist people who are hospitalised in consequence of their own indiscretions or addiction to substances.

Sir, as we bear the burden in this tremendous social cost, it means that the society as a whole is being called upon in many instances to support the few. The majority exists and will support the few. The few have to be isolated and properly weaned off the substances that they use.

We have to encourage all the parties, beginning with the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health has to get to the bottom of the type of care available in Barbados. He has to get to the bottom of it. He has to go down to the

Psychiatric Hospital and ask the Director, if he has staff able and willing to work with persons whose lives are messed up with substances, including illegal drugs and even legal drugs.

The Honourable Minister of Health also has to find out whether there are any programmes of support that were brought to him before, either him or the Honourable Member for St. Philip West became Minister.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James South, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, the Honourable Member for St. George South and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition have to find out whether there were programmes available to help persons come off their substances, and whether those programmes were interlocking activities before the Honourable Member for St. Philip West and the Honourable Member for St. James South became Ministers of Health.

Sir, in other words, were there programmes consulted, well-thought out with the appropriate levels and quality of charity available to those in need, and were banned or stopped through ill-advice, or through some advice by particular individuals?

Sir, one of the worst things to happen when one lives, moves and has power on his being, is when one allows oneself to take oneself in a clamour of pride and proclaim from abroad that he or she advises themselves. I would rather like to encourage my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, to end the cop-out that she advised herself in all matters, but I have also heard this being said by specific individuals. I am not looking across the aisle. In fact, I am not even looking at you, Mr. Speaker, which I regret. Let me show you the appropriate respect.

Sir, I do not want it to be said by any of us in here who are called on to represent people, that in the representation of people, either at the level of the Constituency, or the level of the Ministry, that we take the best advice, and that best advice comes from within our bosom. External advice well-thought out in our professional lives, certainly has a way and certainly is the best advice.

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House A49, Sequence 29, 3.40 p.m.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: I conclude, Sir, by joining This Side and linking This Side with the policy as enunciated by the Honourable Member for St. James South. I think that Barbados can learn a lot from Trinidad.

Professor Bourbon did a lot of work in the field. He actually left the lofty citadel of his office and came out in the streets. Sir, and we can learn that the Trinidadians - whatever we may think about them, or whatever doubts we may have about them - have achieved a spectacular level of recovery, but there are islands in the Caribbean, where recovery among people who suffer from substance abuse is almost nil.

Some of our immediate neighbours in the Caribbean see nothing called "recovery" from substances and what is frightening, as we look at this whole thing about tobacco, is that the Caribbean Region has seen the offloading of illegal tobacco and the use of certain things as contraband.

Sir, we are island people and boats can island hop and drop off packages and such like. We are seeing situations where these islands are at a particular risk, even though the presence of the Regional Security System sometimes acts as a powerful deterrent and sometimes actually captures drugs on the high seas.

These sentiments which I am expressing, Mr. Speaker, are expressed by a person who would have not only seen what drugs and tobacco and all these things can do to people in their own private sphere, but the suffering caused to family. A person who is hit by substance abuse interacts with, at least, five or six people in an immediate family situation and his illness affects them.

We have to see, Mr. Speaker, addiction as an illness and it is a multifaceted illness. A person who is a smoker will experience a physical craving for tobacco. A person who is a marijuana user would probably experience an even higher craving, a mental craving. Some forms of addiction see physical craving, mental obsession and spiritual dependence. Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker. Some forms of addiction see physical craving, mental compulsion, or mental addiction and spiritual dependence.

Mr. Speaker, where an addict, or substance abuser is in the relationship of spiritual dependence on a substance, then it means that substance has become that person's god and that god, in our judgment, will always be a false god. A substance cannot be the true and living God. It has to be a false god.

Sir, it is highly probable that you would then have to invoke the help of the true living God to deal with that god of fire, Volcan. When we think about tobacco and drugs that are smoked, we have to think about the god of fire, Volcan, whom I believe lives in a volcano and we have had experiences in the Caribbean where we see the evidence of what volcanoes can do.

Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, one of the focusses the Ministry of Health is going to have, is to go beyond

World Tobacco Day, or Tobacco Week, or whatever events we use to celebrate commitments to given strategies and have the Ministry of Health, through its appropriate Branches, educate the public because one aspect of a treatment of drug abuse, Mr. Speaker, is the question of public education.

I believe that a lot of public education about drugs and drug use is done in the primary school system. A lot of primary schools are extremely keen to embrace programmes designed to do something about substance abuse, because a lot of primary schools are interested in demonstrating values that are wholesome to the little ones, but little children, five to nine-years-old do not seem, from practical experience, to fall into or under peer group pressure to the same extent as children between 12 and 17 years old.

This is also worth looking at, the extent to which a child between 4 to 9 years old still adores his or her parents and does not fall under the influence of peer group pressure, while a child 12-19 years old ignores the values of the parents, disobeys the parents and then falls under peer group pressure.

Sir, substance abuse is even more than that, because in addition to the fact that the substance abuser would fall under the influence of peer group pressure, the addiction itself, has to be isolated as a powerful driving force compelling its victim to pursue the habit, or the craving or the compulsion to its bitter end.

Mr. Speaker, This Side is supportive of this measure, which, as the Honourable Member for St. James South said, has been in the works for at least four years. I would want to encourage the Honourable Member for St. James South to turn to those people in his immediate political system who may know about these things. I have intelligence. I do not mean the normal intelligence that informs reason and informs thought, I mean intelligence in the form of information.

I have information that there are those close to the Honourable Member for St. James South, who have experience in counselling. Sir, it would not be fair to call names, but some of the support system of the Honourable Member for St. James South is a group of people who would have gone to conferences and seminars on the whole question of substance abuse.

I wish the Government well in tackling this very severe problem of substance abuse. I believe that we can save a lot if we have a proper policy. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central has a role because he is the Minister of Human Resource Development, and our human resources can be held back and retarded if our human resources are taken over by substance abusers.

Sir, that is why I say that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East would have a hand in this. The Honourable Member for Social Care cannot be left out because this whole question of substance abuse is multifaceted and has many ramifications. In fact, this calls for a joint national effort.

Honourable Members in here would have seen youngsters, in particular, and some not so young, fall victim to substance abuse. Honourable Members in here would see how rum and other substances take people to the Law Courts. Honourable Members in here would see how, without going to the Law Courts, and even to prison, rum and other substances kill, because some people do not get a chance to get to the hospital.

Some people under the influence collapse and die of poisoning themselves. Some people get behind steering wheels of vehicles, sometimes which are not even theirs, and in a blackout when they are driving and not even know what they are doing, they crash and the consequence is that is a loss of life, loss of a loved one and the like.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to urge Honourable Members of this Parliament, and those to come in the future, and even those who have served up until recently, to gird themselves with sufficient information about this whole thing called substance abuse, to find that the substance abuser is really a sick person in need of help, to locate where the help can be had, and to take measures and steps to bring about change, in circumstances where the loss of one person to drugs, the loss of two people to drugs, the loss of three people to drugs, all those losses, one by one, represent too great a loss for a country at this stage of development.

With those remarks then, Mr. Speaker, and with your kind indulgence, I present the case as encouraged by the Honourable Members on This Side, and I am going to bind My Side in its support for the measure before this Honourable House.

Thank you very much, Sir.

House A49, Sequence 29, 3.50 p.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

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

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to stand to support this Bill which would ban the sale of tobacco products to minors. Indeed, I support from various perspectives this Bill. We just heard from the Honourable Member for St.

James North an overview of substance abuse and what it does to those persons who are so affected.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that having heard him, that certainly everybody in the hearing of his voice and everyone in this House would take note and be mindful not to get themselves so embroiled in the use of substances and even to discourage smoking. I myself have never bothered to try tobacco, and certainly having seen, at post mortems, what the lungs of a smoker look like, I know that I would not. It is, certainly, a dramatic change when you see the lungs of a smoker, which is black and stiff.

Mr. Speaker, in this country, we have to be mindful of the impact of tobacco and cigarette smoking. As you would have heard from the Honourable Minister of Health, it is a major risk factor in coronary artery disease and in strokes. Mr. Speaker, when you put that along with the other major risk factors of hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol and obesity and indeed, family history, we would have many individuals in this country who have a high risk of heart disease and strokes.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly do not need to add to the burden of care, another risk factor, that of tobacco. I say that because the figures were also mentioned here. Many of the persons who are in their 40s, 50s, and 60s that you are trying to get them to stop smoking, certainly those in my medical practice that I would have tried to discourage from smoking, are by now smoking 20 or more cigarettes a day.

Sir, they would tell you that they have been doing this since they were 13, 14, and 16 and it is a difficult thing to break. I have seen many of them try to conquer it. There are many who would tell you, you would have heard the Honourable Member for St. James North say this, that they could stop any time and they would try, but it is not easy.

Certainly, I do not know what the availability is now of products such as the nicotine patch to be able to help folks to get off of the tobacco and the cigarettes, but those are things we need to add to our armoury as we try to get off the cigarettes.

The nicotine patch, or other delivery mechanisms of nicotine, in a step down approach, usually helps to gradually wean persons off the cigarette, along with the other methods of counselling and so on that have been used. I would encourage that those products become available to persons who are trying.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, they would have started in their teens and by the time they are in the 40s, 50s and 60s, and you are trying to get them to stop, this is next to impossible on their own.

The challenges of addiction and what it spells to a family as well are well-known to all of us. Mr. Speaker, mention was made of parros. We know what they represent to our society, the burden that they are on our society and the burden that they are on families. We have young men whose lives had hope and promise who are now parros and now not contributing anything to society. Instead, they are a drain on the society and an embarrassment to their families because of drugs.

Mr. Speaker, what we know is that many of these young people who are now on drugs, marijuana, cocaine and so on, did not start there. Many of them actually started with tobacco. Tobacco was more readily available. Certainly, without legislation to ban the sale of tobacco to minors, minors could easily access tobacco and cigarettes and find themselves smoking.

Mr. Speaker, it is culturally acceptable in certain peer groups to start with a cigarette. When I was growing up many of the young boys would walk around with a sweetie that looks like a cigarette in their mouth. They used to make these candies that look like a cigarette, because it was cool to be walking around with this thing. I know someone who does not smoke, but walks around with a cigarette tucked behind the ear because he thinks it looks cool.

Mr. Speaker, some of our children start experimenting with smoking cigarettes because of peer pressure and some because of rebellion. They know that this is not what their parents would have wanted. Their parents may have been preaching and teaching this for a while but they would have started there and it was accessible and their peers would have encouraged them in that and it seems harmless enough.

Yes, we see now that it is very addictive and we see the health risk that it causes. For many it has been an intro. It is often overlooked because it is seen as the least of all evils. It is not as debilitating as marijuana and cocaine, so for many it seems easy and we have overlooked it for far too long, therefore, I am glad to see today that we have taken a stand against it.

Mr. Speaker, there are other measures that need to be put in place, but I am glad to see that this step has started. For many, this is an introduction into the use of marijuana. I could recount the many times I spent talking to young men who would try to preach to me on the virtues of marijuana. They would say that it is an all-natural product, so nothing can be wrong with it.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: The love vine is all-natural too. Belladonnas are natural. There are

poisons from the Amazon forest that are all-natural. Mr. Speaker, I would always try to tell them that because it is all natural...

They would argue that it does nothing. That it is not mind-altering, but in the next breath they would describe the high that they get from it and the level of consciousness that they achieve when they go on marijuana and how it allows them to think on a different plane without appreciating that it is, indeed, mind-altering.

Mr. Speaker, anything that is mind-altering takes the control out of your hand. We need to send a message to our young people that when they dabble in substances that are mind-altering, even if they do not want to give it that label, that it affects their consciousness and their level of thinking. Once it does that, it takes the control out of your hands. When alcohol affects your ability to think, it takes the control out of your hands.

Even as we try to deal with HIVAIDS, we are teaching behavioural change and helping our young people and older ones too to make better decisions. You cannot make those decisions when you are using alcohol, marijuana, or other substances that affect your ability to think and to reason rationally. It takes the control out of your hands.

Mr. Speaker, I laud this move today in the passing of this Bill as yet another approach by this Government to protect our young people. If it is one common thread you could have seen in activities over the past 20 months, is an effort to help our at-risk youth. There is a lot of concern about our at-risk youth and many people are trying, and indeed we must all try because the approach to our at-risk youth must be a multifaceted one.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen many different programmes in here for that. We have seen where the free bus ride has been introduced, among other things, to get our children in a more safe environment. Yes, it gets them to school promptly and so on, but it is also to ensure that they are stirred away from certain behaviours such as the minibus culture that we would often hear about. That free bus ride is supposed to help to protect our young people. We also heard from the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central that if the behaviour on the minibuses continues, then we would have to stop the students from travelling on the minibuses. Again, not because people do not want the minibuses to make money, but because we have to protect our young people.

The national camps that have been run over the past few vacations have been just that too, a method of protecting our young people so that children out of school can still be in a controlled environment where they can be

supervised, and where they can have access to training in other disciplines that they may not be exposed to in school.

During the vacations when children are idle, there is a lot of mischief for them to get up to. Even the best of students who are focussed during the term, can get up to mischief during the vacations. When they and their friends have no parental supervision, they can be off doing, God knows. Mr. Speaker, that was yet another approach.

House A49 Sequence 30

4.00 p.m.

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Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Speaker, in the National HIV/AIDS Commission, the thrust is on behavioural change communication. This is yet another programme to help our youth. This is to help them to make the right choices, to change their behaviours, and to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS, which is not seen in a vacuum, but reducing that incidence of HIV/AIDS by allowing them to understand the risk they are taking with certain sexual practices and to understand how they can shy away from those behaviours.

Mr. Speaker, I see this Bill as being part of yet that overall package of protecting our young people, and we all have to invest in our young people. Sir, we have spent a lot of time talking about the economy today, but despite the economy, despite the grim economic picture that we would have heard being painted, and I venture to say because of it, now is the time that we must look to protect our youth more so than ever.

Mr. Speaker, when things get tough and people are challenged, that is when it is easier for some of our social systems to fall apart. Therefore, we need now to protect our young people more so than ever. We need to invest in our young people.

Mr. Speaker, as I talk about other programmes that are protecting the youth, there is a parenting programme to help parents to be able to communicate better with their children. There are other facets to that programme, but I think most importantly, it is helping them to understand their children. It is helping them to understand the needs of their children. It is helping them to understand how to communicate with their children.

Mr. Speaker, when young people were surveyed in this country and across the Caribbean, one of the things the young people lamented was the fact that they felt that their parents were not in touch with them. They felt that they were not being parented and that they were left to society and to societal forces to raise them. Sir, that is a dangerous

situation because when that happens, in fact, we see what happens, our young people believe that is how they were raised. Many of them believe their parents have not been very actively involved.

Mr. Speaker, parents nowadays take their hands off too early. They put a lot of emphasis on their children in primary school. When children get to secondary school, parents tend to lift their hands off their children a little too early and let young children, who are not capable of making these major decisions, make those decisions on their own. Sir, the fact that your child who was accustomed going to primary school down the street can now catch a bus to go into Bridgetown or further, does not mean that child has all the skills to make those major decisions.

Mr. Speaker, even with Government doing all that we are doing now to help our youth and to protect them, it does not negate the role of parents at this time. Sir, parents must still assume the primary responsibility for their children. Sir, I want to encourage all parents to do so.

Sir, there is a Bill today to guard the sale of tobacco products to minors, but in our society that is not going to be enough. Parents still need to talk to their children. Parents still need to tell their children about the dangers lurking out there. Parents still need to teach their children how to say no. Parents still need to teach their children about tobacco, alcohol and the various drugs. Further, if parents do not know about these drugs, they should try to find information on them.

Children were once told not to speak to strangers. Parents need to teach their children about inappropriate behaviour and touching. Parents need to teach their children about the dangers of the Internet. If parents do not know about these things, they should try to get the information. Many of us, when we started parenting, did not know what it was going to be like, but we had to get the tools along the way. We had to talk to people to help us out and bit by bit, we got through the challenges of raising a rambunctious toddler.

There are things parents may not understand, but parents need to get information and teach that information to their children. As a Government, we will help to put support systems in place to protect our young people, but it does not lift that responsibility from parents. Parents have to teach their children. Parents have to spend time with them. Parents have to get to know what their children like and dislike. Parents must also get to know their children's friends. It is one way to help them to counteract peer pressure when parents get to know their children's friends.

Sir, above all, parents need to teach their children self-esteem, because it is only when a child has self-esteem, can that child find the courage to stand up to face

peer pressure and to say no. That child will not say no because they are afraid. Those days are gone.

I have heard people talking about not touching or doing certain things because they knew, had they done that, their mother or grandmother would have beaten them. Today's young people are not afraid of that. In fact, a lot of people do not beat their children anymore. Further, there is now this ongoing debate about corporal punishment.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot drive our children to do the right things by driving fear in them. Instead we need to instill self-esteem into our children, along with other values. It is only when our children know who they are, when they know what they can be, when we help them to understand their potential, it is only then can they understand that they need to stay away from certain things because certain behaviours will stop them in the track to progress. Sir, it is only when we help our children to understand that, that we can see a turnaround. That is why the parenting programme is also important because we need parents to be able to get these messages out to their children.

Mr. Speaker, we often hear people saying that Government should do a number of things. For instance, Government should have public service announcements, training sessions or seminars. Sir, Government will do as much as it can, but at the end of the day, the parents still have better access to their children. Sir, parents are the ones who need to start instilling such values into their children.

Sir, parents should also not wait until their children reach ages 13 or 14 to start telling them about risky sexual behaviours, and about using substances. That is not the time to start. We need to start when our children are listening to us. By the time our children reach ages 13 or 14, they have a lot of other voices in their heads, and they are listening to their school mates and other friends telling them things. The time to start instilling values in our children is when they are younger, when we have them at our knees. We cannot beat it into them. We have to show them. We have to do it gently over time and we have to start early.

Mr. Speaker, our children start smoking from very early and so we need to be able to reduce it. Sir, we still have to be vigilant because we know that wherever there is a measure put in place to stop this, we know there is somebody who is going to find a way around it, and so we have to continue being vigilant.

Sir, this is where the entire community must play its part. The community now knows there is a ban on the sale of tobacco to minors. Members of communities now know when they see people on the "blocks" selling cigarettes or "looseys" or whatever to young people, they now know

that these people who are selling these things are breaking the Law. Communities now know that they have within their power the right to call the authorities to report such.

Mr. Speaker, I want members of the communities to stand up and start taking back their communities. We all talk about the "block" culture and about drugs on the "blocks", but we are also afraid to call the authorities for what we know is going on right under our very noses. I want to encourage the community to get up and to take a stand for our young people.

Mr. Speaker, on Sunday we had the National Youth Award, where we awarded dozens of young people who have excelled in their fields. Those were ones who were nominated this year. We know there are many more out there. It was a wonderful event and I want to congratulate all nominees and awardees for outstanding work so far.

I know they have bright futures ahead of them and so, I look forward to hearing of their contributions to society in the years to come. I know they will continue to make a stand here in this island.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the members of staff at the Ministry who also coordinated that National Youth Award. It was an event par excellence.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate those young people who have achieved so much, let us look to those around us who need help, the ones we call the "at risk group". Sir, let us now take the matter into our own hands. We have seen that Government is doing its part, and I have outlined some of the various programmes that this Government is doing to help our young people. Let us now as a community stand up. Let us not stand for what is wrong anymore.

We will not allow certain things in our homes, and I hope we have not got to the point where we would allow just about anything in our homes. Let us restore certain standards in our homes and let us demand certain standards in our community again. If we start to demand them, the authorities will have to pay attention.

Mr. Speaker, too often our communities turn a blind eye to what is happening on the "blocks" around them and so even the police no longer takes it seriously. The police may pass through every now and then but they do not see it as a big issue.

4.10 p.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: If we of the community start to take a stand again and start to call in the authorities when we see things going wrong among our

young people, when we see the marijuana sales and when we see the tobacco sales, then the police would have to stand up and take note and, Sir, bit by bit, community by community, one young person at a time, we can take our young people back before it is too later.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, again, I support this Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I just wanted to make a brief intervention on this particular Bill, because I believe that it really accentuates the policy of this Government, particularly as is reflected in the strong commitment of the Honourable Member for St. John, the Honourable Prime Minister, on putting families at the centre poll of Government's policy and ensuring that, in our pursuit of economic prosperity, that we do not lose sight of the importance of protecting and advancing our human capital.

Mr. Speaker, I think all of us would have been experiencing, from time to time, the horror of seeing very young persons in our society involved in smoking, or other related activities. The Honourable Member for St. James North, I thought, made a very passionate presentation, very reflective of his usual substance on this particular Bill and pointed out some very important elements that should be considered as we move towards the passage of this Bill.

When one thinks of the cost of smoking tobacco products, or using tobacco products, one would have to acknowledge that the cost is not so much an immediate cost, in terms of the purchase of these products, but can have a long-term impact, not only on the individual, but a long-term impact on the health services, a long-term impact on the cost to Government, a long-term impact on the cost to families and a long-term impact on those persons who innocently sit by, but then become exposed because they share a common environment.

Therefore, this Bill sets in train a series of actions empowering the Minister to be able to continue to fine-tune the approach of this Government on how we should seek to guard our young persons from exposure to these kinds of habits.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that smoking in many circles is considered a pathway drug, and if you become attached to it, or addicted to it, it can lead to the use of other more serious substances, including marijuana and other types of drugs. Therefore, it cannot be taken lightly when minors are involved because, what we might well be doing is setting in train, a long-term practice that would

have serious consequences on a number of areas in our society.

Mr. Speaker, when we think of the cost of smoking, many of us have observed, even at times, family members who have become casualties of many years of smoking. Sir, many of us, as children, who grew up in the homes where adults smoked, could not help but have our curiosity peak why they engage in such habits and would, from time to time, try to experiment ourselves with any of the tobacco products that would be left exposed so that we could have access to them.

Mr. Speaker, we watch over time, how tobacco has had an amazing impact on the health and wellness of millions of people across the world. Sir, it is not just in Barbados, but other developed societies have been working assiduously in trying to curb the practice of smoking, especially among young people, their most productive force. Therefore, they have sought to put measures in place to limit access to public places, and to create other types of restraints that would help, perhaps, to slow down the perpetuation of this habit that could become so detrimental to our health and wellness in the society.

Mr. Speaker, I really applaud the Minister of Health and, certainly, our Government for taking this stand very early in our Administration to continue to emphasize that, as far as we are concerned, the greatest asset of tomorrow's Barbados is our youth and, therefore, we will do whatever is necessary to ensure that we protect them.

Mr. Speaker, while we seek to stabilise the economy, while we seek to deal with the economic downturn, we have not lost sight of the importance of bringing along, with all those activities, the importance of protecting and guarding our human capital, which would become our greatest economic force in years to come. Therefore, we want to ensure that everyone understands that it is not a cool thing for young persons to be exposed.

Sir, those persons who sell tobacco products must understand that this Government takes a firm stand against putting minors in contact with tobacco and, therefore, we will lay out policy why it is not an acceptable practice in our society.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at smoking, there is a cost to Government because, as persons become addicted, over time, then it costs the health care system a tremendous amount of output in terms of treating these persons with cancer-related illnesses coming from their smoking habits. Therefore, it is a good thing, if we can deal with this issue at this level and try to arrest it among the youth, so that in the long-term we can save, perhaps, millions of dollars that would have to be expended in taking care of those who become the casualties of smoking.

Mr. Speaker, the treatment cost. Sir, treatment is not only in terms of the medical care, but also there are those who discover that they have become addicted and will seek psychological care, and that also is a tremendous cost.

Sir, from time to time, they seek psychiatric care because of the perpetuation of the illness. Therefore, we would want to suggest that if we are going to be able to convince the society that the best way forward for a productive, progressive society is to try to ensure that we protect our youth against these kinds of habits, then we must be able to point out to them that there is a cost to the society and, indeed, there is a social cost to the Government when persons become attached and, eventually, addicted to these substances.

Mr. Speaker, there are some young people who see smoking as faddish. They see it as something that they would want to become a part of because it is socially accepted among their peers. Therefore, to be accepted and to be identified, they take on the habit, perhaps, just only as an experiment and then it becomes an addiction. Therefore, the whole social symbol of smoking becomes one that is very difficult for persons to shake as they go through life, particularly, in the adolescent years.

Sir, during the adolescent years, young persons are searching for identity. They are seeking to define themselves, and whatever works in a certain type of group, works for them, and becomes part of that whole identity search. Therefore, what we are suggesting in this Bill, is that we will do whatever it takes to take these products away from our youth and protect them in that sense. Sir, there is that treatment cost.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say here that I am not convinced that there is the kind of level of psycho-social care being attached to this whole issue of smoking in our society and that, very often, persons who have problems with smoking are sent for psychiatric care, which is not necessarily the best care to bring them back to a sense of normalcy. Therefore, I believe there needs to be a broader set of services available so that young persons or older adults, who have issues with smoking and other types of habits, would be able to find that level of psycho-social care without having to go to the Psychiatric Hospital to get that care, because that brings along its own social stigmas with it as well.

Mr. Speaker, not only is there a health care cost and a treatment cost to Government and so on, but there is a cost to self.

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Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: You will pursue that habit because it is the protection of your sense of self. It is important that we teach our children that authentic selfhood is not aided by these habits, but it is a deep search within oneself from who they are and how they live out the virtues of that discovery.

Very often what happens, parents and families are not involved enough in that socialisation, especially during the early years. Therefore, as peer groups take on their role, as peer pressure begins to exert itself on individuals, there is that sense of confusion. There is that sense of loss and whatever becomes comfortable in the society, or within the peer group, you find that a number of persons would tell you years later, it was never my intention to become addicted to smoking, but then it was the cool thing to do, and they became involved in the habit.

We have to teach people how the journey of self-development occurs, and in the process of pursuing a sense of who you are, how do you avoid those perils? Well, if they are not handled correctly, they could lead you down a road that later you will come to regret. It calls for the involvement of the family, the involvement of the school system, the involvement of the Church, and all of the agencies within the society that lends to the socialisation process. We need to bring them back on board so that they can become more intricately involved in how our young people develop in a society. That is why I so admire the position of this Government, because family is important to us. Our children are important to us.

We do not mind the social cost of putting our children on a bus service that protects them from the vices of other types of transportation because, at the end of the day, that cost will save us many more costs in the long run. That is the important thing.

Sir, I believe that our Honourable Prime Minister has become a crusader of such sorts in continuing to push that message, that while you can define the strength of your country on your monuments, buildings, GDP and so on, the real definition of the strength of your country is in the lives and the quality of the lives of your children and of families. That is important to us as we go forward.

Sir, I believe it is also important, not only to look at the whole area of self and the impact of self, because I know there are a number of persons, who ordinarily would not pursue a certain course of life that is positive, because they feel that they need an aid. They feel that they need to light up.

They go to a party and several of their peers are smoking. They do not smoke at home. They do not smoke other places, but they light up, because it makes them feel accepted and comfortable. We have to emphasise to our

people that there is something virtuous about seeking to define yourself on the merits of who you are, and not on the pleasures of those other systems that you can invoke in your life at that early age.

Then there is a cost to society. I do not like to be in places where, if I do not want to be exposed to smoking, I do not. There are times when you find yourself in situations where you are exposed. We know that there is a lot of research the world over, that talks about exposure to second-hand smoking. We understand that research is being verified and that there are persons who have never smoked in their lives, yet they have developed cancer, smoke-related cancers, that is because of prolonged exposure.

Sir, there is this drive now in societies to protect persons, who do not want to be exposed, from smoking, and protect them by creating smoke-free zones, whether it is in public places, work places and so on. Perhaps, that is something that we have to think about as we go forward. Sir, the truth to tell, I still believe that anyone who chooses to embrace a pleasure should be allowed to practise that pleasure in his or her home. If it is smoking, then you should find a place to do it, without exposing other people to it. At the same time, one has to be advised that there are some natural perils one can face if one engages in the practice, therefore, be discouraged from doing so.

Sir, I really applaud the Minister of Health that in a short space of time he has been able to pilot this Amendment. I believe it is consistent with our Government's policy in protecting and guarding our society. I believe it is a good thing to do because, in the long-term, we will be able to save our health care system a lot of unnecessary costs. I also believe that we can save a number of young persons who might otherwise become addicted to other drugs because they are smoking.

I think these are very important considerations. I give my full support to this Amendment and to this Bill.

I thank you.

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

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Bill before this Honourable House, and to say that I have been personally following this fight against substance abuse for many years. Indeed, not blowing my trumpet, just to give you my background from which I speak, your humble servant was one of the founding members of Citizens Against Narcotics, back in the 1980s, headed by that great social worker, Mr. Glenroy Straughan.

I also worked with Combined Organisations Against Drugs, people like Dr. Tony Gale, who was a pioneer in the whole issue of educating the public about the harmful effects of tobacco smoke and the use of tobacco products to the community, also, Pastor Roach and others.

I am saying it is very important that we have reached the stage that we, as a country, are courageous enough to join with the international community in support of Article 16 of The Framework Convention of Tobacco Control to play our part to reduce the usage of tobacco products by minors in particular.

I note that the objectives and reasons of this Bill as circulated:

"This Bill will amend the Health Services Act, Cap. 44, to give the Minister responsible for health the power to make regulations provided for the protection of persons, particularly minors, from the consumption of tobacco products and exposure to tobacco smoke."

As the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, who so eloquently mentioned, this will provide the framework for which the Minister in the Ministry of Health can really look seriously at reducing the exposure of the public at large, to the harmful effects of cigarette usage.

Sir, as others mentioned, the nicotine that is found in cigarette smoke as combustion occurs, when people light up a cigarette, is very dangerous. It is a chemical addiction. There are some drugs which give rise to a psychological addiction, but cigarette smoking is a chemical addiction. That is why people who become addicted to cigarette smoking, chain smokers, as we call it, need help actually to break that habit, because it is a chemical addiction where they are controlled by this chemical drive to continue to smoke. Sometimes you need, as the Honourable Member for St. George South mentioned, nicotine patches and so on, so we in the society must protect these persons from themselves.

Sir, it goes further than this. As the Honourable Member for Christ Church East mentioned so correctly, the side stream smoke from cigarette smoking is even more harmful to that person in the area around the smoking who is inhaling That Side stream smoke. That Side stream smoke is more dangerous than the smoke inhaled by the cigarette user, because most cigarettes come with a filter, and that filter will remove some of the harmful chemicals, so the smoker is actually harming the people who are around him inhaling That Side stream smoke, more than he is harming himself.

Sir, this comes home to me, because as a Member of Parliament for the City, there was an unfortunate situation which occurred a few months ago, where a senior

constituent, who had smoked in her life, died from lung cancer because there are smokers in her household.

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House A49, Sequence 34, 4.30 p.m.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, this is a reality in Barbados today so that we cannot be soft on these issues. I agree people have a right. We are not saying to ban smoke completely, and notwithstanding people's right to smoke, if they are harming others, then we have to draw the line.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that no one is allowed to smoke in my household, that is my decision.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, if people want to kill themselves by smoking that is their business, but this does not give them the right to kill the people around them, who will be inhaling the side fumes.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let us have some order, please.

Continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: I am saying we must be firm on this.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George South alluded to the issue of parents and you know that very often, as young people mature, they want to assert their adulthood. The parent does not want to be seen as somebody who is restraining the natural development of the person and they want to give them freedom. I am saying, given the chemical and biological realities of the harmful effects of smoking, I am calling upon leaders of households to be firm and tell minors if they want to smoke, not to bring the cigarette smoke or other smoke in their house.

We cannot be with them 24/7, but if we are soft on them and say well you are a young 17, 18, 19 year old now, even 19, 20, 25, and so you have a right to smoke, but when you are smoking in that house, you are threatening the health of the others, including my babies and senior persons who may be asthmatics, or suffering from other respiratory illnesses. The smoker is threatening the health and safety of those persons in the household, so the

household leader has a right, in my view, to ban smoking from residents and visitors within their household.

Mr. Speaker, we as a society will have to take the debate further in the ensuing months in terms of protecting, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church East mentioned, the workers in public places of entertainment, but what is considered a public place would be the mute point that we, as a society, would have to achieve a consensus on, so I look forward to that debate.

In this particular issue, Mr. Speaker, as I said, parents and guardians must not be soft on their minors because they are impressionable people. They are not quite adults and so they need the leadership of the adult, not to bully them and condescend but to guide them because we love them.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I have been training in the fight against drugs for years. I remember in the mid- 1980s the United States of America Government funded an exchange programme that took youth leaders from among the Caribbean, Pakistan and Venezuela, including your humble servant, for over a month, where we toured drug Rehab programmes hosted by the Youth to Youth Programme. Sir, some of the delegation came back here and formed a local group, with hundreds of young people meeting in the Park, fighting drug and substance abuse.

I remember in that tour in the United States of America that we toured Rehab Centres in Washington, D.C. We even visited the First Lady, Nancy Reagan at the White House because she piloted the "Just Say No Programme."

I visited Teen Challenge in Riverside, California, even before it came to Barbados. When we met the leaders of Teen Challenge, they were recovering addicts and there were very tough Rules, because they said that if you go soft on the recovering addicts, they can easily degenerate and go back into their substance abuse approaches.

Sir, that is why sometimes we see in some of our rehabilitation programmes someone may have been a cocaine addict or marijuana addict and there is this view that you cannot let them go "cold turkey", so you allow them to smoke as many cigarettes as they wish in the wards or at home.

I am no expert, but I am saying that there must come a stage when we will tell these people that smoking is not allowed. As we mentioned, it is a gateway drug because many people start with the cigarettes and they get addicted to the nicotine. Then, they end up smoking the marijuana and when they have the little butt of marijuana, they put it on a cigarette and they smoke the marijuana and the cigarette at the same time. Then, they go into cocaine and

they smoke the cocaine pipe and then the crack cocaine. Sir, we have to be serious in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I will be frank. I am saying that we as Parliamentarians have to set the example. I am not saying discriminate against anyone, because we are all people. I, as a young teenager, tried a few cigarettes, but I could not bring any at home. I would go in the cinema and take a puff or two. This is a tobacco cigarette I am talking about, but I personally broke out of that. It never got to the stage of being habitual. Why I broke out of it was, quite frankly, I had limited funds and I worked out quite clearly that the money I wasted on cigarettes could be better spent buying some food that would be more nutritious and beneficial to me, a young student.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that I am calling upon all Members of Parliament, if you currently smoke, to stop smoking. We must set an example. We try to set the example because we are role models. We are leaders of the society, and people emulate us. We talked about peer pressure earlier, so people call them demons, people call them bad vices, be it alcohol abuse or whatever, but I am saying that as Members of Parliament, we are not perfect, but we must set an example for the rest of the society to follow. We should not be hypocritical and if we are smoking, we should stop smoking and I think our spouses can help us.

Mr. Speaker, I really love the advertisement that ran over the last few years on our television, when they say, kissing someone who smokes is like licking an ashtray. I think that given the fact that the drive for sex, thirst for drinking water and food, these are innate instinctive drives and so, I am saying that if someone knows that their spouse is not going to allow them to be intimate with them if they continue to smoke cigarettes, see how fast they would stop smoking, so spouses, I am saying that you have a role to play to ensure that we as Members of Parliament set the example and not smoke. I am speaking for myself. If I used to smoke, I am saying I should not smoke.

I go further, Mr. Speaker, so this Member of Parliament, when I am having a fund-raising function, you will not see cigarettes being sold regardless of who gets vex, because we are setting a certain standard, setting the example. This is nothing for us to be ashamed of, so do not talk about asking this Member of Parliament for money to buy cigarettes. No can do.

I am not encouraging anyone to hurt themselves. This is why on the cigarette cartoons by Law in Barbados and the United States of America, you see the big sign, "The Surgeon General Says Smoking is Harmful to Your Health." In Barbados, of course, we talk about the Ministry of Health, because we are trying to save people from themselves. They are smoking at their own risk.

Sir, regardless of the negative implications about the sale of tobacco, people start talking about jobs at risk and so on, but we as a society must not be afraid of these issues and we must look to alternative ways of sustaining the jobs and the economy. We do not have to perpetuate this.

Mr. Speaker, I would go further. I am in education and I am saying that as others alluded to earlier, we must really educate the public about the harmful effects of the use of tobacco products on their health, because knowledge is power, and many people through peer pressure, do a "follow pattern" and engage in smoking cigarettes because they are ignorant. It has not really sunk into their psyche that they are actually killing themselves.

I remember as a young teacher, a leading Government forensic analyst came to the school and brought a diseased lung of someone who smoked and, as the Honourable Member for St. George South said, I saw this preserved lung in the formalin, which was as black as tar. Mr. Speaker, that stuck a clear signal in my psyche that if we are smoking we are killing ourselves.

We must be frank about this matter, if we say we love people. I love all the Honourable Members in this House that is why I say frankly that all of us, none excluded, should not smoke. If constituents know that their Member of Parliament is smoking, tell your Member of Parliament not to smoke.

House A49, Sequence 34, 4.40 p.m.

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: I do not want to hear talk about discrimination. I am not saying to discriminate against smokers. I am saying to save them from themselves. If we love them, we need to tell them not to smoke. We cannot be hypocrites. We cannot be telling the rest of society not to smoke and we are puffing a cigarette in front of their face. They would not take us seriously at all. Education is the key so that we can develop positive peer pressure where young people know now that it is cool not to smoke.

As the Honourable Member for St. James South mentioned, we in Barbados are well on our way, thanks to the work of Dr. Tony Gale and other pioneers, in educating the public about the fact that smoking can lead to throat cancer, an increased rate of breast cancer among women, strokes and coronary heart diseases, including heart attack.

When the people are educated, then the positive peer pressure would be such that those persons who smoke would be considered a nuisance. Their work has paid dividends because the level of smoking in Barbados is among the lowest in the world, and I congratulate those

pioneers for sticking to their guns against ridicules from some quarters to spread that positive message that we should all stop smoking.

Mr. Speaker, we as a society must reflect on the issue of the sale of wrappers. Hardly anybody in Barbados that I know about, roll raw tobacco and smokes it like that, so the private sector does not have to wait on any ban. We know that these wrappers are being used to smoke marijuana, so if they are not available in the shops, then we would reduce the likelihood of people smoking marijuana.

When we sell these wrappers to the public, we are really aiding and abetting the use of marijuana. Mr. Speaker, we as a society should not be caught up with just the raw greed in terms of trying to get profits and be Machiavellian selling these wrappers that we know would end up encouraging drug abuse.

Mr. Speaker, let me just conclude by reflecting on the underlying reasons why people abuse drugs including tobacco. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East alluded to this. I remember, Mr. Speaker, when I was at the Lodge School with yourself as a young lad, there was this great competition between Earth, Wind and Fire and the Commodores. I was a Commodores fan. I remember that the first album I ever bought was an LP entitled "Natural High" by Lionel Richie and the Commodores. It included songs like "Once, Twice, Three Times A Lady".

Mr. Speaker, natural high has always been my philosophy of life. I do not need to use drugs to get an artificial high. I get a natural high through sports. Many persons are not engaging in physical activity so you get obesity and sluggishness. Just to get some bread from down the road, persons have to drive. That gives rise to constipation, Mr. Speaker, could you imagine this?

Mr. Speaker, you have a lot of obese constipated people out there because they are not getting enough exercise. They sit in front of the computer day in and day out, and they are not running around. The computer has good uses.

Boys are now afraid to work up a sweat at school because the girls would think they are not smelling like perfume. Boys and girls should be encouraged to get physical exercise so that they are healthy. A healthy body means a healthy mind. You get an euphoria from running. I was a long-distance runner and after running through those cane grounds out by the Lodge School with you, Mr. Speaker, you know that we really felt relaxed and energised and so, there was no need to take any drugs.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Yes, I like to party. I like to dance and wuk up. That is part of our culture. That is nothing to be ashamed of. You do not have to be obscene. That is part of our Barbadian African heritage. I am saying that is good exercise.

On the television on Channel 8 after regular programming, you see experts in their dance studio doing aerobics with American hip hop dancing, and they are showing you that when you wriggle up and dance, you are really exercising many muscles in your body and losing weight in the process and having good clean fun without engaging in drug abuse.

Being involved in clubs, societies, be they the Girl Guides, the Boys' Scout, the Cadet, or community clubs, not many young people are engaging in this sort of bonding that would give the young people a sense of belonging which helps to improve their self-esteem, so that they do not have low self-esteem and follow the negative peer pressure. Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the underlying causes so that we do not just treat the symptoms, but we have lasting solutions to these problems.

Mr. Speaker, I totally support this Bill and look forward to a healthier drug-free Barbados. I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

The Honourable Member for St. James South.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, I am very much obligated and grateful to those Members of Parliament who intervened and spoke on this Bill here today. Like I said at the very beginning, I did not anticipate that it would be a debate that would be full of the usual partisan politics. I recognise that all Honourable Members accept that this is indeed a very important national initiative as we seek to protect our young people and to improve upon the health of Barbadians, generally speaking.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly want to commend the Honourable Member for St. James North who, in his usual eloquent style, would have spoken well to many of the challenges confronting our young people today, particularly the issue of substance abuse and to assure you, and allay your concerns, that the Ministry of Health does take the issue of substance abuse in Barbados very seriously.

As you quite rightly pointed out, it takes a collaborative effort between various Ministries, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports, the Attorney-General's Office, the Ministry of Social Care, and the non-governmental organisations in this country, to sensitise Barbadians to the ills of substance abuse and, through a

collective effort, seek to address and allay some of the ill effects.

To that extent, recognising that there is indeed great stigma attached to the Psychiatric Hospital, the Ministry of Health continues to work closely with, and to give financial and other support to Verdun House and Teen Challenge, which are private substance abuse programmes, to assist Barbadians who need such interventions. We recently, with the assistance of the Pan American Health Organisation, undertook a review of the substance abuse programmes in Barbados, with the intention of making the necessary improvements to the various institutions that provide such facilities, once that report is concluded and forwarded to the Ministry of Health.

As was rightly pointed out, today it could be cigarettes, tomorrow it could be cocaine. Cigarettes, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, the Honourable Minister of the Environment, pointed out, is a pathway to many other mind-altering drugs which we would not wish to have in our society. This Bill, at the end of the day, is reflective of this Government's commitment to protect our young people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to stress for a few seconds on that point because we, as a Government, as the Honourable Member for St. George South pointed out earlier in her presentation, have taken some very bold initiatives to protect our young people. I am of the view, not only as a politician but also as a parent, that young people have a right to enjoy their youth.

What has been happening in Barbados over the last few years is a situation where many young people are being robbed of their youth and are engaging in behaviours that are not just deviant, but reckless and the kind of behaviour that certainly does not allow them to grow into positive adults as we would want them to be, as we pass the baton on to them.

Therefore, it is no mean effort and, certainly, no coincidence that initiatives like this which seek to protect our minors from the sale and consumption of tobacco products, come right on the heels of our initiatives in respect of providing free public transportation to our school children as we seek to deal with the challenges created in a ZR culture.

Mr. Speaker, I am one politician who would state boldly that I am of the view, I share the sentiments expressed by some of my colleagues, that we need to take some bolder and stiffer steps in respect of dealing with this ZR culture that permeates our society. There is too much reckless behaviour and too much indiscipline in this society. As a responsible Government, we have a duty to

rein it in and to protect our young people. If we do not do it, no one else will.

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4.50 p.m.

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Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Speaker, the other issue raised by the Honourable Member for St. James North with respect to labelling and advertisement, we recognise it is one thing to have these Laws on the Statute Books. We are not saying we are banning the sale of cigarettes totally, therefore, we have to go a step further with respect to labelling and advertising rights and rules.

Sir, to that extent, the Ministry of Health throughout CARICOM and other partners in the Region, continues to work with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Commerce, and the Barbados National Standards Institute (BNSI), in particular, to address the issue of labelling cigarettes and advertising strategies being employed thereon.

Sir, one ought to be mindful of the very powerful effects and the very deep pockets of tobacco manufacturers and their representatives, particularly in small developing nations like ours in the Caribbean. These cigarette manufactures and their representatives can be extremely powerful. Their tentacles can reach deep and far and, therefore, we have a responsibility, as an enlightened Government, to ensure that we do what we have to do to combat such challenges.

Mr. Speaker, everyone would have spoken well to the issue of peer pressure and to the need for parental guidance. Sir, I do not need to re-emphasise these points, except to say they are well-taken and that, at the end of the day, parents have to realise that they cannot abdicate their responsibility and pass it on to someone else. Therefore, every effort that we can make in terms of strengthening parental guidance will certainly be commended.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would wish to point out that we, in the Ministry of Health, will not just stop at the point of restricting the sale of cigarettes to minors. We recognise that we have to go a step further in terms of dealing with the issue of smoking in public places. We believe this will have far-reaching positive effects on our economy and on our citizens overall. This effect is not just in terms of the health of our nation, which translates into dollars and cents, but also it certainly impacts on other areas such as tourism and others that are very important to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I would wish to inform you and this Honourable House that we have already prepared the

regulations, and we expect them to be announced very shortly.

Sir, we have looked at the definition of a minor, who is someone under the age of 18. Sir, it is not that we are looking to prohibit the sale of tobacco products to minors. We are also seeking to prohibit minors from selling tobacco products. It is not just minors being recipients, but also being vendors of tobacco products.

Mr. Speaker, recognising that minors are the ones who we are targeting here, we have to be cognisant of the fact that the parents will not escape, therefore, we will propose that the parent or guardian will be the one to pay the fine or to be responsible for sending the minor to counselling sessions as the Court may dictate. It goes beyond selling tobacco products. We are also addressing the issue of the fact that the penalty will occur to those who, not only sell cigarettes, but those who offer, whether for consideration or not.

Mr. Speaker, a point was made earlier, I believe by the Honourable Member for St. George South, in terms of sweets and imitation cigarettes, generally speaking, that have been used over time to lure our children into the habit of smoking cigarettes. Therefore, we will be proposing that any person who imports, manufactures, sells, displays for sale, supplies or distributes any sweets, snacks, toys, or other items, or object that imitate tobacco products is guilty of an offence. The recognition is that we really have to go the full gamut here in terms of protecting our young people.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of self-merchandising facilities is also being tackled, and any vendor who uses these merchandising facilities, and they are not so well policed, that would allow minors to procure cigarettes therefrom, will be guilty of an offence.

Mr. Speaker, there is no sense in protecting our minors and then allow them to be active participants in promotional activities relating to the sale, or distribution of tobacco products, therefore, it will be an offence to use a minor in advertisements promoting tobacco products for use in Barbados as well.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me reassure this Honourable House and Barbados, generally speaking, that as an enlightened and responsible Government, we are prepared to do what we have to do to protect our young people. This Bill before this Honourable House is considered to be a very important initiative in going forward along that plank.

As I said, it relates to many other initiatives that we are taking, in terms of placing family values at the forefront and protecting our young people. Therefore, I am very

much heartened by the support it has garnered from Both Sides of this Honourable House.

Sir, I look forward to regulations being in effect and to Barbadians being generally appreciative of our efforts and being on board.

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

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

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

On the motion of Hon. D. O'N. INNISS, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, the House resolved itself into Committee. Mr. J. D. PAUL, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 - 4, inclusive, were called and passed.

The Schedule was called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. D. O'N. INNISS, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. D. O'N. INNISS, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Health Services (Amendment) Act, 2009.

5.00 p.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

ORDER NO. 6 – RESOLUTION TO RESCIND THE
RESOLUTION PASSED – BY THE HOUSE OF
ASSEMBLY ON THE 14TH DAY OF JULY, 2009,
AND THE SENATE ON THE

29th DAY OF JULY, 2009, APPROVING

THE ARTS AND SPORT PROMOTION FUND
(AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2008.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Prime Minister.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, this is a very simple matter and when we had previously dealt with the Budget, the issue of the Arts and Sport Promotion Fund, when a validation Bill was brought, I had indicated that it would be necessary for us to bring regulations. What happened is that the Fund acted prematurely and, therefore, funds were disbursed under the Regulations prior to their parliamentary approval.

Mr. Speaker, what we have before the House is a Resolution, which would rescind the previous Resolution made on July 14, 2009, and would then replace it by a Resolution which is set out as Order No. 7 on the Order Paper. Sir, it is really part of the process of validating the entire exercise. Therefore, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

ORDER NO. 7 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE ARTS
AND SPORT – PROMOTION FUND (AMENDMENT)
REGULATIONS, 2009.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Prime Minister.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, having passed that particular Resolution to rescind, I now am bringing back the same Regulations which have been previously passed. The Resolution which essentially brings into effect the Regulations, which I would have signed on August 14, 2009, under Section 9 of the Arts and Sport Promotion (Fund) Act, 2004, be approved. Therefore, I am moving that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Friday, December 4, 2009, at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that the House be adjourned until Friday, December 4, 2009, at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

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EASTMOND, Mr. R. C. (St. James North)
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INNIS, Hon. D. O'N. (St. James South)
JONES, Hon. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)
KELLMAN, His Excellency D. St.E. (St. Lucy)
LOWE, Dr. the Hon. D. S. (Christ Church East)
MARSHALL, Mr. D. D. (St. Joseph)
MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M. A. (St. Michael North East)
SINCKLER, Hon. C. P. (St. Michael North West)
STUART, Hon. F. J. (St. Michael South)
THOMPSON, Hon. D. J. H. (St. John)
TODD, Hon. P. M. T. (City of Bridgetown)

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Committee of Supply, motion to report progress. The procedural sentence records the motion as seconded by ‘Hon. R. D. MARSHALL’; the seconder in the debate is Mr. D. D. Marshall. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Committee of Supply, Standing Orders. The Leader of the Opposition refers to ‘Standing Order 68, Rule 8’ and Mr. D. D. Marshall to ‘Order 66, Rule 8’ as the 15-minute rule she sought to have suspended. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Committee of Supply, Head 62. The Prime Minister gives revenue for April 1 to September 30 as ‘\$1 18.4 million’. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Committee of Supply, chairmanship. Mr. J. D. Paul was appointed temporary Chairman of Committees for the Sitting, but after the Speaker’s ruling the House ‘reverted to Committee of Supply, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY in the Chair’, and on the Health Services (Amendment) Bill Mr. J. D. Paul is described as ‘Chairman of Committees’. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 4, Health Services (Amendment) Bill. During the second reading in the House, Mr. R. C. Eastmond is called under the label ‘Mr. CHAIRMAN’ rather than ‘Mr. SPEAKER’. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Order No. 6 and Papers. Order No. 6 rescinds the July 2009 Resolution approving the ‘ARTS AND SPORT PROMOTION FUND (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2008’, while Order No. 7 approves the Regulations of 2009; the paper laid reads ‘Arts and Sports Promotion Fund (Amendment) Regulation, 2009’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, 17th November, 2009, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair. The Minutes of Tuesday, November 10, 2009 were confirmed and the Speaker reported the Accounts and Statements for May 2009. The Prime Minister, Hon. D. J.

H. Thompson, laid the 2008 Annual Reports of Needham’s Point Holdings Limited and Needham’s Point Development Incorporated and the Arts and Sports Promotion Fund (Amendment) Regulation, 2009. Standing Orders were suspended, and on the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones Mr. J. D. Paul, the Member for St. Michael West Central, was appointed temporary Chairman of Committees.

On Order No. 5 the House went into Committee of Supply on a Resolution to grant \$68 017 018 for Supplementary Estimates No. 2, 2009-2010. Under Head 62, \$16 727 003 for subsidised diesel to manufacturers, farmers, fisherfolk, public service vehicles and the Transport Board, the Prime Minister, noting that no Opposition Member was in the House at 10.30 a.m., gave a half-year review: GDP was expected to decline by about 4 per cent, unemployment had risen to 9.9 per cent at the end of June and perhaps 10.5 per cent in the third quarter, manufacturing had fallen by 11.8 per cent, and the current balance to September stood at negative \$380.4 million.

When the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, said the 15-minute rule in Committee prevented a proper economic debate, the Prime Minister offered to let her speak for the rest of the debate. Mr. D. St.E. Kellman argued that the police flexibility allowance was a bonus, which Mr. D. D. Marshall disputed on a point of order. Miss Mottley then moved that the Committee report progress so that a Standing Order could be suspended. The Speaker, citing Order 71 and the rights of a minority of Members, would not allow the motion, refused to let her continue, and said he would not tolerate one Member’s repeated challenges to the Chair’s rulings. The House returned to Committee.

Miss Mottley, speaking in 15-minute turns, criticised cuts such as those to police allowances and said only \$15 million had been put into the Tourism Relief Fund against \$39.5 million in claims. Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick disputed her claim that the Government had taken \$104 million in extra taxes. After the luncheon suspension Hon. P. M. T. Todd denied that schools were being starved of supplies, Miss Mottley said the decline to the end of the third quarter was 4.9 per cent and Hon. C. P. Sinckler said that money put aside in good times had been spent. Replying, the Prime Minister said unemployment had averaged 9.36 per cent since 2000, that 137 companies had applied for the interest and penalty waiver, and that the previous Administration had paid someone in Hong Kong \$40 000 a month. Head 62, Head 19 (Treasury) and Head 54 (Education and Human Resource Development) were agreed to and the Resolution was passed.

On Order No. 4 the Minister of Health, Hon. D. O’N. Inniss, moved the second reading of the Health Services (Amendment) Bill, 2009, giving the Minister power to make regulations to protect persons, particularly minors, from tobacco products and smoke, following Barbados’ signature of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in November, 2005. Mr. R. C. Eastmond, Dr. the Hon. E. R. Byer-Suckoo, Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe and Hon. P. M. T. Todd supported it, and the Minister replied on labelling and advertising. The Bill passed all its stages.

The Prime Minister then moved Order No. 6, a Resolution rescinding the Resolution of July 2009 on the Arts and Sport Promotion Fund (Amendment) Regulations, because the Fund had disbursed money before the Regulations were approved, and Order No. 7, a Resolution approving the Regulations he had signed on August 14, 2009; both were agreed to. The House was adjourned until Friday, December 4, 2009 at 10.00 a.m.