
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

met on Tuesday, February 16, 2010.

PRESENT

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

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

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, B.Sc., L.E.C., 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. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday,
February 10, 2010.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to
move that the Minutes for the Honourable, the House of
Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, February 10, 2010,
which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read. Hon.
F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

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

PAPERS

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

Duties, Taxes and Other Payment (Exemption) (The Barbados Light & Power Company Limited) Order 2010.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that Standing Orders Nos. 6,8,16,18,20,42(5),43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of this day's Sitting.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 1 – BARBADOS WATER AUTHORITY
(AMENDMENT) BILL, 2008.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill before the House for consideration seeks to amend the Barbados Water Authority Act, Cap. 274A, to make the power given to the Authority to determine rates and charges in respect of the supplementary of water and services subject to the regulation by the Fair Trading Commission in accordance with the Utilities Regulation Act, Cap 282 and the Fair Trading Commission Act, Cap 326(b).

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this debate today is a very important debate on the whole issue of the water industry in Barbados.

Sir, our Government's policy is to ensure, as it pursues a sustainable development path, that all of the instruments of the society that provide a vital service to the nation, are working and working efficiently to ensure that Government's programmes are not impeded in any way, shape or form.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority has gone through some years of turmoil, frustration and the like and we are now prepared to talk to this nation about what this Government's policy is for the water industry, and how we intend to ensure that the Barbados Water Authority is able to deliver the services that it is expected to deliver to this nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority came into being in October, 1980, and operates under the Barbados Water Authority Act, Cap 274(a) of the Laws of Barbados.

We do understand that the Barbados Water Authority has a vital role to play in the provision, or supply of potable water for domestic purposes. It has a vital role to play in the provision of potable, or otherwise satisfactory supply of water for agriculture, industrial and commercial purposes.

Sir, it is a statutory body that is responsible for the collection, treatment and disposal of waste water for the said purposes.

Sir, we have had two functioning waste water plants and the Government of Barbados is now working to ensure that the West Coast Sewerage Project gets on the way, and delivers that very vital plant on the West Coast.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we are going to be able to bring to the fore those important developmental elements that are critical to the sustainability of life and work in this country, we would have to be able to wrestle to the ground all of the problems associated with the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if any Administration of Government in this country is capable of doing that, it is this Democratic Labour Party Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am confident that we are on a path to correct many of the inefficiencies in the Barbados Water Authority.

H/A56/10.20 a.m. Sequence 2

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: We would be able to achieve a level of success with the Barbados Water Authority never seen in Barbados before. There are a lot of people who talk and a lot of people who will have their say this day on this Bill, but I believe that so far, this Government has demonstrated a commitment to correcting the problems at the Barbados Water Authority.

The truth is, in many cases they have been there for some time, particularly under the 14 years of the Administration of the Barbados Water Authority. We will, very methodically, take the country through this journey today because there is a story to be told. At the end of the day all we have to do is demonstrate to Barbadians that:

1. we understand the problems;
2. we are up to fixing the problems; and

3. we will deliver to them an institution that will work for one and all Barbadians in this country.

Sir, the Authority is also responsible for the constructions and operations of schemes needed for the development of the water resources industry in Barbados and the supply of sewerage services.

Sir, I should say here that under this Democratic Labour Party Government, we intend to modernise at every single point of service of the Barbados Water Authority, the instruments used by the Authority, to ensure that Barbadians get effective, efficient services. I am very confident that the Authority has the human capital at present to do what needs to be done.

I believe that those who are now providing the service have been doing so under duress for many years. These individuals with the right kind of political leadership, and the right kind of administrative leadership will be able to produce what is required for this institution to make its mark, once again, in this country.

I know that there are those who, under the Barbados Water Authority, with great skepticism, I know that there are those who render the Barbados Water Authority as useless in a current Barbados, but we on This Side believe that institutions of importance in this country, and must be given every opportunity and every support from the Government to succeed at their level of functioning in this country. We cannot achieve the level of sustainable development, whether it is in agriculture, tourism, education, health, or the environment.

We cannot go forward as a developing country without an efficiently operating Barbados Water Authority. It is a must in this country.

Sir, we do not just talk about efficiency, we do not just talk about what has to be done, or what should be done. We realise as a Government, that Government must lead and you lead through the development and articulation of policy, and out of that policy grows your programmes.

Sir, if your programmes are connected to your policies, and Government becomes the chief sponsor of those policies, then it is quite likely that those policies will give birth to the unfolding of benefits to be accrued to the citizens of this country.

Sir, never again in this country will we have an economy that is doing absolutely well, and yet still, there are those persons who are not enjoying the returns of that economy.

Sir, never again in the history of this country could you have institutions, like the Barbados Water Authority, struggling for their very survival, and yet still, the country

in a time of economic plenty, cannot find the time and resources to put the money into an institution like the Barbados Water Authority, as critical as it is in the development of this country.

They would rather put the money in the GEMS Project. They would rather put the money in Eastry House, to the tune of \$1 million. They would rather put the money in all kinds of things, but when you consider what is required to ensure that the country continues to grow and blossom, and the development needs of the country are met, when you consider those institutions, those are secondary to the fancies and the flights of fancies of the previous Administration that ran This country for 14 years, but this is a new era. This is a new time.

Sir, it may not be a time of plenty, but it is a time of vision. It may not be a time of plenty, but it is a time when this Government will take a careful look at all of those vital systems of this society, to make sure that the systems work and work efficiently for the benefit of the people of Barbados, and that is the road we choose to take. That is the road we have cast our vision on.

Sir, we are in the business of creating footprints, or "Pathways to Progress". That is our Manifesto commitment.

We intend to do whatever is necessary to ensure that, at the end of the day, Barbadians, in spite of the difficult times, can say without a shadow of doubt, that This Democratic Labour Party is working for the people, and the people are working with the Government. That is our commitment and our desire.

Sir, how did we get here is the question that we have to ask. How did we reach a stage where a vital institution that performed admirably in the past could be limping along and could reach a stage of hurt, almost to its own extinction? How did we get here?

Sir, let me remind the public that in the 1990s, Barbados went through a very difficult economic struggle, not uncommon to what is happening now, for some have noted that it seems that whenever the Democratic Labour Party takes over the Government of Barbados, they have to drag Barbados out of difficult circumstances. This time around is no different.

In 1994, when the Democratic Labour Party demitted office, the Barbados Water Authority was left with a surplus. The economy of Barbados was left on an economic climb. If you would recall, the economy was recovering and things were beginning to look good for Barbados again.

As a matter of fact, the former Prime Minister of Barbados, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, is on record as saying that he has never seen such economic growth in all of his life. He said that he was given a wicket and he was batting like Sobers. Then, remember at the end, after an opportunity to bat in both innings, he was asking for an extra innings to bat, and the people of Barbados said no, enough is enough, we are not going to have that any longer.

Sir, the Barbados Water Authority, after going through the 1990s, coming out at the end of 1994, with a surplus, when we took over this Government, the Barbados Water Authority was in its worst position. It was on its death bed. It cannot meet its payments, it cannot meet its debts and it was saddled with a loan of \$150 million to do a Mains Replacement Programme, and to this day, you cannot find where that money was spent. This Government is now repaying that particular loan, and still has to do the Mains Programme.

Sir, may I remind the country that when we took over the Barbados Water Authority, it was bankrupt. It was totally bankrupt, and that was after 14 years of plenty, where the then Government could have put money into the Barbados Water Authority because the money was there.

Remember the former Prime Minister said that he was borrowing for a rainy day. No rains came. He was the only man walking through Barbados with an umbrella in the sun, having the plenty expected rain and no rains came. Now that the rains are here, you cannot find any of the money that was borrowed for the rainy day.

S A56 10.30 a.m. Sequence 3

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House A56, Sequence 04, 10.30 a.m.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Barbadians must understand that when they sit down and analyse their circumstances and look at their lives in this country, that life could be far better, even under these difficult times, had the previous Barbados Labour Party Administration managed the affairs of this country more efficiently and effectively.

Sir, we have a job to do, and we are not going to spend too much of our time reflecting and lamenting on what was not done during that time. Sir, we are not going to spend too much of our time sitting down and lamenting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say this though, that when the Barbados Labour Party talks to the public about getting back into office, they need to explain to the public what they did with the country's resources while they had

the reins of Government for 14 years, and how did their Administration contribute to the social development of this country, and what are the social landmarks left behind to suggest that a Government with endless resources, would have actually injected those resources into the lives of the people of this country.

Sir, we found a Barbados Water Authority that was bankrupt, could not pay its bills, suppliers were refusing to supply goods and services because the Barbados Water Authority was unable to pay on time. It was running a persistent annual deficit and it was saddled with a \$150 million loan.

Just imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an institution on its death bed, on life support system and a loan as if the cold hands of death had come and ripped that system out of its body, so that it would expire in due time. This is what was left behind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the country begins to talk about what is happening, and their concerns about water in Barbados, I want the country to understand that it is not the intent of this Government, neither is it the intent of the Barbados Water Authority to make any kind of suggestion whatsoever, that we are not going to ensure that they get the best possible deal in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the truth is that when we got this Barbados Water Authority, it was lathered with scandal, including all of the pipes and other fixtures that were supposed to have gone into the South Coast Sewerage Project, and could have been transferred to the West Coast Sewerage Project. All of those pipes were left at Graeme Hall.

Sir, equipment was stolen, cannibalised and hidden, apparently by the flight of night in the bushes, and when they were discovered, someone went and set the whole place on fire and destroyed millions of dollars of the Barbados Water Authority's property.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is what we had to deal with and not only that, but it was also discovered at the time that there was a whole host of brand-new pipes stored at an individual's house covered with palms from coconut trees.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they were discovered, all kinds of hairy explanations were given why they would have been there, and they are the property of the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, there was leakage all around, leaking pipes, leaking money, leaking man hours, just leakage everywhere, and good hard-working Barbadians at the

Barbados Water Authority, had to put up with that over the years and dragged through this country day in and day out, as persons who are not committed to their jobs and their work, but in truth and in fact, they were and still are just as committed as anybody in any enterprise in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we took over the Barbados Water Authority, it could not pay its bills. Sir, it means that sometimes when a truck goes to a location to fix a broken pipe, or broken main, very often the job was delayed because they could not get the equipment and the resources needed to fix those things, and the public has to understand that.

Sir, it is not that people do not care, it not that workers go out there and just sit around. Very often there is a grand shortage of supplies and individuals cannot do what they are able to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only was there a bankrupt situation, but when we took over the Barbados Water Authority, it was unable to carry out its Capital Works Programme. The Mains Replacement Programme was a vital capital works project that has to be done in this country. Why? Because many of our mains are very old, some of them more than 100 years and they are very susceptible to high pressure, and when they burst and you fix one area, you have to turn around and fix the other area.

Sir, the money was provided. Bear that in mind, but now the Barbados Water Authority has to go back to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and borrow money in order to replace the mains because the previous Administration has completely wiped out the resources, and that is the reality, so the Government, while trying to recover the dignity of a vital institution, now has to look to borrow, in order to be able to ensure that Barbadians across this country in low lying areas and high elevation areas, are able to get uninterrupted water.

Sir, the Mains Programme is now taking off with some speed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, then there was the Meter Replacement Programme. A number of Barbadians have complained about faulty meters. The Barbados Water Authority has taken on the task of replacing many of those meters to ensure that there is no situation where a customer is being billed outside of reason because of a fault in the meter-reading system. Sir, that Programme was also compromised.

When we took up the Barbados Water Authority, it was unable to carry out upgrades in areas of equipment.

Sir, only yesterday, I met with the senior staff of the Barbados Water Authority. We are getting prepared for the

drought season and, of course, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to be able to keep water in the communities, we have a system where we go out and we do distribution of water, and several of those vehicles are down.

We sat down yesterday and tried to work out an action plan where we could pin it down, to get the 12 or more vehicles, at least 10 on the road, or get them roadworthy as quickly as possible.

Sir, we want to make sure that no one in St. Andrew, St. Thomas, or those areas that suffer very often from outages during the drought season, is still able to be supplied with water. Sir, that is what this Government is doing because This Government is a totally caring Government.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, our commitment is to ensure that the things we were elected to do, as long as the economic circumstances allow us to do those things, we will do them with haste.

Sir, there are vital pieces of equipment in the yard of the Barbados Water Authority that are not working. They have not been able to source the parts to get them repaired. Sir, the reality is that in many cases, that is because of a lack of finance.

Sir, very often, people in the country are constantly aggravated by matters related to water resources, and when they begin to speak, they speak as though it is the Government's fault, or the Barbados Water Authority's fault. It is not. It is that we are operating under very difficult circumstances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to ensure that our finances improve and that is why we have to wait out this economic crisis, but we pray to the Almighty that it comes sooner rather than later, because there are a lot of things that need to be fixed in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority is, in many cases, operating on obsolete technology and that obsolescence interferes with its ability to respond faster to customer complaints.

House A56, Sequence 04, 10.40 a.m.

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Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: It affects their ability to be able to work on some of the mundane things that impact negatively on customers, because of either slow technology, or technology without the capacity to be able

to transmit information to different locations and get immediate responses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is, therefore, important that in this whole modernisation programme, that matters relating to technology, equipment and so on, are addressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to put those issues to bed once and for all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we took up the Barbados Water Authority, not only was it bankrupt, not only was it unable to carry out its capital programmes, not only was it unable to carry out upgrades in areas like equipment, plant and so on, it was also unable to facilitate this Government's National Development Programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me go back to plant for a minute because, before the last General Election, public servants across the public sector complained about deplorable working conditions. One of those agencies that complained was the Barbados Water Authority, which subsequently had to abandon its headquarters in the Pine because of the deplorable conditions that workers were subjected to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, a Government of vision and a Government intending to support the best possible conditions for workers, has commissioned the construction of a new Barbados Water Authority Headquarters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to say that we have moved it from a drawing to a bona fide activity where the work has started at the site in the Pine and we expect that building to be going up very soon. Our workers are important to us and we want to make sure that they have the best possible conditions to produce the service that they are expected to produce.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are other plant-related issues. There is the plant on Spring Garden that we are trying to get sorted out, at present, and there are other issues that we are working on to ensure that we get the best possible deal for our workers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a difficult season for this country. It is a difficult time for some of our workers in terms of the buildings that they have to work in, but this Government is moving steadily to ensure that all of those impediments that would negatively impact on the work culture are being sorted out, so that we could empower our people to do what they have to do.

This Government has committed itself to housing every last Barbadian, and we are going all out to ensure that programme is delivered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my view that we cannot deliver that programme unless we have a viable water resource management system in this country, because every house you build requires a supply of water to get it built.

I have to give to the Minister of Housing and Lands all of the accolades for the haste with which he has moved, and the commitment to ensure that Government's housing programme continues uninterrupted across This country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are some areas in this country where water supply is at a premium, particularly when you go around the South, heading up through Christ Church, going into the East, and across the East into St. Philip and parts of St. John.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government has decided that if we are going to be able to deliver a progressive housing policy, that we are going to have to be able to ensure that all of the services required to enable the achievement of that objective are in place. Sir, one of those services is ensuring that water is there to supply those homes.

I am pleased to say that the Barbados Water Authority has responded to the Government's directives and they have been working with the Ministry of Housing and Lands, and the National Housing Corporation, ensuring that mains are laid, and that water is connected to all of those new developments that are currently coming out across the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is our commitment to ensure that this housing programme is a total success, considering what the other Administration did on its housing programme. As a matter of fact, they were only able to collect insects. They were not able to build houses, so they went from bumble bee to cockroach, to beetle and the rest of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have now a Minister of Housing and Lands who is actually delivering houses across this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Other Side had 14 years and delivered under 100 houses, and in only two years, we are above 50 per cent of what they delivered in 14 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that it is important for us to understand that there is a positive correlation between the delivery of houses and the correcting of the Barbados Water Authority's challenges.

There is also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a direct correlation between the delivery of water resource services and the building of schools.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Education and Human Resource Development, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, is on fast pace to deliver to this country some new school plants, which are important as we continue to promote education in this country. In order to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to be able to provide water again.

Given where some of those schools are projected to be located, it is important that we fix the water challenges around the eastern belt of the country to make sure that we have an adequate supply there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we understand where we are going. We are telling our people that they must grow more food. We are telling our people that we must reduce our food import bill, and therefore, we understand the correlation between food, agriculture and water, and we are working also to ensure that through our water reuse policy, that we have water available for irrigation purposes in the country to ensure that we meet the burden of those needs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is where we were and that is how we got here. We got here because we found the Barbados Water Authority in deep, deep trouble.

What was the policy response of this Government? Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to be able to deal with issues like these, your response has to be driven by your policy in order for your response to be sustainable. If your policy is not a sustainable policy, then your response will not be a sustainable response and, therefore, we have fancied ourselves in understanding and accepting that policy must always lead programme, and that policy must always lead any kind of response that the Government puts forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a clear and simple policy in This country as it relates to social and sustainable development. The Barbados Water Authority is one of the agencies in this country that fits within that policy response.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we decided that in order to be able to respond to the needs of the housing programme, it was necessary for us to be able to examine the state of the Barbados Water Authority from a financial position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, remember I said earlier that the Barbados Water Authority was on its death-bed, and the previous Administration refused to do anything that would bring the Barbados Water Authority back to a position of a fully functioning institution. We have established that already.

The Government of Barbados, as it is known today, introduced a 60 per cent rate increase. Mr. Deputy Speaker, rate increases in Barbados are nothing new. The Barbados

Labour Party is really the Government of rate increases in Barbados. The record would show that, but I would let them explain that when they get up to speak.

House A56 Sequence 5

10.50 a.m.

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Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is important and I want the country to listen. We have to take the decision whether or not we would move the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission at that stage, or whether or not we would increase rates to ensure that we save the Barbados Water Authority because of its vital role in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we took a decision to ask the country to work with us and to assist us in the salvation of the Barbados Water Authority and we raised the rates by 60 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, somebody said to me on my way here: "Don't forget, water is approximately \$1.00 a day in Barbados, and there are people who spend lots of money on bottled water." The water from the Barbados Water Authority is the best anywhere one goes and it is for \$1.00 a day. It is one of the lowest rates in the Hemisphere.

Sir, we took a decision whether we should allow time to elapse, to move the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission and, then to correct the issues there, or whether or not we should go ahead and raise rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the record will show, and it will be discussed in here today, that for the first time, since 1994, the Barbados Water Authority is back in a surplus. It is on a trend that once we continue to manage our efficiencies, it is on a trend that if we continue to manage the operations effectively and we do what we have to do with the Mains Replacement Programme, the Barbados Water Authority will become one of the most viable statutory corporations in Barbados today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party Opposition stands condemned forever for licking out 14 years of plenty and doing nothing whatsoever for the Barbados Water Authority. The Barbados Labour Party stands totally condemned. It is inexcusable. It is unbelievable. It is incredible that an institution like the Barbados Water Authority could have gone through so much at a time when things were plentiful.

Sir, now at a time when things are hard, this Government has to take on the responsibility, and willingly

so, of ensuring that the Barbados Water Authority gains new life and operates the way it can in This country. The Barbados Water Authority is now a rebirth institution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what was the policy response of this Government to the Barbados Water Authority, not only in terms of trying to resuscitate its financial viability, but also in terms of trying to address issues of employee morale?

Sir, I well recall the Honourable Prime Minister, the Chairman and I, meeting with the staff of the Barbados Water Authority. Sir, they were so delighted to have us there, we had hours of exchange. We told them our concerns, they told us their concerns.

We collectively agreed that we would do all within our power as a Government, to ensure that their jobs are secured, and we collectively agreed that they would do all within their power to ensure that they gave us the best possible opportunity to get the Barbados Water Authority back on pace.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say today, as I stand in these hallowed Chambers, that there is a significant turnaround at the Barbados Water Authority, in terms of the morale of the staff.

Sir, it is our intention to ensure that the rights of our staff are always protected, and it is their intention to ensure that the rights of the Barbados Government are also protected. That is the relationship we are building with the staff.

Sir, it is our view that while third parties are important in ensuring the rights of people, it is the Government's responsibility to ensure, first of all, that it has a happy medium between itself and its workers and that whatever their needs and concerns are, that they are heard in this country, and that the Government responds in a proactive and sensitive way to the needs of our workers. Sir, we intend to do that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not going to sit around and let anybody define the relationship that should exist between the Government and its workers. We are going to do that ourselves, but we have to constantly work on ensuring that people's concerns are heard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the problems in some pockets of the Public Service is that a lot of workers are not heard, people are not listening to them. Sir, we intend to listen to them and to ensure that their best interests are looked after.

Sir, we are in the business, as part of the modernisation and revitalisation of the Barbados Water

Authority, of addressing issues that are important to our workers.

Sir, our workers have raised all kinds of issues. They have raised issues of lack of supplies, issues of not being able to engage leadership, issues of having to work in some harsh conditions at times and without the necessary recognition.

Sir, they raised a number of issues and all of those issues this Government will address one by one, to ensure that our workers are heard, and to ensure that they get a fair hearing in the circumstances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we realise that in order to build employee morale, in order to boost the good work feelings of employees, we have to modernise our human resource operation at the Barbados Water Authority. It is obsolete. It does not meet any of the standards of modern human resource science. It is way behind in terms of how it responds to issues of employees.

Sir, this is no finger-pointing at any individual. I am of the view that no one person can decide whether something works, or whether it does not work, it takes a collaboration of failures to decide to render any operation a failure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not pointing fingers at anyone. What we are saying is that it is Government's responsibility to ensure that Government diagnoses what is wrong, and that Government takes upon itself the responsibility to enable people to fix those things that are wrong in the system. That is the point I am making, and we intend to work closely, not in any intrusive way, with the human resources operations at the Barbados Water Authority, to ensure that a lot of the challenges that are there would be addressed.

We need to take a new approach in how we deploy workers. We need to take a new approach in how we recruit and hire workers. We need to take a new approach in how we train, hire and promote people. All of these things need to be considered and Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to be the one at this point in time to take charge of ensuring that those things are fixed, and that those things are done at the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have issues with employee morale and there are certain institutional inefficiencies that have to be addressed there, both on the people's management side and on the operational side. There are quite a number of inefficiencies that we have started to address already.

Sir, I want the public to know that we are not sitting down and waiting for things to go away. We are actively

involved in ensuring that those issues are flagged and that, collectively, the Ministry and the Barbados Water Authority will work to ensure that those things are alleviated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what was Government's policy response to this situation? We examined the rate increase, we examined employee morale, and we examined issues of institutional inefficiencies, where we will talk about a little later in more detail.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, immediately we addressed the institutional inefficiencies in the Barbados Water Authority by looking at customer service issues.

11.00 a.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that you follow a lot of media things in Barbados including the Call-in Programmes and so on. I know you are very busy in your Constituency, so when you find the time you listen, I would like to think.

Sir, we know for years, every single day, that customers across Barbados would be calling and trying to deal with issues and sometimes we get annoyed by it, but it is the right of the customers, because they are not begging for water. Sir, they are paying for it and it is the right of every customer to express his, or her dissatisfaction if, in his or her view, the service is not of the quality that they expect.

Let customers across Barbados know that this Government in no way, shape, or form, becomes upset when customers talk about their concerns, because that is what is going to help us fix the problem. We are not talking about that handful of people, who out of mischief and malice, would call and try to distract the public. We are talking about persons with legitimate issues with the Barbados Water Authority about customer relations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say this to the country, through you, and give the assurance that we have been working day in and day out on a number of customer service related issues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have examined how customer service is delivered. We have examined what is the routine from call to completion of problems. We have examined who is delivering customer service and what is their level of training in that science, because customer service is not just opening your mouth and saying something happy, or something sad to a customer. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it requires a certain level of training.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, part of the relationship that will exist between the Barbados Water Authority and the Fair Trading Commission, is the Authority's capacity to deliver efficient services, because the Fair Trading Commission is also mandated to guarantee consumer rights.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have started to look at it. We have brought in some new people to work in the area of customer service. We have taken customer service out of the hands of security guards who man the phones from 4.30 p.m. until midnight, and we have new staff doing this service.

We have also examined when calls come in how they are logged, who is responsible for logging them, who clears the logs, who assigns the problem and then who does the quality checks to make sure those problems are being fixed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, only yesterday we spent several hours working out a routine that is less complex, that is more efficient and that would deliver a better and more sustainable value through customer services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a low-cost measure. Sir, as somebody said, it is a low hanging fruit that none of the Members on the Other Side could reach. It is not going to cost the Barbados Water Authority any new Budget that it cannot handle. These are things that could have been done in the 14 years of the Administration of the Barbados Labour Party, if they cared about the concerns of the public and if they cared about how the public was persistently complaining about a lack of quality service. Sir, they could have done that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even in difficult times, this Administration, because it is a caring Administration is working on those issues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also realised that there is a difference between customer service and customer relations, because you can deliver a point of service through customer service, where someone comes in, asks for a service, you deliver it, they go and maybe you might never see them again.

Sir, customer relations is about building that relationship, building a bridge between yourself and your customer, where there is smooth and persistent transition between the institution and the customer, in exchange for service and relationship.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we understand it and that is why this Cabinet, as someone said recently, has the skills, but more than the skills, we have a caring heart that we believe is important in sustaining customer confidence and in sustaining customer relationship.

What we have been trying to distill with our people at the Barbados Water Authority is, that it is important that you do not see yourself as simple as someone who hands a service, but you see someone who is in the business of building sustainable relationships and, Sir, to do that, you have to go the extra mile.

Sir, to do that, you have to reach out to your customers, and to do that, Sir, you have to go beyond the call of duty. Sir, to do that, you must come to your job with a disposition of a persistent desire to give the very best service possible to our customers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I am happy to report to the Nations News and, certainly, to this Chamber, that we are happy to see the results of this effort in that regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is still more work to be done because we would like to create a customer service centre that simply handles complaints, removed from the day-to-day customer service that has to be done, where we have persons who are dedicated around the clock to handle complaints, to communicate with the public and to ensure that there is always a fluid exchange of information between the Barbados Water Authority and our customer base.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I made the point yesterday with our team, that you may go to a bank, have a bad experience and you decide to take your money from that bank and take it somewhere else, but there is only one water supply company in Barbados and so, your relationship is almost an eternal relationship. Therefore, you have to do as much as is necessary and beyond, to ensure that relationship is a sustainable relationship in that regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talked about human resource reform and we talked about what we need to do.

Sir, what we have discovered in the Barbados Water Authority is that there are persons who are working at other jobs in the system who are so qualified to perform human resources jobs, but they are sitting out there doing things that necessarily somebody else could do.

Sir, whenever you talk about redeployment and so on, people get frightened and start to talk about the union and what the union will, or will not do.

Sir, I am of the view that the most vital relationship between an enterprise and its workers is between the enterprise and its workers. Therefore, the Barbados Water Authority has to understand that it is their job to develop and define the relationship, and that they should not rely on any third party to set the road map for how that relationship should be constructed. Sir, I believe that is vitally important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not advocating any adversarial relationship between ourselves and the union, because we understand the Social Partnership and that they are a vital component of that partnership and, Sir, wherever it is possible, we have to continue to cultivate a working productive relationship with the Social Partnership.

Sir, I would also make the point that we expect the unions to work with us. We should not always have to be the one holding out the olive branch, begging for meetings and so on. I believe that there should be a happy medium between the two institutions because it is our business. We are all Barbadians and we all have a responsibility to ensure that the relationship works well enough, where Barbadians benefit from that type of relationship.

Sir, we are working to ensure that we come to the table, ourselves and our unions, that we work through all the circumstances that are necessary, to ensure that the kind of institutional culture is constructed and sustained. We will continue to rely on them to give us the guidance necessary to make sure that we have a seamless industrial relationship culture within the institution.

Sir, what we will not do is to stand by and leave it up to the unions to decide what kind of culture we should have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that has to be a partnership discussion, a collaborative effort to ensure that we get the best possible work relationship. Therefore, it is the intention of this Minister, within our Ministry, to ensure that we pursue a course that is productive between ourselves and our union.

H/A56/11.10 a.m. Sequence 7

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Sir, we are addressing inefficiencies. We are talking about Human Resource Reform, Public Relations, and Communications is another area that we have been working on very hard, and we are seeing some progress in that regard.

I believe that anytime you hesitate to give the public information, you create a panic in the public, or you create suspicion in the public.

My policy is that you always talk to the public on issues relating to us. If we are having difficulties, we should tell the public. If we are going to be carrying on capital works that will cause disruption in communities, we should go to the public and tell the public what we are doing.

If we discover that there are problems in the system that will affect the operational aspects of the Barbados Water Authority, then we should be happy enough to tell our customers. This view of not saying this and not saying that, but waiting until people call to give answers, I do not believe in that.

Sir, what we have done is, we have gone down the road, we have been creating information, manufacturing brochures and putting them at the disposal of the public and explaining those things that the customer base keeps asking about.

Sir, there are a number of frequent questions being asked of the Barbados Water Authority, and we have provided the answers and made sure that those answers reach the customers. I believe that is important in this whole relationship process.

Sir, we have also made sure that we brought on board a public relations specialist to assist us as we go forward in the number of programmes, both capital programmes and otherwise, that the Barbados Water Authority has to undertake.

Sir, why are we doing this? We are doing this because we believe that it is vital to our cultivating a relationship that is seamless, that is productive and that is trusting. If we are to go forward successfully, these things must be put in place.

Sir, there are operational inefficiencies. Sir, we lose a lot of water, which is a cost to the Barbados Water Authority. We call it unaccounted for water. There is another term I have been hearing being tossed around, but that is basically what it is. That happens at different levels. It happens because of faulty infrastructure with mains and so on, a lot of leaks and that kind of thing. It also happens with our own consumption patterns and how we view matters relating to water conservation and so on.

We believe that we have to get involved in establishing a programme where we can talk to the public about our expectations and our policies, and where we can assist the public through incentives and otherwise, ensuring that the right kind of consumer actions are taken, when it comes to the use of water, because we have to reduce that unaccounted for water, and ensure that we increase our efficiency to make sure that our customers get the best possible deal out of their arrangement with the Barbados Water Authority, and the Authority gets the best deal out of them as well.

I believe it is important that we continue to pursue a programme, an educational awareness programme, that would put information at the disposal of our consumers and our customers.

Sir, We have also addressed the matter of road reinstatement, another issue that many customers have, where the Barbados Water Authority goes in, digs up the road, for whatever legitimate reasons, and then takes sometimes too long to ensure that the road is reinstated.

I am happy to report to the country and to this Honourable House that the Barbados Water Authority has now come up with a template of how to execute that programme and has completely revised the whole process, to include a new revamped progressive process, that should allow us to see less of that kind of nuisance in the country, because of works carried out by the Barbados Water Authority.

We have also established a new protocol for getting back to customers on customer issues, in terms of a resolution protocol.

One of the other problem is sometimes a customer calls and he does not get through, he calls back, does not get through, calls again, gets through, but then nobody gets back to him. This is not good for customer relations.

What we have been working on over the last several months is ensuring that the system works. Again, there is a routine. There is a complex routine where customers' concerns go through. You call in, somebody takes your call, either in the Engineering Department, or at the Customer Service end, then that call is routed through a system of mains, if you will. I think it is too complex. I think it needs to be reduced. Therefore, we have made an effort to reduce the complexity of that process to ensure a better and more functional process.

Sir, this programme is part of the requirement for the Barbados Water Authority to be regulated by the Fair Trading Commission, because one of the requirements is the enhancement of the efficiency of the Barbados Water Authority and, therefore, we felt it was necessary, as I said before, to delay the process at the time, in 2008.

Now we feel that it is time for us to make our move in that direction, because we have resuscitated the Authority. We have now invigorated it with new systems. We have a road map for modernisation and we believe the time is now here for us to move ahead on our programme.

Sir, the truth is, as we continue to look at the whole operation of the Barbados Water Authority, we have to be prepared to do what is necessary to make sure that our efforts are sustainable, because we are not going to give ourselves any knee jerk responsibility, and what we end up with is a situation where we are able to fix things and fix them with some degree of permanence.

I believe that this Government's approach is the right approach. I believe that we are in a position to go forward and go forward in a way, that we could sustain the viability of the Barbados Water Authority, making sure that we get the best possible deal out of the situation.

The Fair Trading Commission, under which we are proposing to amend the Act to put the Barbados Water Authority under the Commission's mission is defined to be a transparent and accountable agency, providing professional services to those who we serve, thereby safeguarding the interest of consumers, promoting and encouraging fair competition and ensuring efficient regulated utility services.

Sir, the Fair Trading Commission has built in a commitment to ensure consumer protection, to ensure that consumers get the best possible deal out of any enterprise with which they choose to do business.

Sir, the truth is, the Fair Trading Commission evolves from its predecessor, the Public Utilities Board, which was responsible for regulating public utilities, such as electricity and telephone services from 1955, until 2001. However, with the island's development, the need arose for a new body with a broader mandate to deal with other areas which have before it other important areas such as fair competition and consumer rights.

Sir, the Fair Trading Commission seeks to determine principles, rates and standards of service for regulating service providers. It is also mandated to monitor general business conduct and to enforce action when needed.

Sir, the reason we feel that our policy approach is the right one is because it is important to ensure that once this Act has been amended, the Barbados Water Authority progressively moves towards the position where it meets the standard expectation of the Fair Trading Commission. I believe that we are moving in that direction.

Sir, remember I said earlier that the Barbados Labour Party had also decided to move the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, I should like to tell you that.

H A56 11.20 a.m. Sequence 8

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

House A56, Sequence 09, 11.20 a.m.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, a Cabinet decision was taken on August 27, 1998, to consider moving the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission. I am hoping that when the Honourable Members on the Other Side get up to talk, that

they will explain why at that time, they did not move the Barbados Water Authority to where they had proposed to move it, because at that meeting it was decided that there would be an adoption of an incentive-based method of regulation, which would give the utility companies an incentive to improve their level of efficiencies. Sir, they never took any action. Nothing was done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on October 21, 2004, another consideration was taken to Cabinet and approved for an interim adjustment to the water and sewerage rates, to facilitate the generation of sufficient additional revenue, to meet the financial deficit of the Barbados Water Authority, until an application could be made to the Fair Trading Commission for rate adjustments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this Government is doing is not anything out of Mars. The Barbados Labour Party when they had the resources, and when they could have done more to assist the Barbados Water Authority, decided first in 1998, to contemplate the same amendment to the Barbados Water Authority Act, and then decided to forego that decision and to raise rates in 2004/2005.

The reason for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker - let us not lose This - was to raise sufficient additional revenue to meet the financial deficit of the Barbados Water Authority, and up to the time when we took office, the Barbados Water Authority was still operating under a deficit, and that is why it put the Authority in a perilous situation.

When we came to office, we had to examine the situation and decide what was the most critical policy direction to take with the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, they did that when they were raking in hundreds of millions of dollars and putting money in Eastry House. They did it when they were putting money in the Hardwood Housing Factory. They did that when they were putting money in the GEMS Project. They did that when they were putting millions of dollars in Greenland, that up to this day, you cannot put a single ounce of solid waste there. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the situation in which This Government now finds itself.

Sir, in a time of plenty, when they could have really focussed on trying to deal with the essential services of this country and set them right, in a time of plenty when they should have been contemplating what corrective actions to take with institutions like the Barbados Water Authority, in times of plenty they would rather put money in bottomless pits. Now, today, they want to join a choir to criticise this Government for trying to save this country.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Sir, that is the problem, so we will continue to work to ensure that none of our vital institutions go down the drain because of the erratic, irresponsible fiscal behaviour of anybody on This Side. We are going to do it right from the beginning.

They can pooh-pooh and laugh as much as they want, but I know they are going to have to explain to Barbadians sooner or later, what happened to all of those millions of dollars that they raked in from VAT and otherwise, and what happened to the millions of dollars that are left out there in GEMS, the Hardwood Housing Factory and Eastry House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would never forget that I took a tour to Eastry House after discovering on the Government's books that \$1 million was spent there and when we got there, we could not even find a nail, only an abandoned property, yet still \$1 million was spent by the Government in that property.

Sir, they want to come and reclaim the Government of Barbados, as though people have just lost their minds, but Barbadians have not, but they had a responsibility.

I am saying that the social, economic and environmental viability of Barbados, depends heavily on how best we treat matters related to water. If I am building a country and I am moving a country from Third World to First World status, then I would have to pay attention to those issues.

The last Administration cared nothing about the importance of the Barbados Water Authority, and that is why we inherited an authority in such a bankrupt state. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to fix it and it is our intention to fix it and we are not going to sit down and worry about anything.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government has just secured a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank to work on the modernisation plan for the Barbados Water Authority. They have just secured the same loan to work on the Mains Programme, because these are important, and we cannot afford to sit down and spend five years in office trying to be happy, when in truth and in fact, the very soul of this country depends upon those kinds of corrective actions, and it is hard.

Sir, nobody on This Side wants to put any extra burden on the backs of Barbadians, but what we have to do is to ensure that generations to come, long after we are gone, are able to enjoy a Barbados that is viable and sustainable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Other Side had done that in their 14 years, we would be doing exceptionally well at

this time, beyond the imaginations of our neighbours. Sir, we are going to work it through.

Our Honourable Prime Minister is working hard and we believe that we are in a position to keep Barbados in a very stable condition, and to move it forward during this very difficult time. It is important for us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the purpose of this Inter-American Development Bank loan is also to improve human resource management, customer service delivery and customer relations, the overall efficiency of operations, rehabilitation of the water distribution network and to prepare the Authority for regulation by the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, that is what we are doing at This point in time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to move ahead and we have to project where we are going. We have to tell the country constantly, and remind them that we have a vision. We have a path. There is a pathway forward that we intend to take This institution and This Government.

The first thing we have to do is to begin to look at how we are going to modernise the work environment, the work structure to move the Barbados Water Authority to a full 24-hour operation. Since we supply water, we do not take holiday. We work day in and day out to make sure that those things are done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important for us to understand that we have to look at how we are going to introduce a 24-hour work plan. One thing that is for sure, we have to reduce overtime.

Sir, many of our agencies, because of the work hours and the structure of their work hours are incurring a lot of overtime service and we believe that there is a way forward.

We believe that in partnership with the unions, we can work towards coming up with a system that will work to the benefit of the country because, in my view, it is country first and we have to always make decisions that will put us in a position, to do the best things for the country.

Sir, this is costly, and a situation that will have to be changed, if the Authority is going to be placed in a position where it can be more responsive in keeping with the needs of the people of Barbados.

House A56, Sequence 09, 11.30 a.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: We also have to work, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on developing a water conservation culture where we encourage our customers not to waste water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is suggested that Barbados would experience some kind of a drought, but there are still people out there watering their gardens with potable water, and there are still people out there who, in the dark of night, sometimes sneak around and waste gallons of water, operating sprinklers and the like.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a concern of the Barbados Water Authority. We are going to be launching an educational programme where we speak with households at large, about what they need to do in terms of being able to assist us in our water saving efforts, because we cannot afford to allow our customers, who should be in partnership with us to ensure that our water supply is always viable, not to engage in the most productive efforts possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spoke earlier about the reduction of unaccounted for water. The level of unaccounted for water in Barbados has been estimated, by one consultant, as 62 per cent, while another has estimated it at 29 per cent. Whatever the true level, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is too high and, therefore, we are going to have to put measures in place to ensure that we reduce that amount of water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to address this problem, as I said earlier, we have a mains replacement programme that is going to cost us in excess of \$236 million to change the mains around this country. It is a long-term programme which we believe is absolutely necessary in that regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would do whatever is necessary to ensure that the monies secured for this programme are spent on the programme. We are not going to borrow \$150 million and then we cannot trace its returns in terms of how it has worked towards helping to alleviate that particular problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the cost of electricity is another area that we have to look at. Currently, the Barbados Water Authority has a bill of about \$2.8 million per month, and we have to find ways of reducing that, including exploring, as we go along the way, some alternative energy options for the purposes of pumping and so on. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is an important effort on the part of Government as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe that we have to look at the construction of additional desalination plants. We believe that we have to continue to explore other ground water options.

Believe you me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority is working hard at examining all of its possible options, to ensure that we come up with the best possible programme in going forward in that particular regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that at the end of the day we, as a Government, would be held responsible for how successful we are in alleviating a lot of these problems from the society. There are some problems that should have been fixed already, but they have not been, but we are committed to ensuring that whatever it takes, that we would do the very best that we can.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we are awaiting the final approval of the Inter-American Development Bank loan, the Government of Barbados is seeking a bridging loan, that would give us the opportunity to begin the Mains Programme, especially as it relates to facilitating the housing programme across the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am excited, because for the first time, many Barbadians are hopeful about owning a piece of the rock and about being a part of this new homeowners' group and, therefore, we have to ensure that the associated services come along with the availability of housing, because availability and accessibility is not only that houses are available, but also that the amenities associated with owning that house is in place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that you have your own concerns about water in your area. The Government is also committed to the construction of a reversed osmosis plant. We are well in the planning stages and we are well ready to begin the technical work there to ensure that the construction of that plant comes on stream within the next several months. I am quite sure that would lay to rest some of the concerns that Your Honour would have in the Belle area in your Constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is only one project. We have to continue because water resource management is really a broad national effort. It must involve all of the potential sources of water and all of the technologies that must be brought to bear to bring those potential sources to source and, therefore, we are working to make sure that happens.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another area that we have been working on in terms of getting the Barbados Water Authority ready for the Fair Trading Commission is that of water meters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we came into office and found a continuous complaint from customers about meter-related problems. The Barbados Water Authority has been working around the clock to replace a number of meters.

The Barbados Water Authority has a customer base of about 100 000 that is almost fully metered and, therefore, we are seeking to ensure that we bring customers to meter and that we try to alleviate the problems of faulty meters.

There is a school of thought that says that we keep meters in service for too long and that, perhaps, we need to look at a programme where every five years we change the meters, so that we could alleviate any wear and tear problems that might lead to the dysfunction of those meters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the Barbados Water Authority is such a sensitive institution and really wants to ensure that it provides the best possible service for its customers, we have been working on ensuring that particular area of concern is alleviated.

Against that background, the Barbados Water Authority plans to replace approximately 50 000 water meters, but on the occasion an attempt would be made to find a metre that is best suited for the conditions of Barbados, that could tolerate the climate and a meter that could be more functional in that particular regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very important that as we go forward, we work with our in-house technical team as well as our consultants, to ensure that we get the best possible advice in achieving these particular areas of function.

We want to be able to arrest these issues once and for all so that the Barbados Water Authority could get on to new things, so that it could explore new technologies and so that it could do additional work. We do not want to be stuck having to do the same thing over and over, and fret the public because we are not satisfying the public's concerns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also the whole matter of water quality enhancements. We have had concerns at the Belle, we talked about that before, which is a Zone I area. We are trying to make sure that we protect that area, and that we get the best quality water out of that area and, therefore, the Barbados Water Authority is putting infrastructure in place to ensure that position is achieved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said earlier, we are moving ahead with our Reverse Osmosis plant and we are hoping that for the cost of about \$40 million, we would be able to have that plant constructed and functioning in there to enhance the water quality in that particular area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talked about the use of technology, about water augmentation and what we are doing in that regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make the point very clear that this Barbados Water Authority, under our regime, is not going to leave a single stone unturned to be able to achieve its mandate, because at the end of the day, we intend to ensure that whenever it is time for us to make a transition, that the Barbados Water Authority is left far better than it was when we found it. That is a commitment that this Government has to make in that regard.

House A56 Sequence 10

11.40 a.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: We do not believe in sitting in office and just enjoying being in office. There are some political parties which just live to win Governments. They see their job as fighting Elections and becoming occupants of the seat of power.

Sir, we are about improving the lot of Barbadians and we see Government as an opportunity to do that. We are not here for ourselves, we are here for the people. Sir, that is our commitment, therefore, whether it is through education, on which we have a sterling history, whether it is through health services or whatever else, we are compelled to ensure that we put our best foot forward and that we can achieve the best for Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are only here for X amount of time, Governments come and Governments go, but what is left behind tells the story of who was there before.

Sir, we want to make sure that we have a sterling history, as we have done in the past, by leaving a sterling educational history in Barbados.

Sir, as you look around and see what we have done, you could ask the Other Side what have they done. I can list some of the things for you - GEMS, Greenland, Eastry House, Hardwood Housing, 3S. They are all there. Sir, the Opposition is ready to come back and do more of it. They are not ready to come back and help the public, they are ready to come back in office - they think - and do more of that, but Barbadians will not let them back in office. I do not care what they say, or what they do. It is not going to happen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to continue to stay focussed. We are going to continue to stay on top of the process because it is our duty to ensure that it is done.

Earlier we talked about office accommodation being important in terms of how our people are able to achieve their targets. We talked about how we would want to alleviate the problems they would have had, while working

under strenuous conditions, especially in the Pine, where we are now able to have a better situation being arranged for them to get their own building.

We talked about establishing a clear and decisive mission for the Barbados Water Authority. We talked about a vision statement that motivates the staff. We talked about establishing service standards to ensure that every staff member is bound by those service standards.

Sir, that is the only way we believe that we could have the kind of result necessary. We talked about customer care. We talked about effective communications and we talked about the publication of information. This is all in an effort to rebrand the Barbados Water Authority, to ensure that it comes out with a new image, a new look, a new feel and a new service. We know that there would always be those who would try to look on us with that kind of skeptical look, but we are not bothered by them.

Sir, the fact is that the people have put us here and the Opposition Members cannot move us. The people of Barbados have put us here and it is only the people of Barbados who can move us.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Well, except you are like some Over There who can take flight to another country and try to represent people from a satellite office. We do not believe in that. We are sitting here on the ground and doing what is necessary for us to do, to make sure that we bring the best representation to the people of Barbados. We are committed to doing this job.

Sir, all of the fundamental initiatives that the Barbados Water Authority has signed on to, we are going to enable them to ensure that they achieve those objectives because they are working as part and parcel of the programmes of the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have laughed at us before. Sir, do you know what is incredible? Sir, what is incredible is that people have soon forgotten. We spent 14 years in Opposition and we gave ourselves an opportunity to self-examine ourselves to see what we were doing right, or wrong. We gave ourselves the opportunity to examine what were the concerns of Barbadian voters, and we tried to fix ourselves and make ourselves ready to be offered to the public again. Sir, we did that for 14 years, we did not gripe.

There are some Opposition Members who still think they are in office. They are behaving as though the people of Barbados have done them a wrong. They do not want to accept that it is the will of the people to introduce change when they want it.

Sir, in two year's time, without even having examined themselves, without even looking at the problems they have, they want to run around Barbados confusing Barbadians. The public is not interested in that. You must first solve your own problems. That is what you all have to do before you can come around trying to pooh-pooh the Government and trying to laugh yourselves to scorn. It is not us that you are laughing at, you are laughing at yourselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to stay focussed. We are going to do whatever is necessary to ensure that we arm Barbadians with the best possible Barbados Water Authority. Therefore, we have asked ourselves some critical questions in terms of going forward. One of the questions we have asked ourselves is, how do we develop a policy on the access of the use of the country's water resources, linked to the overall long-term development policies of the Government? We asked ourselves what are those connecting variables?

We have concluded that in order to have a successful sustainable tourism product, we must have a viable water resources industry. We have concluded that in order to have a successful manufacturing product, we must also have a sustainable water resource industry. We have concluded that in order to have a successful agriculture programme, we must have a successful water resources plan.

We have concluded that in order for education, health care and the environment to thrive in Barbados, our water resources programme must be intact. That is what we call policy. We do not move from a fairytale position, we move from a policy position.

We also have some insight into the question of how greatly would we impact the strategic, or opinion of the Government in terms of how it structures its own development plan and where water fits in.

Water is at the core of Barbados' sustainable development capacity and we understand that. Sir, that is why when you look back over the 14 years of the Barbados Labour Party Administration and you see the scant regard they paid to the Barbados Water Authority, you begin to ask yourself, what is their interpretation of the notion of sustainable development in Barbados? Sir, the two just do not go together.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government understands that there is a relationship, more than just a symbiotic one. It is a genuine relationship between water resources management and sustainable development. That is why we are prepared to put whatever is necessary into our arsenal, to ensure that we come out with the best possible product.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in relation to the first question, we have asked also to consider the phase of work, identification, qualification and risk assessment of various components and how the entire project of building a water resources industry in Barbados really works. Sir, it takes a number of efforts and inputs. It takes a lot of risk assessment. We have to look not only at domestic, in terms of housing development, we have to look at commercial development. We have to look at tourism and see how these variables all fit into the process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the overall goal of this approach is to ensure that the fundamentals of sustaining our water supply are carefully examined and advanced. We believe that we are on the right track to get that result out of the work we are doing. Is there any overriding, or defining outcome that the Government should have in mind, as it begins to make this particular policy focus? Yes, there are overriding concerns. One is the reliability of water supply, one is the diversity of methods used to harvest water in Barbados.

Sir, I know the Honourable Member for St. James North will have a lot to talk about relative to tapping water supply sources and technologies to be used. He always delivers a very good presentation to This Honourable House.

Sir, I am sure that there will be the opportunity to glean good information that can be part and parcel of Government's march forward in this regard. Sir, we cannot just focus on traditional ways of doing our water business.

11.50 a.m.

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Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Sir, we have to be bold. We have to step out. We have to be able to contemplate new technologies. We have to examine how other countries are doing their business and we have to bring all to bear on what emerges as the Barbados Water Resources Management Plan that would be important in that particular regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that if we begin to look at these things, and we begin to take serious consideration of how we go forward, not going forward only as the policymakers, but going forward in collaboration with those men and women who work day in and day out, to make the Barbados Water Authority a viable institution, we have to work with them to ensure that we get the best possible outcome.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, once we do that, then I believe that the Barbados Water Authority would be safe under the

regulations of the Fair Trading Commission and that they would be able to deliver what they are expected to deliver.

Sir, I thank you.

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

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

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

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you very much. Sir, before I start, let me first state for This Side that we are going to support this measure. We support this measure, based on the concepts of monopolies being under the auspices of the Fair Trading Commission and the utilities must come under one of those auspices. Sir, that is why we made that decision way back then to bring the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this debate is essentially about two aspects. It is about the ability of the Barbados Water Authority to serve the people, how it has been managed, what it has done for the people and what it plans to do for the people. Sir, it is also about the Fair Trading Commission because, at the end of the day, what we are hoping to do, is to bring an Authority, which currently is not under the Fair Trading Commission, to bear under the auspices of the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened very attentively to the presentation of the Minister, because I wanted him to get more into what the Bill was really about, the Fair Trading Commission, and what are the requirements that the Barbados Water Authority would have to undergo in terms of meeting its obligations as a utility, in terms of being able to provide a proper service to its customers.

Sir, that is what the Bill is really about, bringing the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission but, Sir, we hear nothing of that. We heard nothing of the period of time that is required for the Barbados Water Authority to be able to go and fix a main, as happens now under the Barbados Light & Power Company.

Sir, they are required, under the Fair Trading Commission, a certain amount of time to respond to queries, to fix mains, new services, all those things that are important for the Fair Trading Commission, and all those things that would have shown the public of Barbados that now the Barbados Water Authority is ready and is able to meet the requirements of the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is what the Bill is really about. It is not about what happened 15 years ago. It is mainly about the Fair Trading Commission and bringing the Barbados Water Authority under the auspices of the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, that is what the Bill says and one would expect that we would have heard that the Barbados Water Authority is now in a position to respond to applications in a good and timely manner, is able to respond to leakages in a good and timely manner, is able, within a certain time limit, to respond to meter changes and all those things that the Barbados Water Authority is duty bound to be able to respond to now but, Sir, I heard nothing about that from the Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would imagine that in his wrap-up, he would come back then and give us some ideas of the Barbados Water Authority being prepared to actually go into the Fair Trading Commission because the preparation was important. Sir, that was the critical thing, and that is why it took so long because we were not satisfied that the Barbados Water Authority was prepared and ready to get into the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill is not only about what the Barbados Water Authority did. It is also about the Fair Trading Commission which is established to regulate utilities. What are the functions? It is to protect the consumers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people go into the Fair Trading Commission to protect consumers from Lawless Governments, who would come and raise water rates by 60 per cent. Sir, that is what the Fair Trading Commission is really about, to protect the consumers from a Government who would come one day and tell a pensioner who is on a fixed income that you have to pay 60 per cent more on your water bill.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that the Fair Trading Commission was set up to be on one side. The Honourable Member knows quite well that was not the role for the Fair Trading Commission, especially now that this Government is in office. Sir, that might have been correct when the Barbados Labour Party was in office, but not now, Sir.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: I did not even understand what the Honourable Member was saying. I do not think he understands it and I am 100 per cent sure the people of Barbados did not understand it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in any event, Honourable Members on the Other Side know why they were waiting so long to bring this Bill. This Bill was on the Order Paper from April 2008, and it is now almost two years, 2010 but, Sir, they knew why. Sir, they knew they were going to hit the people of Barbados "Wax Palax" with 60 per cent increase on their water bill. Sir, that means that people on welfare cannot now pay their water bill, which is a social good, something that is most important and vital to living.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. It is wrong to give the public the impression that it is the Democratic Labour Party that has set up the Fair Trading Commission to bring the Barbados Water Authority under its mandate.

Sir, the Honourable Member knows and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North could bear me out on this, that when the Fair Trading Commission was set up that the Barbados Water Authority was mentioned as one of the agencies that would have to come under the whip of the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, the reason why it never came before is because there were certain things to be done.

Sir, the Honourable Member cannot be now giving the public the impression that it was:

1. the Democratic Labour Party that set up the Fair Trading Commission; and
2. that it is because of the Democratic Labour Party that it is now there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member knows better and we know that he debates better than that.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Fair Trading Commission was set up in 2001. I am not going to give anybody any impression that the Fair Trading Commission was set up under the Democratic Labour Party because they did not have any vision for something like that. I would not expect them to have it, because they do not have it and, Sir, they have proven it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they did not have any vision for a Fair Trading Commission and protecting consumers. They never had any vision about that, so I would never want to suggest to the people of Barbados that they would set it up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know if the Honourable Member for St. Lucy wants to provide comic relief today, but I have serious business to do and I want to get on with my serious business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Fair Trading Commission is setting standards. Sir, they have a list of standards and there are targets to which they have to relate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is important because if we are now bringing the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission, that means that the Barbados Water Authority is ready and prepared to adhere to standards which are set by the Fair Trading Commission.

H/A56/12:00 noon Sequence 12

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Dr. W. F. DUGUID: I will give you the examples of the standards as the standards are set for the Barbados Light and Power Company by the Fair Trading Commission, because there are certain standards that they must adhere to. I want to hear what standards that Administration is committing the Barbados Water Authority to adhere to. If they do not adhere to the standards, then there would be penalties. Do you know what that would translate to? The customer and consumer will suffer.

Sir, I am glad to support this. I am glad to know that the Government cannot wake up one day and add another 40 per cent increase on the consumers. I want to know what the standards are. I want to know that the Barbados Water Authority is prepared to adhere to those standards.

Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East got up and said that it is great reform for the Barbados Water Authority, but you would have thought that he would have mentioned some things they have done. All they have done is to change some security guards into customer relations people. They did not do anything. What did they do? They said that they are going to revamp the plan for a building. Can you build a building on a plan? You have to construct a building on land.

The Barbados Labour Party acquired the land for that building. We did it for the Barbados Water Authority. We did not do the plan. We acquired the land. You cannot construct a building on a plan. You have to build it on the land. That is what we did for the Barbados Water Authority. We did not have the talk. We had the action.

Sir, the Honourable Member said that you cannot see any mains replacement, and that the money was borrowed for the replacement.

First, \$150 million was not borrowed for the mains replacement. It was debt consolidation, with a small part towards mains replacement. We have the list. If he was a credible Minister, instead of misleading the House - if the Honourable Member for Christ Church East was not

interested in just misleading the House on mains replacements, he would have read the Report of the Barbados Water Authority which said very clearly, a total of 47 000 feet of mains were replaced, and that was just for a one-year-period under review. These were done in places like Martindale's Road, Walker's to Mapp Hill, and St. George, under the Government ...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church West, I want you to have respect for all Honourable Members in this Chamber and refer to them with their correct title. Okay? The question of "he" and "you" will not be tolerated.

Thank you.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I always respect Honourable Members in and out of Parliament.

Sir, as I was saying the Honourable Member for St. Lucy knows well that mains were replaced in St. Lucy. If he does not know that, let him get up and say so now. He is quick to get up on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy knows well that mains were replaced in St. Lucy, mains were replaced in Dayrell's Road and mains were replaced in Mapp Hill.

Sir, for the Honourable Member for Christ Church East to mislead this Honourable House to say that nobody could see any mains that were replaced is absolutely ludicrous and untrue, when the documentation is here. There are even pictures of mains being replaced. If you do not believe the Report, 50 000. It is here. That was in 2004/2005. Since then there were other projects where mains were replaced. Sir, the Honourable Member was misleading the House, when he knew full well that it was not true.

Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East even got up and said that a country...

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West were ordered expunged from the records by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church West, please continue.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: I am guided by you, Sir.

I am going back to the Regulations. The Barbados Light and Power Company Limited, is expected to restore supply after a fault on a customer's service within 12 hours. If that is not done, the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited has to make compensatory payments, \$45 for domestic, \$90 for general service, \$215 for

secondary voltage, \$45 for each additional 24 hours and \$90 for each 24 hours, general service.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading the Honourable House with facts, according to him. We know in this country that we had many blackouts in this country for many hours and I have never heard one person being compensated, even in the Honourable Member's Constituency, based on those rates that are being read in this House. It is either a neglect in duty by the Honourable Member, or the Honourable Member is accusing the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited of not paying people when they should have paid them during those blackouts.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I see no point of order. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West, please continue.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you very much, Sir.

Sir, these are new standards so, obviously, there were years where people had blackouts, but these are now the standards under the Fair Trading Commission. This is not something that I just dreamed up. These are new standards. Investigation of complaints must be done within three working days, under the Fair Trading Commission.

Sir, if you are to provide a simple service for a connection, it must be done within 12 working days, otherwise they must refund your installation fee. Response to billing complaints must be done within 15 working days, otherwise more compensation. This is what the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited has agreed to when it goes under the Fair Trading Commission, agreeing to guaranteed standards.

Is the Barbados Water Authority ready to have similar standards in place when it goes under the Fair Trading Commission? That is all I am asking. What are those standards going to be? What are the implications of those standards? These are critical points that attend to This Bill, because we today are deciding to take the Barbados Water Authority out of the auspices of the Government and into the Fair Trading Commission. Therefore, these are the questions that we want answered. Sir, we heard nothing about it. Sir, we support the principle of the Bill, but there are certain aspects to it.

Sir, let me go on further about the Fair Trading Commission, because there is an integral part. I can speak to this because of my short sojourn at the National Petroleum Corporation, which is also under the Fair Trading Commission.

Sir, there is a cost involved in a rate increase application to the Fair Trading Commission. You do not go to a Fair Trading Commission hearing without having all of your books in order and all of your books ready to be presented. We worked out, at the National Petroleum Corporation, that the cost to mount an application to the Fair Trading Commission was between \$2 and \$4 million.

The Barbados Light and Power Company Limited could tell you how much it cost them to mount applications to the Fair Trading Commission. What does that mean? That means when a utility is under the Fair Trading Commission, every time that utility makes an application for a rate increase, or a rate adjustment, it does not have to be an increase, it could be an adjustment to the bands, they must spend around \$2-4 million to present that case. What does that mean? They might spend \$2 - 4 million and do not get the adjustment required. They might spend \$2 - 4 million and then find a way to recoup, or pay for that, which means another project might suffer.

H A56 12.10 p.m. Sequence 13

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House A56, Sequence 14, 12.10 p.m.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we are considering this Bill, although we support it in principle, the devil is in the details, the details about the standards that they would adhere to, the details about how rate applications are paid for, the details about how you band.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one would have expected that the rate increase would have been done in such a way to protect the lower income workers in this country, the pensioners and the people on welfare, and you do that by banding, so that the people who use the least amount of water are protected and they do not see their water bill jump by 60 per cent, these people in your Constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that those who can least afford to pay, do not suffer the great increase of 60 per cent.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: These are not only my words. I could pull things by the Honourable Member for St. Philip West who made a similar suggestion. You band and protect the people who can least afford to pay, and the people who can afford to pay, because they are the people making more money, they can accept a higher increase, Sir, and that is what the Barbados Labour Party did, when we had a rate increase. We band it in a way that the people who use less, do not pay the great increase. Sir, this so-called caring Government did not do that, but was 60 per cent across the board.

Sir, the unfortunate thing is, now that we go into the Fair Trading Commission, if they wanted to go and readjust their mistake, you cannot do it now, you would have to go for a rate application, so the mistake was done, but we understood. The delay to get the rate increase and once the rate increase is there, then go into the Fair Trading Commission.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that if the Barbados Water Authority decides to go under the Fair Trading Commission, that they would not be able to reduce the rates by themselves. I think the record would show that they would not be able to increase without justification by the Fair Trading Commission, but nobody can stop the Barbados Water Authority from reducing rates on their own.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I will move on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Banding is about adjustment of rates, which means that you have to make a certain amount of money, so if you reduce on one band, you have to increase on somebody else.

First, let me commend the staff at the Barbados Water Authority. They do an excellent job.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: They had difficult situations in the past, but all companies do. All companies have problems, all companies have management issues, all companies have cash flow problems, but they provide a social good to the people of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, nobody hears of hundreds and thousands of people being cut off from water in this country at one time. It is the exception rather than the rule, that you do not have water.

In a country next door to us with millions of dollars, Trinidad, it is the rule rather than the exception that you do not have water.

Sir, in 2010 only 20 per cent of their population actually has running water to the house, and we have 100 000 customers. Sir, almost every household in Barbados - they are some that do not - has water coming to their house, and the Barbados Water Authority takes care of all of them. They do a fantastic job with little resources.

I heard the Honourable Member talk about bottled water and it struck me. Why is it that the Barbados Water Authority is not bottling and selling its own water?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, bottled water is more expensive than gasoline. A bottle of bottled water is \$1 and it is not a litre, it is a quarter of a litre, and a litre of gasoline is cents in this country, so then, why is it that the Barbados Water Authority is not looking at the possibility of bottling its own water as it may give another income stream? It is just a possibility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 20 years ago, one would not have thought that the Barbadian public would be running hither and thither to buy bottled water. Bottled water sells very well in Barbados and I cannot understand why, but people feel that they must buy bottled water because it is better for them, but the Barbadian water is good. The standards are high and we meet the international standards constantly, and Barbadian water is some of the best in the world.

Sir, if the people could bottle water abroad and sell it in Barbados, we should be able to sell our own water as bottled water. It is something to look at instead of purchasing water from other entities.

The Barbados Water Authority continues to do a fantastic job. They have had some difficulties, the greatest of which is leakage and the Honourable Member went into a little about the leakage. Yes, leakage was estimated at 60 per cent by one study and he said 30 per cent at another. It really goes back to the fact that the mains are old, 100 years old.

Sir, let us go back and think. The Barbados Water Authority had a programme and they had \$25 million in a fund to replace mains. The Fund was depleted and the money was taken out of the Barbados Water Authority by the Democratic Labour Party Administration and so, the Barbados Water Authority had no money to replace mains, many years ago, Sir, and that was the beginning of the problems for the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, this meant that if you are having 60 per cent of your water leaking back into the earth, you have to pump more to be able to meet your requirements, and by pumping more, essentially impacts on your Light and Power bill. This is why the Barbados Water Authority has a \$3 million Light and Power bill every month because they are having to recycle water, or re-pump water that should be getting to its consumers. This is why I agree that we must have a Mains Replacement Programme, but it should have started when the money was taken from the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, now we have added to the cost of the Barbados Water Authority, and now that we are going to increase in electricity bills, it is going to add even more to the cost of the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, if the Honourable Member wants to understand what the root cause of the problem was, he needs to look within the bosom of his own Party, because it was that Party which took the money out of the Barbados Water Authority and put it into the Consolidated Fund. Sir, that is why the Barbados Water Authority now finds itself having to expend more and more money in electricity, every month.

House A56, Sequence 14, 12.20 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to report, as I have been told, that they have new leak detection equipment and they have been working, not only to replace the mains, as we said, but also to find the leaks and to stop the problem with leaks throughout the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to understand that Barbados is a water-scarce country. The suggestion is that in order not to be water-scarce, we should have 1 000 cubic metres per year per person. We do not have that. We have 225 000, so we are woefully below what we need to have, therefore, we have to conserve and preserve our water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember that when the Sewerage Project was being done, there was a suggestion that some of the effluent from the Sewerage Project be used as irrigation water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to ask the Minister if any of the effluent from the Sewerage Project is now being used for water irrigation, so that we could recapture some of the water that we use in effluent? I think that is important because it would reduce the drain on our potable water for irrigation. It is something that I would like to see being incorporated in both of our sewerage projects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that brings me to the question of water quality. A study was done on the water quality in Barbados and it was found that in every criteria, be it the nitrate content, the chloride content, the sodium content, the sulphate content, or whatever, with respect to international standards, that Barbados' water remains excellent in its quality, and that is important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would recall that when zoning was done, it was done to assess the biological impact, and lands and tracks of land in Barbados were

zoned as Zone I because of the risk of biological contamination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has happened since then is, that in addition to biological contamination, you could also get contamination of the water supply from people using chemicals in their gardens and in their crop lands, so that has raised the amount of nitrate consideration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know if there is a plan to do a re-zoning. If there is, the Minister could let us know about the re-zoning plan with respect to not only the biological components as it relates to the land for water, but also the nitrate components because that is the critical thing now.

The aspect of zoning tracks of land as Zone I because of the biological components which has worked well for Barbados. Let us be fair, it has helped Barbados to keep the biological content of its water down, which otherwise would have leached back into the water and then we would be drinking back our biological contents, which of course is wrong and is a significant health threat.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the society moves forward and as the society changes, we need to reassess that zoning and see what the nitrate contents and the effect of zoning on the nitrate contents for the water now have to be, and how zoning would be impacted from a nitrate content position, more so than the biological content. These are important things for the Barbados Water Authority, the country and the development of the country as a whole. It is not about looking back to see who did what and how the money was spent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us move forward. Let us take the country forward. Let us take the Barbados Water Authority forward. Let us improve the service. Let us agree to standards. Let us make sure that the Barbados Water Authority - because after today the Barbados Water Authority is agreeing to standards and agreeing to compensation if they do not meet those standards.

The Democratic Labour Party Administration is telling the people of Barbados that they are taking the Barbados Water Authority to the Fair Trading Commission, and they have to agree to standards and meet those standards, and if they do not, they can look for some compensation, because that is the agreement. That is what the Fair Trading Commission is about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to report that the Barbados Water Authority is doing a fantastic job with very little. They have had difficulties, but they have overcome their difficulties and they continue to work well to provide a social good to the people of this country and they need all the help and support we can give them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one thing that would save the Barbados Water Authority hundreds of thousands of dollars, is if the Democratic Labour Party would keep to their promise and remove the VAT off electricity. The Barbados Water Authority is the biggest customer of The Barbados Light & Power Company Limited.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if they were to remove the VAT off electricity as promised, that would save the Barbados Water Authority some money. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$3 million a month is their bill, so you could work out what 15 per cent of that in savings would relate to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we could do some more mains in the Constituency of St. John, because I guess it would be a quid pro quo situation. It would be a saving, not only for the Barbados Water Authority, but for the people of Barbados, so why are we delaying it? What is the problem with it? It was a promise. They should fulfil that promise as it would save the Barbados Water Authority significant amounts of cash and save the consumer as well.

These are the things that we need to be looking at, providing something better for the country, not a 60 per cent increase and then hear about a wage freeze. That means, take more and give less. If you are taking more and you are giving less, you are depleting the savings of the people.

There is an Honourable Member in here who talks about purchasing power. What has happened to the purchasing power of the people of Barbados? It has been depleted. What does that mean? People have to work harder and get less, pay more and get less, go into their savings, or go into bankruptcy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 18 months ago, I told the Democratic Labour Party that this country was facing a crisis and the Leader got up and said what crisis what, you are watching too much television and everybody laughed. Who is laughing now?

Everywhere you go, you are hearing about the economic crisis, but 18 months ago when we were in a nightmare in slow motion, when we were supposed to be preparing for the hurricane we did not do that, we were watching too much television. Barbados was not facing a crisis then, so there was nothing to prepare for, but now that we have the hurricane, we did not put up our shutters, collect our bottled water, nor get our batteries so that we could ride out the hurricane and then come out better. Instead, we are facing the hurricane with nothing, no water, no batteries and no corned beef, and we are facing the elements because a Government failed to protect its people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a major responsibility of a Government is to protect its people, but instead of

protecting its people, we make them a little bit weaker by taking away the money that they would use to pay a water bill, by increasing the rates by 60 per cent. We made them weaker by increasing the cost to pay their road taxes for their car. We made them even weaker now by saying we are going to have, not a wage freeze, but a moratorium.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you are going to characterise the programmes and policies of the Democratic Labour Party, the people must bear the burden. It is not the Government that bears the burden and shields the people.

House A56 Sequence 15

12.30 p.m.

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Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is what they are doing, day in and day out, the people must bear the burden. Wherever you go, whenever you look at every policy, you would see that the people have to bear the burden. When it comes to increases, or decreases in gasoline, the people have to bear the burden, when it comes to water, the people have to bear the burden, when it comes to road tax, the people have to bear the burden. Sir, wherever you look, we know the policy is that no matter what you do, the people have to bear the burden.

Under the Barbados Labour Party we shielded the people, we shielded those who can least afford. Sir, that is the basic difference between these two Administrations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to tell you, one day the people of This country would say: "No more, we ain't taking that burden, we taking back our country."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

SUSPENSION

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

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 1.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.30 p.m.

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RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Honourable House is now resumed.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak in this debate. I was very happy because I knew that someone from the Other Side would have raised the issue of the surplus that the Barbados Water Authority had at the time when that great gentleman had to save the Barbados Water Authority from keeping money in a bank account and not using the money, to use it for the national good of the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when money is left with a statutory board and it is not being used wisely, there is no better place than for that money to be placed within the funds of Government and, Sir, that is exactly what happened. Sir, I have heard this for years.

When a statutory board does not have money, the Consolidated Fund is expected to put money in that statutory board, so what is wrong when a statutory board has money and it is not using it? It is in the interest of the country for that money to be taken and put into the Consolidated Fund for the national good and to serve all the people of Barbados.

H/A56/1.50 p.m. Sequence 17

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His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I cannot understand how we can have politicians walking around telling people that a former Prime Minister took money from a statutory board, that was not being used, put it in the Consolidated Fund, and it is supposed to appear to be a crime.

Sir, let me tell you what it means. It means that the Government would not have to raise that amount of money in taxes. It means that no interest will be paid on that money, which means that the year you are in a deficit, that deficit would be reduced, or if there was a surplus, then it would have increased, ensuring better planning by the Government.

Sir, what is worse? Sir, \$25 million, as quoted by the Honourable Member, but what we have seen as a result of that? We have seen every Government coming before this House and pumping millions of dollars into the same Authority. On what mandate? Can it be justified for the Consolidated Fund to pay money to the Barbados Water Authority?

Sir, based on their argument, no Government should take money from the Consolidated Fund for the Barbados Water Authority, if you are saying that you cannot take from the Barbados Water Authority and transfer into the Consolidated Fund. Which way do you want it?

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West were ordered expunged from the records by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I welcomed what the Honourable Member said, that instead of returning the money claimed by them to be a bad decision, they forced the Barbados Water Authority to borrow money instead of returning the money. That is the point.

Sir, I am very glad that the Honourable Member got up on a point of order to make that point to this House.

Sir, I have said for years that it was a simple case. If the Government of the day took money and put it into the Consolidated Fund, all you have to do is present the value to find out how much money it would have been and repay it, but nothing like that occurred. Sir, what the Honourable Members did? They allowed the Barbados Water Authority, instead of giving them back the money, to go out on the open market and borrow. They said over and over that the Barbados Water Authority had money.

The Barbados Labour Party should tell the public of Barbados why they did not repay the Barbados Water Authority the money they owed them because - Government is continuous, instead of them repaying the Barbados Water Authority - you could find it in the debates, when that \$150 million was loaned to the Barbados Labour Party and they came to Parliament...

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I know that after they got \$150 million nothing changed. If the Honourable Member is telling me that it did not go there, it went somewhere with a "B" that is for him to say, not me.

Sir, all they had to do if they were serious and not only about talk, instead of encouraging the Barbados Water Authority to borrow money, they would have repaid the loan that was borrowed by one Government, and they would have done their duty giving them the money by just using the present value. We would have known the true amount and the problem would be solved, but they did not do it. Sir, they encouraged them to borrow and borrow without paying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another thing is, the Honorable Member had the gall to come in here today and talk about the impact of the electricity on the Barbados Water Authority, as if they were not told by their Board and by Management, that the cost of electricity was too high and it was better for the Barbados Water Authority to generate their own electricity.

I want them to tell this Honourable House why they saddled the Barbados Water Authority with an electricity bill of over twenty something million dollars a year, when it is known that if the Barbados Water Authority had done their own generating, it would have been half, or less. I want them to tell this Honourable House this, and there would have been no reason for any 60 per cent increase in rates or anything.

Sir, instead of the Barbados Water Authority...

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

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. The Honourable Member continues to mislead this House, when he knows full well that the capital outlay to buy generators would not reduce the electricity bill immediately. It would take time to be amortised downwards.

Further, in the current situation, with diesel being more expensive than it ever was, we actually would not be making a savings, but an additional cost at this time. The Honourable Member is misleading the House again.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I see no point of order. Let me point out again the relevance of a point of order. I will say again that a point of order must not be used in an instance where a person has forgotten something in his speech and they want to patch up things. Thank you.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West knows that argument cannot hold water. The Honourable Member knows of a bakery that has bought two Rolls Royce engines to generate electricity during the day. If a bakery can do it, what do you think about the Barbados Water Authority that has a massive water bill of over nearly \$2.8 million a month? Sir, do you understand what I am saying?

Sir, why is it that the Honourable Member wants this Honourable House, and me to believe, and to give the impression to the public of Barbados that those persons who are out there generating their own electricity, do not have any common sense, but they are only doing so to pay out money. Everybody knows that the major plants in Barbados are now turning to their own generating of electricity.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the Honourable Member has moved away and has his own plants too, or planning them. I am not being personal. I am congratulating him for a wise choice, because he does not spend money...

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, he said that he is not doing it anymore now that I have made the point. The Honourable Member cannot withdraw just like that, because I know him well. He is money smart and he will not withdraw just like that. The only reason he would withdraw is if he plans to sell all the plants he has in Barbados and go to Canada. I know that he is not going to do that because the returns are too good in Barbados for him to do something like that.

Sir, the point is being made that we have to understand that This is a serious matter and no amount of politics can be played in this matter. To come in here and give the impression, playing on the word, that we were the ones who took the Barbados Water Authority to the Fair Trading Commission cannot be, because I was here when the Honourable Member for St. Michael North said that we are taking these companies, and the Barbados Petroleum Company and the Barbados Water Authority will come later.

I know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North will not disagree with what I am saying. He also said that they have to put their house in order before he brings them to this House. That is what he said at that time and I agreed with him then.

Sir, I also made the point that if we were to allow the Barbados Water Authority at the time to come before this House, nobody would have been able to pay a water bill. Sir, it has taken nearly 11 years to get the Barbados Water Authority before this House.

H A56 2.00 p.m. Sequence 18

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House A56, Sequence 19, 2.00 p.m.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, it could come now because of careful management by the Democratic Labour Party because we pump some money into the Barbados Water Authority and allowed them to shape up their office.

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

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member just said in his speech that we are trying to give the impression that the Democratic Labour Party is bringing the Barbados Water Authority to the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, that is exactly what the Bill is about, and if the Honourable Member has not read the Bill, it said plain and clear:

“The Bill will amend the Barbados Water Authority Act, Cap. 274 to make the power given to the Authority to determine rates and charges in respect of the supply of water and sewerage services, subject to the regulation of the Fair Trading Commission in accordance with the Utilities Regulation Act.”

Sir, it is not for me to suggest that the Democratic Labour Party is doing it. That is what the Bill is. This is why the Democratic Labour Party is doing it and that is the function of this Bill, and for him within his speech about the Bill to push down and knock down the fact of what the Bill is actually doing, is clearly misleading the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I leave it in your court.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you see why the people dumped them? Sir, all we are doing is completing what I thought they started. Sir, for 11 years, they procrastinated on this issue and did nothing to get this Bill before the House. Now you have heard it from the Honourable Member for Christ Church West that they have nothing to do with it. This is what the Honourable Member said just now and it is the Democratic Labour Party that has done all the work to get it before this House. Sir, let him deny it.

Sir, for more than 11 years, the Honourable Member has just admitted to This House that they just talk the talk, but did no action. No wonder, Sir, so many losses and deficits were accumulated at the Barbados Water Authority because no action was done to put the house in order.

Sir, even though it was promised since 1999, that they would have put the house in order to bring it before the Fair Trading Commission, now you are hearing that nothing was done by the Barbados Labour Party, which meant, as usual, bare talk and no action.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you some of the actions that I would like to see the Barbados Water Authority doing. I would like to see the Barbados Water Authority having a relationship with the Ministry of Public Works, because there is a relationship between water savings and damaged roads. I am suggesting that the two work hand-in-hand, and the Ministry of Public Works set aside some money out of their repairs, to public roads and minor roads to help the Barbados Water Authority to sink some wells before you get to major roads.

Sir, every time you get that heavy flow coming across the road, it undermines the roads and it destroys the roads. I am suggesting that we can be two winners. The Barbados Water Authority can save the water from running off into the sea by digging wells so that the water can go into the system. Sir, it can also stop the Ministry of Public Works from having the roads undermined. Sir, I want them to think about this option. I do not want them to knock it because I have said it.

Sir, it seems that when you have availed yourself with certain knowledge, once it is said by me, you ignore it and dump it and regurgitate it 10 years after as a new point, as we heard in here earlier today.

Sir, I am saying that the cost cannot only be for the Barbados Water Authority and that the Ministry of Public Works has a lot to gain from this suggestion.

Sir, you would know that many times you see roads being paved, and when we have a good rainfall, the next thing you see is all the asphalt floating going somewhere else. If we were to dig the wells at strategic points where we know the water will flow, there will not be that amount of water traversing across the road, or under the road and damaging the road, causing the Ministry of Public Works to spend a lot of money.

Sir, we need to conserve water through that process, but we also need to ensure that the rainfall does not damage our highways and other minor roads.

We also have to recognise, Sir, that we have to be very effective, and I am very glad to hear that overtime will be looked at because the truth is, it has to come in This country when we recognise that we have to trade off overtime for something else in this country. This word “overtime” is creating too many headaches for this country Barbados, and we need to have a trade off. We also need to ensure that overtime is not paid too high up the ladder.

I repeat that. Sir, we need to ensure that overtime is not paid too high up the ladder because whenever you get overtime being paid too high up the ladder, overtime is not controlled because the persons who should be controlling overtime, have to get some too, so they have to encourage it and, I hope that you understand what I am saying.

Sir, my way of it is that we need to do the quid pro quo where we give something to get something, because if we are going to increase productivity in This country, we cannot continue to make people believe that they could work time and a half and do less work and get more money. Sir, it is a very serious thing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I have always advocated moonlighting in this country for the simple

reason, when an employee leaves one employer and he goes to another employer, he cannot tell that employer that he has worked eight hours already. He is now starting afresh and he has to behave as if he is now in his new job, but when it is encouraged at the same employer, Sir, discretion has to come in, so you are paying time and a half, but you are not getting much in production. Sir, we have to be realistic about it.

We have to allow workers to go home, get afresh, get something to eat and come back on the job line but there must be something to encourage that and I have said it for many years in this country, that if we are serious about beating the economic problems in this country, we have to start thinking differently.

We cannot continue to think the way we have been thinking for 365 years, Sir, and believe that we can solve the problems thinking along that line. I am glad that this Government has recognised that there is a need for change and I congratulate them on that, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some people really believe that the masses cannot think. I heard a moderator making the point that the Barbados Water Authority just came for 60 per cent increases and you are now going to build a new building for the workers. Those same moderators are the same ones that would give the impression that other Government buildings should be closed and new ones should be built.

They are the first to tell you that in order to get good production, you must have good working conditions, but just because the Barbados Water Authority happens to be the flogging horse, commonsense does not kick in, and what you said yesterday cannot relate now, because you are talking about the Barbados Water Authority.

I am saying, Sir, the same way that you want good working conditions at the other Government Departments, the Barbados Water Authority needs it too. Sir, because we have a 60 per cent increase, do not ignore the workers and do not spit down on the workers, but recognise that they are workers too.

I am saying, Sir, that we too cannot just talk the talk for the sake of talking. We have to understand where we are going in This country. It is clear that some of the moderators need to stop, think and then talk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Transport Board is expected to be supported by the Government when it is in deficit, any authority that has a surplus should expect to give some to the Consolidated Fund so that they could help to support others that would be in deficit.

Sir, people seem not to understand that it takes two hands to clap. I am also saying, Sir, that I am happy to hear the Minister making the point that the whole system of public relations at the Barbados Water Authority has changed.

House A56, Sequence 19, 2.10 p.m.

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His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I also want the commitment from this Minister and the Government that management would be able to manage now. Sir, over the years management was not allowed to manage, sometimes even the Boards were not allowed to manage.

Sir, the truth is that the last \$150 million that was lent to the Barbados Water Authority, the Board drew up a plan, but they were never allowed to implement the plan, because instead of them dealing with pipes and all the other problems that the \$150 million had to deal with, job No. 1 was jobs and the Barbados Water Authority was able to inflate the number of workers even though we were told in this House when the loan was sought, that we will get effective management and good policy by the Government, but what you saw was a swelling of the ranks and all the money went.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West might not know this, but I can tell you that many persons who served on the Board were very angry because they drew up a strategic plan, gave it to the Government and then saw all their hard work going down the drain, because what they thought was a good policy and a good plan by the Board, was back-raised by those who sat in the Cabinet. Sir, when the Barbados Water Authority should have been turned around, the only thing that was turned around was jobs.

Sir, I am hoping that This 60 per cent increase that is given is not about jobs alone. Sir, it is true that in some areas you would need to get some effectiveness, and I can understand why you would need to increase the Public Relations Department, because the customers need to have good service. People believe that just because they are poor people, you do not have to give them good service, and I congratulate the Minister on that one. The Minister needs to ensure that there is a department to answer and to appreciate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard a lot of licks being given to the Barbados Water Authority about how they do not fix burst mains, but I have always been taught that there is something called "opportunity cost."

Sir, not one person ever questioned whether it is cheaper on weekends to allow the water to run, or to fix the

mains. We have to ask ourselves all of these things. Sir, in this country we do not see water as important even though it is the most important thing. Sir, I remember well when I was in here saying that it is cheaper to get water from the Barbados Water Authority than it is to get bottled water and I was laughed at, but today I am hearing the Opposition repeating it as if it is something new.

Sir, the hurtful thing about it is that they did not say, and I quote, the Honourable Member did not say he quoted the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. I did not hear that. When I was saying that bottled water was in 1809, et cetera, they were laughing at me and now they come in here and tried to make a new point out of it. Sir, they should have been saying that they agree and that the Barbados Water Authority needs to bottle water and make some money.

Sir, it is obvious that the Barbados Water Authority has problems. On a daily basis, I am confronted with mains that are bursting pretty regularly, not only in the Constituency of St. Lucy. I recognise that coming down the Maynards Road, especially in the Grape Hall area where mains are bursting pretty regularly. Even now in the Moon Town area, we are recognising that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it takes money, time and planning and my suggestion to the Barbados Water Authority is that whenever they go in to do repair work, not to cut a piece of pipe, but to put in a length, or two every time especially on that Maynards Road. Every time there is a burst main, they should not fix just the piece that is damaged, but put in two lengths so that by the time they fix all of the burst mains, they would have a new main in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Barbados Water Authority cannot get the money one way, it should get it the other. I am saying to the Barbados Water Authority that if someone in St. Peter, or the rest of Barbados complains about that strategy, they do not have to do it in St. Peter, or the rest of Barbados if they do not want it, but I want them to do it in St. Lucy, because I am convinced that low water pressure comes from burst mains.

As you would know, Sir, sometimes all of the burst mains are not on top of the ground. They go down and you are not able to spot them quickly, so as soon as you fix This piece, the piece next door will burst in a short while.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the best thing to do is to put in some new mains, one or two at a time, and try to solve the problem because those persons complaining to me in the Grape Hall area have a genuine concern and I feel that we have a right as a House, to ensure that the necessary funds are placed within the Barbados Water Authority, so that this problem can be solved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to come in here and bash management, or the Board as I heard the Other Side trying to do. I know when to bash the Board and when to bash management. I will only do that when we have supplied the tools, and right now we have not supplied all the tools, so I cannot do it. If you cannot give a man tools to work with, how can you bash him? You have to give him the tools to work with.

You also have to give a Board that is prepared to give policy, and allow management to implement the day-to-day running and not have Chairmen who believe that they are brighter and more qualified to do the day-to-day work. I believe that when you give a man a free hand, then you could criticise him, but if you do not give him a free hand, you cannot criticise him.

I am saying, Sir, that after today, we should be in a better position to ensure that we are going on the right path and that we will be able to achieve what we want.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard a suggestion in this House today about an additional desalination plant for the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, I believe that before you could have an additional desalination plant, you must be able to maximise what you have first.

I have always said to the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited and LIME that before they could ask my constituents for an increase in rates, they must be able to justify that they have supplied every person that has applied to have electricity, or telephone service, because if they cannot do that, it shows me that they have not maximised their revenue from the sources they should.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I have always said to this country that I always had a problem with the Fair Trading Commission, because I believe that the first thing they should have said to the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited and LIME, is to justify that they have served all of their customers first, that they are maximising their revenue and after that, they could come back to me for money because everybody knows that the more customers you have, the more revenue you would have, and most likely the more efficient you would be.

I am saying, Sir, that we only know about efficiency when it comes to the Barbados Water Authority, but we do not know about efficiency when it comes to the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited and LIME.

Sir, I am saying that it is not fair. Why can we only see to bash our own when there is a greater possibility that we can maximise more elsewhere, but we leave the blame to the whipping horse just because there is something

called two political parties, and some of them want to say one thing when they are in Opposition, and then another thing in Government and vice versa, so let us understand what we have to do and deal with the problem.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I have said in this House already, and I want to repeat it, that an injustice was done to the Barbados Water Authority. You heard the Other Side talking about \$25 million that was taken by the Democratic Labour Party when it was in Government and put into the Consolidated Fund, but what they would not tell you is that they have now taken millions of dollars on a yearly basis from the Consolidated Fund and given it elsewhere in terms of road repairs.

House A56 Sequence 20

2.20 p.m.

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His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, so bad is this policy that when roads in an area are damaged, the work has to be accumulated and people have to wait a long time before the contractor, or contractors, can come and fix those roads. Sir, nobody is quarrelling about that, but they are talking about \$25 million from a Statutory Board to the Consolidated Fund.

I am saying, when you want to argue against the Democratic Labour Party, you must have your facts right. There are some of us who can still remember, who can still understand and relate. I am saying for the Barbados Labour Party to come here now and chastise the Democratic Labour Party, they must first clean their house. They must understand that \$25 million from a Statutory Board to the Consolidated Fund cannot be a crime, because it is like an investment. It is like Government taking money from the National Insurance Board to build offices. Is that a crime? Sir, they have all done that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one thing for sure is that in the same way the money from the National Insurance Board had to be repaid, what they should have been arguing is that the money that was taken from the Barbados Water Authority should have been repaid. Sir, they had an opportunity to repay it and did not. Instead of repaying that money, they encouraged them to borrow loans. Sir, they are guilty as charged.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

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

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a short intervention in this debate. I would wish to begin by congratulating the management and staff of the Barbados Water Authority, but to single out the General Manager for work over the years that has been very well done.

I think that the quality of his work is a credit to that institution. He has been able to hear complaints raised by individuals and to respond promptly, effectively and competently. Therefore, I wish to congratulate, especially him, for the job well done over the years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West has stated that we support the Amendment before this Honourable House today. Sir, I would add my voice to that support. We believe that this should have been done a long time ago.

Sir, what the Democratic Labour Party Government has managed to do is, in fact, put the cart before the horse by having a situation where, unilaterally and without reference to the consumers of this country, they have imposed a 60 per cent increase on the backs of the consumers, who are already heavy laden.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House by giving the impression that since the Fair Trading Commission Act was set up, there was only the Democratic Labour Party that actually increased water rates in This country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that cannot be fair. The Honourable Member knows that on His Side they too increased water rates. Sir, if that is the charge against the Democratic Labour Party, then it would also have to be a charge against the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that the Democratic Labour Party has put the cart before the horse by having a Bill before this Honourable House.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let me say once and for all to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. I preside over this Honourable House and so I determine when there is a point of order. Your remarks why I did not rule, that there was no point of order, I heard that. The Chair has heard the aside and I will, therefore, ask you to behave yourself in this Honourable Chamber.

I think that your behaviour is not becoming of that of an Honourable Member of this House to cheupse when the

Chair is speaking. Honourable Member, you then would want to tell the young people of Barbados that you are someone they would want to look up to.

I will let you know that as from today, whenever I sit in this Chair that any bad behaviour will be dealt with according to the Standing Orders in this Honourable Chamber.

Please continue, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is being done today should have been done before there was any increase in rates by the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, one of the main philosophies informing the establishment of the Fair Trading Commission was to ensure that no efficiencies of any utility company would be passed on to consumers, and to ensure that the interest of consumers is safeguarded.

Sir, my bias, if there is one, is well-known. I have always felt that given the fact over the years, consumers were heavily disadvantaged, my bias has always been on the side of the consumer. I believe the consumer should have a say in the determination and setting of any rates in relation to water, before those rates were set.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the Government has managed to do, is to bypass all the provisions of the Fair Trading Commission and all of the support systems that were put in place to assist consumers and simply arrived at a figure that was literally pulled from the air, a figure of 60 per cent.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member knows...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what is your point of order?

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member knows that the Government cannot refer this matter, or the last increase to the Fair Trading Commission, because the Barbados Water Authority is not yet before the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, that is what we are about to seek now, therefore, what the Honourable Member is asking the Chair to do is to reflect on a Resolution before this Honourable House, which you know you cannot do.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Government should have waited and give consumers the opportunity, which they will now be

provided, given the enactment of this Amendment to the legislation.

Sir, Government opted to bypass all systems, including an institution as valuable as the Public Counsel, where an attorney-at-Law is provided free of cost to the consumers to assist all interested parties before the Fair Trading Commission, so that arguments can be made in relation to consumers on their behalf, such as the ability of consumers to examine the books of the Barbados Water Authority, the opportunity for consumers to be able to examine the systems and operations of the entity.

Sir, these things were all swept away in Government's haste in putting the cart before the horse, in imposing a 60 per cent increase in water rates on the consumers of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, water is a very indispensable commodity.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House by giving the impression that because you can scrutinise books, that would stop the rates from increasing.

Sir, you know that the public of Barbados were able to scrutinise the books of both the Barbados Telephone Company and the Barbados Light and Power Co. Ltd., yet in the end those companies still got increases.

Sir, am I to believe there is one Law for those two companies and a different Law for the Barbados Water Authority? Sir, the Honourable Member knows that argument cannot hold water.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you spoke earlier of the Standing Orders. Sir, you really need to address these matters. You have to make some serious amendments, because these interruptions are unwarranted and very disruptive. They are really.

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

Honourable Member, you are fully aware of the Standing Orders of this Honourable House. The Standing Orders were here before you and before me. You are aware that any individual Honourable Member can get up on a point of order. It is then for the Chair to rule. If I see it fit to give you back the time that is lost, then I will so rule, but it is rude of you and disrespectful to the Chair to ask the Chair and to tell the Chair how to rule with respect to the Standing Orders.

Please continue, Honourable Member.

Asides.

2.30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, water is very important and is an indispensable commodity. Sir, special considerations have to be given and taken into account whenever a rate is set in relation to water in this country, and it is opened to a Minister, or any policymaker in relation to the setting of water rates.

Sir, they cannot intervene in relation to the Fair Trading Commission at the technical level, but they can set policy.

Sir, any policy to govern the setting of rates henceforth in this country must take into account that water is a commodity without which we cannot live and, therefore, the rate to be paid for water must never be out of the reach of the ordinary Barbadian and, therefore, the benchmark has to be affordability.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, water is, in my view, the most fundamental of all fundamental human rights. It has to be, and this is recognised in the Barbados Water Authority Act at Section 6, when it says that:

“The Authority shall, unless prevented by drought, other extraordinary event or unavoidable accident, the Authority shall provide to the public a supply of potable water for domestic purposes and potable or other satisfactory supply in relation to agriculture and other purposes.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is recognised, even in the Barbados Water Authority Act, that the Barbados Water Authority has a duty to provide water to every single citizen. Sir, that is because it is recognised to be the most fundamental of all fundamental human rights.

Sir, foremost in the mind of any Minister has to be to ensure that water is always affordable to every single Barbadian in this country. Sir, this is not hard to implement, because this is actually implemented in other parts of the world.

In some places, they have a situation where they determine that no more than X percentage of your salary can be charged, or levelled upon you to pay your water rate. We do not necessarily have to apply that method here, but we have to move to the benchmark of affordability in relation to water.

Sir, a Minister, or a Government is not to get up willy-nilly and pull from the air a figure that reflects a 60 per cent increase on the backs of Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is true that the Barbados Water Authority is going to be concerned about its losses and they would want to stem those losses, but it must also recognise that Barbadians have a fundamental right to be supplied with water.

Sir, I am not one who has ever supported the situation where, as a first resort, people's water can be turned off. I have never supported it. I do not now support it and I never will. I do not see how you could tell someone that you are a humane society, a humane Government and expect that because persons do not pay their water bills, that you can, without any proper investigation why they do not pay their water bills, rush to turn it off. I have never supported it. Thus, no one, in my view...

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: An Honourable Member is saying, neither should landlords. Sir, I agree that no one should have the right, willy-nilly, to just go and unilaterally turn off people's water because it is too fundamental. Therefore, Sir, I join my colleagues on This Side in condemning the Government, first of all, for increasing water rates by 60 per cent.

What I would want to say is that the Fair Trading Commission may, or may not know it, but they have the power from the day that this Amendment becomes Law to institute on their own motion, on their own initiative, with or without the request of any individual, who can also do it, they have the authority to commence a hearing into the appropriate rate to be charged by the Barbados Water Authority.

They do not have to wait until when the Barbados Water Authority decides it is coming to them to make any adjustment to rates, because Section 4, Subsection 6 states very clearly in the Fair Trading Commission Act, that the Fair Trading Commission can, on its own initiative, investigate into any aspect of any matter relating to the operations of any public utility in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am now calling on the Fair Trading Commission immediately upon this Amendment taking effect, to behave the way they were supposed to behave.

Sir, I must tell you that I consider this present Fair Trading Commission to be a shadow of the original Fair Trading Commission but, Sir, it is what we have.

Sir, it has certain powers, one of which is, that it can institute proceedings on its own initiative to look at the whole issue of water rates. Sir, at which time consumers can utilise the assistance of Public Counsel, see the books, see the accounts, look at the systems and operations of the Barbados Water Authority and hopefully, Sir, have a reduction in the unconscionable increase that was recently inflicted upon the backs of Barbadians who are currently carrying an increase in water rates, an increase in telephone rates, soon to come, an increase in electricity rates, an astronomical cost of living in This country.

Sir, despite the assurance and the promise by this Government that they were going to lower the cost of living, consumers are now carrying that as an additional burden as well...

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the House the impression that it is because of the passage of this Bill today, that we will see an increase in water rates and an increase in telephone rates when the Honourable Member knows full well, that the price cap mechanism was not put in place by this Government, and that what we are now seeing is the price cap mechanism for electricity, which is automatic, and you do not even have to go before the Fair Trading Commission for these things to occur.

I do not think it is fair to this House for the Honourable Member to make that point the way he is making it, and to give the impression that it is because of what we are doing today, that you are going to get an increase in the light bill and an increase in the telephone bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member knows better because he was the Minister who set up the Fair Trading Commission that agreed to the price cap and agreed to rate increases, even when the decision was made that there should be no increases.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will repeat that I want to see this hearing instituted with haste, so that all and sundry can go before the Fair Trading Commission and let our views be known and a determination made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, consumers in this country have a lot of rights. Sir, consumers are not utilising their rights. It is time that consumers rise up in this country and speak about their rights and ensure that they understand their rights.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first act of this new Government was to abolish the Ministry of Consumer Affairs. Sir, for years consumer rights were buried away, here, there and everywhere, and most times, nowhere.

Sir, the former Administration, under the leadership of the Honourable Member for St. Peter, saw to it that a Ministry was set up specifically titled the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, and immediately upon this new Party becoming the Government, their first act, I think before any of them even took the oath, because the Ministries first have to be named before anybody could take an oath, it was announced that there was no longer any Ministry of Consumer Affairs.

H/A56/2.40 p.m. Sequence 22

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Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, they took the Government at their word that their priority Nos. 1,2 and 3 were to lower the cost of living, only to find today a monumental betrayal by the Government, a betrayal in form, substance and in procedure, every sense of the word.

Sir, we have a situation here where a Government - I have not heard the Minister say in his speech today, once, that the reason why the Barbados Water Authority did not go to the Fair Trading Commission was because they were in a position, or sufficiently organised to go. The Minister harped on the debt, the need to service debt and the need to put in mains, et cetera.

The reason why a Government decided not to go the way it should have gone, and it is going now, which is the proper way, is to go through the avenue of the Fair Trading Commission, but to go on its own initiative willy-nilly and set a rate without any consultation whatsoever with the people of Barbados at one step along the way - Sir, the Minister has not said that.

Sir, the Minister has not said that the Barbados Water Authority was not ready yet to go in terms of its organisational structure, bookkeeping or anything. The Minister said that it was a question that the Barbados Water Authority needed money and, therefore, a rate was set to have that determined. Sir, that is an improper way for a Government to behave.

Sir, the Fair Trading Commission was not set up to be ignored. It was set up to ensure that all persons across This country at all times, had a say in their own destiny in relation to their cost of living. Why have a system like that and just bypass it? Why, Sir? Why just bypass it?

Sir, if it is that the Government intends to bypass it, then I am saying now, and alerting the Fair Trading

Commission, to the existence of its right in the legislation that it does not have to wait on the Barbados Water Authority now, or at anytime, to make an application to it. It does not even have to wait on any consumer organisation. It can come forward and make any points on its own initiative.

The Fair Trading Commission can now decide that it is going to have a hearing into the current rate being charged by the Barbados Water Authority and invite the public to participate. Let the systems that have been established be used and then let a rate be determined.

Sir, I just want to end on this note, in relation to the Fair Trading Commission. A Government has to recognise that there are certain Statutory Boards, though they would be technically referred to as Government Statutory Boards, they really are above politics. There are certain institutions that really and truly ought to remain non-political.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber. One would wonder if it is not deliberate, because no way in the allocation of Ministries, by the Honourable Prime Minister, was the Department of Consumer Affairs ever abolished. The legislation protects the rights, under this Department, and the consumer still exists.

The Honourable Member is supposed to be a learned attorney, and he should really know better than to try to mislead the Chamber and the nation with that approach.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, if only I had said that, I would accept what the Honourable Member said. I said the Ministry of Consumer Affairs. I challenge the Honourable Minister to produce any Ministry at all, operation titled Ministry of Consumer Affairs, anyone at all. That is what I said.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, it must be understood that there are certain Departments, stretching across Statutory Boards, that certain Statutory Boards are above and beyond politics.

There are certain Statutory Boards that, despite any change of Government, should only experience changes made to them if it is absolutely necessary, and the Fair Trading Commission is the type of institution that really ought to remain above politics.

Sir, I said, in passing earlier, that the present Fair Trading Commission is a mere shadow of the original Fair

Trading Commission. I wish to see that changed. I am not going to go any further into that, but just to say in closing, again, that I fully endorse the wonderful comments made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West who, as far as I am concerned, is the only person who yet has really spoken in this debate, prior to my intervention, of course. Therefore, I am obliged to you.

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

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Sir, I rise to support this Bill before the House, which has the effect to bring the Barbados Water Authority under the ambit of the Fair Trading Commission.

I chose deliberately to speak after the Honourable Member for St. Michael North because if we were not aware of the record, particularly Hansard, if there was no history of utility regulation in Barbados, if there was no former Minister responsible for the Fair Trading Commission, who just spoke, then perhaps the Honourable Member for St. Michael North would have been able to get away with his very wide-ranging expose' in a number of matters that certainly did not connect with the reality, or the truth of the situation.

Sir, if there is one truth, or one truism that will come out of this debate is that the Barbados Water Authority cannot be allowed to exist and to be run in the manner that it is.

I want to reconnect with what I said before, because the Honourable Member for St. Michael North would have us believe that this Government came to Parliament, and in a very high-handed and arbitrary manner, increased water rates by 60 per cent in Barbados. It was an act that was so precalculated, never occurred in the history of Barbados before.

In fact the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, who led off the debate in relation to the enactment of the Fair Trading Commission Act, was a Member of Government in 2005.

On January 1, 2005, he was a Member of the last Administration, which by an act, I do not know if you would call it arbitrary or not, but certainly at that time by imposing a rate increase of 38 per cent on Barbadians. He did not have the gumption to tell his Party that ...

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: It was across the board effective January 1, 2005, a 38 per cent increase.

Sir, no doubt it was in recognition of the fact that finances of the Barbados Water Authority were not good as we have realised now. I believe we have to be fair and frank when we are addressing matters to the public. We have to, as Parliamentarians, understand that we are not a tailing around. This is no game.

The reality is, in 2005, a 38 per cent increase across the board without the benefit of any kind of scientific analysis whatsoever, no studies, but yet still the Barbados Labour Party Administration of that day, imposed a 38 per cent increase. They did it knowing full well that the 38 per cent increase would not have been enough to cure the financial problems of the Barbados Water Authority. They did that.

Sir, to prove the point further - that is why you should not play games with the lives of Barbadians. Let us come to this Parliament and deal with the issue of the Barbados Water Authority in a proper manner. That was done when finances of the Barbados Water Authority were precarious. Since that 38 per cent increase, which took effect from January 1, 2005, the Barbados Water Authority only saw profit of one year, a very mild profit and then thereafter, the Barbados Water Authority's finances resumed their traditional projectory as maximum losses.

H A56 2.50 p.m. Sequence 23

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House A56, Sequence 24, 2.50 p.m.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really feel that when Honourable Members speak, particularly those from the Other Side who would have had the benefit of being in Government, and being in charge of entities such as the Barbados Water Authority, they should really come and speak candidly, knowing full well that the records of Parliament can be brought back to life and shared with the public of Barbados in relation to this very important entity called the "Barbados Water Authority."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is more because we are talking in this debate about bringing the Barbados Water Authority under the ambit of the Fair Trading Commission and, therefore, when the Government is being critiqued at this time, I certainly want to applaud the Government for taking the stance of ensuring that the Barbados Water Authority can now be regulated by an independent entity called, the "Fair Trading Commission."

When the Honourable Member for St. Michael North led off the debate that led to the implementation of the Fair Trading Commission, which took place in this Honourable House in June, 2000, he made some very telling observations, and he spoke from his heart, in relation to the

need for utilities' regulation to be taken to a new level in Barbados.

Indeed, his sights were on what was then BET/BARTEL, and the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited, that these entities needed to be brought under more effective and efficient regulation, and that the public of Barbados, the consumers, needed to be guaranteed protection from monopolistic organisations, certainly very laudable ideals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is yet to be told to this House, and to Barbadians, why at that time, the last Government fell short of bringing the Barbados Water Authority under the ambit of the Fair Trading Commission.

Indeed, we have a number of other entities that would have at some point in time - and I believe sooner rather than later - to be regulated by the Fair Trading Commission. We have the Transport Board that needs to be regulated by the Fair Trading Commission and it has to do with ensuring that the public is protected.

I want to quote because the Honourable Member for St. Michael North made the point that the benchmark in relation to utility Regulation must be affordability. The regulation of water must be affordability. Barbadians have a fundamental right to water, and then he condemned the Government for the increase in water by 60 per cent. Of course, he said that the Fair Trading Commission can, on its own volition, initiate rate hearings and so on, and that is correct.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel what has happened has been a major blunder. In 2000, the financial situation of the Barbados Water Authority was well known, when it was known that in terms of the infrastructural growth and development of Barbados, we would have had to move rapidly towards having a modern Barbados Water Authority. This could have been very readily compared to what was happening at the time to BET and the Barbados Telephone Company, as well as the Barbados Light and Power Company.

One would have thought that the most logical thing to do at that stage would be to start the job of preparing such an important entity - the Honourable Member for St. Michael North recognised the Barbados Water Authority as crucial to the development of Barbados - and efforts should have been made to start the work of ensuring that the Barbados Water Authority could rapidly be moved to being regulated under the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the failure to do that created even further problems for the same Barbados Water Authority, because their systems were not, at that time,

exposed to the kind of scrutiny that was necessary to ensure maximum efficiency.

I fear that the delay, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in bringing the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission contributed to an environment, in which we could have costs running out of proportion, and we could have such a major financial tragedy, in relation to the finances of the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we need to connect to reality, as the Honourable Minister has said in this debate. We need to understand that errors were made, which have brought us to this point.

The question is, and I think the question that Barbadians would want to have answered is, what are we going to do now to ensure that the problems at the Barbados Water Authority, particularly the financial problems, are corrected in the shortest possible time?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many problems and I believe that, given what I have heard from the Honourable Minister, we are connecting with the issues, and we are on track to ensuring that some of these problems in the short-term and then the others in the long-term, are brought to a very quick resolution.

Again, there are major problems and I believe that if the Barbados Water Authority was being prudently managed in the past, some of these problems would have been corrected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the movement to place the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission, I believe that the Barbados Water Authority itself, can no longer operate in a manner where it is business as usual, and that will become rapidly a thing of the past.

The management, employees and indeed, the Ministry that has some kind of oversight in relation to the Barbados Water Authority, must be warned that as of the enactment of this legislation, where the Barbados Water Authority comes under the ambit of the Fair Trading Commission, that there will be no business as usual.

The policies and practices of the Barbados Water Authority would have to become more efficient. The very systems by which the Barbados Water Authority functions would have to become more efficient.

Certainly, all of the issues, whether they impact, or impinge on employees, the unions, or otherwise, which are crucial in relation to what amounts to a fair rate of return, what amounts to a fair rate to be charged, and all of the ingredients in relation to the operational costs of the

Barbados Water Authority, will now fall to be scrutinised and examined.

Sir, that has got to be put on the table, and I feel that what we should be doing and, I hope I am hearing from the Minister that what has to happen now, is that there must be a very proactive action plan designed to bring the Barbados Water Authority, in terms of its structure and manageability, very rapidly into the realm of the 21st Century, where its systems will now be operating at maximum efficiency.

The reality, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that in today's world of modern regulation, that is the benchmark. The benchmark has nothing to do with affordability, as we are hearing from the Other Side. It has to do with ensuring that there is a fair rate of return and that in return, consumers can get quality and efficient service from a utility and that is essentially what it is, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Barbados Water Authority, in relation to all of its programmes, such as the Meter Replacement Programme and the Mains Laying Programme, which essentially have been aged because they are now being tackled way beyond the time that they ought to have been tackled.

We are trying catchup in a game where in the past for some reason, we have failed to recognise that moving the Barbados Water Authority along, can only be done by a systematic approach, and a master plan designed to solve some of the problems that we have of the aging plant, the meters that are now outdated, and finding consumers that apparently nobody seems to be able to find who are no longer on the radar.

House A56, Sequence 24, 3.00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: We still have a situation where far too many consumers are still paying a flat rate and, therefore, I think we have to move rapidly towards finding consumers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the financial situation of the Barbados Water Authority cannot be ignored. It is a dire situation, but I believe that going forward we have to ensure that we could bring the Barbados Water Authority on solid footing. It has to start at some point. There are a number of issues that I believe we have to look at. I certainly welcome the disclosure by the Minister that most of these issues, whether they relate to the question of management at the Barbados Water Authority, or to putting in place a modern human resources system and ensuring that the whole question of the kind of approach towards

how the Barbados Water Authority is managed, have got to be taken and managed on a holistic basis.

The issue of making the Barbados Water Authority a linear and more efficient operation, has to be tackled in a frontal manner. There are ways that we have to look at, the whole question about sourcing and so on. I do not think that anyone here would readily question the very solid support that we all get from the Barbados Water Authority in our respective constituencies. I believe that most of the employees are well-intentioned. I certainly cannot complain.

When I call on the Barbados Water Authority to deal with issues in the Constituency of Christ Church West Central, there has always been a quick response from the Barbados Water Authority. I believe that they have been forced to operate in an environment where a number of systems have not been designed to ensure that they could produce the kind of output that is necessary, and therefore, I think that those are issues that we need to revisit.

We need also to probably hear in this debate of some of the recommendations from the Other Side, how we would take the Barbados Water Authority to that level of operation. The finances are known.

If you pick up the Auditor General's Report, you would recognise that probably one of the things that you need to do, not only with the Barbados Water Authority, but with many of the statutory corporations, is to ensure that their audits are done on a frequent basis, particularly as we move towards the Fair Trading Commission. It has to be a thing of the past that the Barbados Water Authority - I do not believe that the Financial Statements and the Audits of those Financial Statements have been completed for the last financial year.

Going forward, it is certainly impossible, in my estimation, to make proper and sound financial judgments about any entity, if those audits are not done on an efficient and timely basis as required by the Law that those audits must be done on a timely manner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is one of the suggestions that I want to make, that going forward, certainly as we move into the regulatory environment and the kind of strictures that would be brought to bear on the Barbados Water Authority, that we have timely audits performed in relation to the financial operations of the Barbados Water Authority.

There are two key areas that I believe that for whatever reasons, and I am not going into the history of it, that we need to tackle. We cannot help, but to re-examine the Financial Statements of the Barbados Water Authority, particularly as it relates to the operating cost. The operating

cost of the Barbados Water Authority has got to be scrutinised.

I have previously made known my concern in relation to the cost of electricity, which is a major part of the operating cost of the Barbados Water Authority. To efficiently do the pumping that is required by the Barbados Water Authority, requires electricity which comes from the grid of the Electric Company, which is of a phenomenal cost. I believe that we have to candidly look at that.

We also have to look and examine very carefully whether or not the Barbados Water Authority should be outfitted with its own electrical generating capability to ensure that it can avoid that cost. It is either that a facility has to be reached between the Barbados Water Authority and the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited, or the Barbados Water Authority has to look very carefully at how it would become more self-sufficient in relation to dealing with the electrical supply that is required.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have this phenomena of the provision of water from desalination, where the Barbados Water Authority purchases on an annual basis \$10 million in water from Ionics Freshwater Limited under a 15-year contract, which would have been negotiated under the Barbados Labour Party Administration. I do not know what happened to those contractual arrangements, but that is also a phenomenal cost. I believe that we still have five more years to go before that Agreement expires.

I certainly hope that when the Agreement comes up, that this Government looks very hard at negotiating a proper arrangement that does not burden the Barbados Water Authority with \$10 million on an annual basis in relation to desalination.

Barbadians must know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that where we are at today in relation to the Barbados Water Authority is no mystery. The financial state of the Barbados Water Authority has been at an unattractive level for in excess of 12 years. I believe there was only one fiscal period between 2005-2006, when the Barbados Water Authority could boast of not being in the red. From as far back as 2006, the deficit situation was approximately \$123 million.

We have to find a way in a regulated environment that will say that you can no longer have a situation where the cost of running the Barbados Water Authority far exceeds its revenue and certainly you cannot now have a situation where consumers are to be asked to pay for the inefficiencies of the Barbados Water Authority, so these are issues that certainly have to be dealt with.

I believe that the consumers would be better served now that the Barbados Water Authority would have to face

the full statutory power of the Fair Trading Commission. With all of the safeguards in relation to the need to put in place systems that guarantee efficiency, consumer protection and consumer rights, the level of services in the Barbados Water Authority would now have to be seriously improved if they are to avoid the penalties that are built in under the Utilities Regulation Act, which is policed by the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is an area that I believe quick work must be done at the Barbados Water Authority, to ensure that we do not have a situation where the Barbados Water Authority is penalised to the detriment of not only the Barbados Water Authority, but the consumers as well.

House A56 Sequence 25

3.10 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in looking at regulating the Barbados Water Authority, we cannot avoid taking a very purposeful review of its structure. The current structure where the Authority is set up under a statutory regime, perhaps needs to be examined. We perhaps need to look towards a corporate structure for the Barbados Water Authority, where perhaps there could be some level of private investment permitted in relation to the Barbados Water Authority.

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not talking about privatisation, I am talking about allowing for appropriate investment. I am saying, if we are to look at the financial well-being and at the reality of the financial situation which faces, not only Barbados, but faces the world in relation to managing such a precious commodity, we have to start looking at the structure.

Sir, therefore, the Barbados Water Authority may very well have to adopt a more corporate structure, a more corporate outlook, in relation to how it is managed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot fool ourselves. We cannot be so blinded that we cannot so acknowledge that if we are to achieve the kinds of goals I heard the Minister talking about, that by ignoring the necessity to restructure the Barbados Water Authority, particularly the management and supervisory capabilities of the Barbados Water Authority.

Certainly, if we are moving towards the regulatory regime, the Barbados Water Authority will now have within its ranks a regulatory department that is sufficiently

staffed, to be able to respond to the queries of the Fair Trading Commission, and respond to the kind of statutory requirements that are built in under the Utilities Regulation Act, and the Fair Trading Commission Act.

I believe these are inevitables that we cannot avoid. I certainly believe that from all that has happened in relation to the setting of a 38 per cent in 2005, to a setting of a 60 per cent recently, in response to a serious financial crisis within the Barbados Water Authority, we have to weave that path into the future and map a future for the Barbados Water Authority that is based on a solid financial footing, one that protects the consumer while, at the same time, does not add an extra burden to Government finances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in winding up this contribution, I believe that this debt is in the best interest of the consumer and that it gives us an opportunity, as a Government, to do some catchup work in relation to ensuring that the Barbados Water Authority, as it is now to be regulated, can be regulated in a manner that creates the kinds of efficiencies that are required for maximum consumer satisfaction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to compliment the Minister in respect of the courage he has displayed in bringing this particular piece of legislation.

Sir, very often people do not appreciate the changes that legislation forces upon entities, especially within the public sector.

Sir, clearly if the Barbados Water Authority is to survive under the new legislation, it must do things differently. It cannot be business as usual.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is really amazing that when you hear the contribution of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, the Honourable Member has literally accused the management of the Barbados Water Authority of shutting off supplies willy-nilly.

Sir, if we know the staff at the Barbados Water Authority, it is the most difficult thing, or the most difficult decision that has to be made when shutting off somebody's water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a matter of fact, one of the reasons the Barbados Water Authority is pommelled by the public and other persons, is that they say that over the years the Barbados Water Authority has failed to take action which they should have. On many occasions, the reason is

that sometimes it has to take into consideration the particular circumstances of the business, or household with which it has to deal.

Sir, it is really strange that we could have this accusation while, at the same time, we can hear a compliment being given to the management of the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, these are two contradictions which have to be reconciled. I do not have to reconcile them.

I think the Honourable Member for St. Michael North has to reconcile them to the public.

Sir, the other point I want to make is that it removes the Barbados Water Authority from the level of politicisation that has happened in the past. When I look at the comment of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, it says to me that the Honourable Member is simply engaging in what I would call plain political posturing.

Sir, at this stage in our history, we can only agree that the move to implement this Bill is consistent with the times with which we are faced.

Sir, if we are going to bring major public utilities like the Barbados Telephone Company under a system where we regulate them properly, we have to do that in terms of the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, what we need to appreciate is that the way in which the Barbados Water Authority has performed its function in the past, can no longer continue. What we need to do is to bring home to the staff of the Barbados Water Authority, that they are now operating under a new regime. Therefore, what happened over the 14 years when the Barbados Labour Party was in place, where the level of political interference that was there.

Sir, let us admit that many of the decisions that the Barbados Water Authority would have made in the past were not really done purely along business lines. Some of them were done with political considerations. Sir, here it is that we are moving the Barbados Water Authority from a regime in which political considerations came to the fore, to one where business considerations have now to come to the fore.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we, therefore, are now challenged in This particular environment to see how we can make that change within the Barbados Water Authority. Sir, again the Minister must be complimented for trying to move the Barbados Water Authority from that regime into a new one.

Sir, it would not be easy, therefore, when I hear the comments coming from the Other Side, it suggests to me that they are still stuck in the past and may be that was the reason they were so hesitant to bring the Barbados Water Authority under the new regime. It also suggests to me that Barbadians would have to agree that the Democratic Labour Party is moving in the right direction, in terms of trying to rectify certain things that were happening in This country.

Sir, let us face it. We have been criticised a lot for the increase in water rates. Sir, the fact of the matter is that the money has to come from somewhere, and to the extent where in the past the Barbados Labour Party avoided the question, they did not deal with it. We have now taken the approach where we will deal with the matter in a very transparent manner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that it allows us to do in future in relation to rate increases, is that it brings transparency to the whole process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I understand it, the way in which increases were done before were by Ministerial edit that says that a rate change was decided upon.

3.20 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, there was no transparency to the process and no one knew the basis upon which that change was made. Sir, no one knew whether, or not the change in itself was adequate. Sir, from that point of view I think that we should embrace the process in which Barbadians can more clearly understand the reason why changes were made.

Sir, also I want to look at the whole question of the efficiency that could be realised.

Sir, because you are under a new regime, I believe that the Barbados Water Authority would then be in a position to ensure that they look to examine the processes to make sure that they deliver a more efficient service.

Sir, I go to St. Michael West Central, which I represent, and not too long ago, in Grazettes Garden, there was an incident in which a pipe was burst and how it was discovered was very strange.

Sir, from time to time, residents were noticing water just springing from the earth and everyone thought there was a spring in the area, but it was only when residents started to investigate further that the water became a gush and when the Barbados Water Authority was called in, it was discovered that a main ran through Grazettes Garden

and when it got really bad, it actually flooded certain houses within the area.

Sir, I wonder about the amount of water that was lost because some people speculate that the loss of water could be as high as 69 per cent, but the point is, there was a loss of water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority came and fixed the problem, but the special problem that I have is that after fixing it, to this day, the road in Grazettes Gardens has not been dealt with as yet. Sir, that is an issue when we talk about service, because the pipe is fixed, but the road is still not dealt with at this point in time.

Sir, when we move to the new regime, these are the kinds of issues that would have to be addressed, the level of service that you give to members of the community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for instance, we spoke about the question of meters and we have to pay attention to the cost benefit analysis very quickly, because everyone assumes that when you see a leak that it is fixed quickly.

Sir, I understand that in many cases, within the processes of the Barbados Water Authority, that they must have done some cost benefit analysis to determine when is the best time that it could be done and, Sir, that is clear.

For instance, in my Constituency there is another incident where you have a house-holder and he has a leak at the point going to the meter. Sir, this leak has been going on for six weeks, or seven weeks, and this gentleman has called them several times to fix this leak, but there is no response.

Sir, understand this, when you bring a utility in a new regime, you have to move quickly in terms of fixing matters such as these. Therefore, when one hears from the Side of the Opposition the current arguments that you hear, you wonder whether, or not they understand the implications of inefficiency in a corporation. Sir, at the end of the day, consumers are the people who pay for that inefficiency and when people talk about the high water, it did not arise by accident.

Sir, costs are a reflection of the inefficiencies that happened in a particular company.

Sir, when we hear the double-speaking, as you would say, from the Other Side, I think they are doing a great disservice in this debate.

The two speakers who got up on behalf of the Opposition said that they were in support of this Bill but, Sir, let them say the right things that would encourage consumers in this country to be more responsible in the use

of water, and also engender the right attitudes and the right behaviours from the staff of the Corporation and, Sir, that is what we need to do. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we politicise it in the manner that we hear it being politicised, it is no wonder that you see the kind of behaviours that you see emanating from not only the public, but from the workers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things we also want to introduce is the whole question of reduce, reuse and recycle. One of the things we need to understand when it comes to the use of water in Barbados is that we need to consider all our options, and we cannot limit ourselves to just a few.

One of the issues we need to address is the Sewerage Project and I want to speak to that when it comes to the issue of water.

Sir, here it is that in the past we constructed a Sewerage Plant in which, on a daily basis, thousands of gallons of water is being pumped out to sea. I would hope that in relation to the new sewerage plant that is being planned for the West Coast, that we take that into consideration and do not make the same mistakes that were made in terms of the Bridgetown Sewerage Plant where there was an opportunity to reuse that water for other purposes.

Sir, not only that, but one of the things I want to emphasise is that very often there is a feeling in this country today, that the private sector is the most efficient in terms of doing things but, Sir, I also want to say this.

Sir, sometimes when you hear the private sector speak, they are a very self-serving lot at times and we have to understand that. When you hear them speak and say that they can do it better, we need to ensure that we put things in place that examine it thoroughly, to see whether or not it is in the long-term interest of this country.

Sir, people make jobs for themselves and we have to be very careful when we hear certain persons in the private sector say they can do some things. We must not, at the same time, discredit the views of bureaucrats who have studied the problem and have come up with solutions and, when the time comes, to tell them to hold their horses.

Sir, we need time to be able to review things as they come to us, to make at least, an informed decision whether or not that particular line of action is within our interest. Sir, in that regard, one of the things I have heard constantly being said recently in relation to the Desalination Plant...

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, let us be clear. One of the points that we need to understand is that the term “desalination” applies to salt water. As I understand it, the plant at Spring Garden uses brackish water because if it were pure salt water, we would have a problem disposing of the by-product.

Sir, sometimes we hear a lot of statements out in the public saying that they can do this and that they can do that. One of the most recent was in terms of trying to solve the problem that we are experiencing in this recent drought.

Sir, someone said that we could increase the amount of water from the Desalination Plant to solve the problem that we are experiencing in this recent drought.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we need is, to hear from the competent authorities some final thing as to whether, or not it can be done. Sir, we need some form of independent assessment of these things, because what is happening out there in the public, is that people are going out there making statements, sometimes to serve their own interest and sometimes not but, Sir, as representatives of the people, we have to make the decision in terms of the interest of the people, not in terms of somebody’s interest, but in terms of the interest of the people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if what you want to do conforms to the interest of the people, then we can go with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say this in respect of the Barbados Water Authority, that there is also a social element within the Barbados Water Authority, and that there is going to be a challenge.

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Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, having placed it under the Fair Trading Commission, I am sure that element within the Barbados Water Authority that there is going to be a challenge, because having placed it under the Fair Trading Commission, I am sure that as we go on, and as Barbadians recognise, that social element is going to have some bearing on the kind of decisions that are reached, in relation to the provision of water to the residents of Barbados. Very often solutions that we have touted to the public are not necessarily cost solutions that we have.

I want, therefore, to encourage the Minister to pursue the options with regard to water conservation in This country. I want to encourage the Minister to insist that proper building standards are practised.

We have people nowadays who are supposed to install tanks in their houses. Do you know what happens? This is the pattern. They build the tank, or they say they have the tank, the Town and Country Planning Department checks and make sure that they have the tank. I understand that some of the practices are, a few years after, the tank disappears, and that is the problem. These are the kinds of issues that we need to address.

I would want to encourage the Minister to pursue aggressively the whole question of enforcing building standards for householders and businesses in this country.

Very often we have businesses constructed in certain areas with no attention being paid at all to conservation, a proper management of the resources, because our rain water resources are finite. We behave in this country as if we can turn on the taps, keep them running and water will always be there. Sometimes we behave in this country that we can fix a burst pipe any how. You have to pay for it. It is your right to have it, but with every right comes responsibility.

Sir, when I heard the Honourable Member on the Other Side speak, he spoke in terms of rights, but what about the responsibility of the average citizen, to ensure that their business is managed to reduce wasting of the very precious resource, water? That is what we are speaking about. That is what we are trying to bring under this new regime. What do we have? We have on the Other Side people being told not to mind us. We could do better. We do not have to increase the water rates because we will get the money from somewhere. We did not choose to borrow it.

Sir, what we try to do and still insist that we try to do is, to encourage consumers to be more responsible with the use of water. In the meantime, we have, at least, introduced a system, where we are now making the Barbados Water Authority more accountable for its costs. That is what we have done, but they cannot deal with it.

Sir, in that regard, I want to compliment the Minister. I want to encourage him. I know that there are challenging circumstances, but bear with it. I want him to disregard the voices from the Other Side that do not recognise the times that we are in.

Sir, my support is given to the Bill.

Thank you very much.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Sir, I would have thought that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central,

would have perhaps paid some attention to those poor farmers who are reeling under the pressure of a 60 per cent increase in water. They are suffering. I know because there are quite a few scores of farmers in the parish of St. Thomas who are crying out by the minute about the challenges they are facing in respect of the high water rates that have been foisted on them in these trying times.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is trying to mislead the House. It is misleading to suggest that no attention is being paid to the plight of the farming community in this country. It is misleading to suggest that.

Thank you very much, Sir.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Sir, I never implied that. I simply said that I felt the Honourable Member, being the person responsible for agriculture in the Department which he heads, would appear to lose emphasis on that and indeed a little empathy in respect of those farmers...

Mr. J. D. PAUL: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is not aware that there is a time and place for everything under the sun. Again, I ask for some protection from the Chair in relation to that, Sir. Thank you very much, Sir.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Sir, the Honourable Member did say emphatically, "Do not politicise this matter". I said here today and I am usually very early, because I believe that the business of this Honourable Chamber is extremely important, and the needs of Barbadians must be addressed.

I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church East speak about the Barbados Labour Party as a Government, and that for 14 years they did nothing. He questioned what the Barbados Labour Party did in 14 years.

We heard the Honourable Member for St. James South who speaks about the mores and so on in the place, but I would just like to make mention of a few. Do you know why? Sometimes our memories are short and the accusations that came, sometimes from the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, who talked about Barbados Labour Party members having overseas accounts, as though the Barbados Labour Party of the last Administration and this one are corrupt, when it comes to taking the Government's funds and putting it in their pockets. I would indeed want to, disassociate that kind of comment. Sir, it was said on this Floor.

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, on a point of order. If the Honourable Member is going to quote me, she should

quote me correctly. I am not asking her to deduce what I said. I said corrupt members of the Barbados Labour Party have overseas accounts, and I am repeating it on the Floor of this House.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Sir, bring your facts. The Honourable Member for St. John continues to give innuendo. For 14 years in Opposition innuendo and now as a Prime Minister, the Honourable Member continues to come with innuendo, but I want to speak ...

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I would tell you about Patina, because that is the disgrace that you have to face.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Members, can you please be quiet so that I can hear the speech of the Honourable Member for St. Thomas?

Miss C. Y. FORDE: The Honourable Members on the Government Side are the ones who continue to disrespect Members on This Side in a way that bothers me, but I shall speak from my heart. I will not lie. I will not cheat. I will not steal. I can speak of projects that the Barbados Labour Party pursued successfully in the interest of Barbadians. I am only making the comment because the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, in his presentation, said nothing was done. I can speak about schools...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Thomas, you just said the Honourable Member for St. Michael East. I cannot speak in these matters.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Sir, I meant Christ Church East, but you are so much on my mind that you must forgive me.

Sir, we built schools - nursery and primary schools. We expanded the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, the Barbados Community College and the University of the West Indies.

The Barbados Labour Party Government also gave to the University 13 acres of land for its expansion, because we believe that we can have a graduate in every household in Barbados.

H A56 3.40 p.m. Sequence 28

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House A56, Sequence 29, 3.40 p.m.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we built office blocks of which we are being maligned every day. One Honourable Member said he hopes that the one he works in does not collapse with him, but I thought that was very childish. We built many kilometres of roads. We bought buses to make sure that Barbadians could get to and fro. We bought equipment for the Mangrove Landfill and we were able to bring that Mangrove Landfill in St. Thomas to a level that it was accommodating to Barbadians, because it is no longer Mount Stinkeroo.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Thomas, please stick to the relevance of the Bill.

The Honourable Member for St. Joseph, let me warn you for the last time. You continue to be disrespectful to the Chair and this Chair must be heard in silence. I can point you to the necessary Standing Orders.

The Honourable Member has been in this House longer than I have been here, and when I am speaking, I want to have absolute silence and no remarks from anybody on This Side, or That side.

The Honourable Member for St. Thomas, please continue your speech.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are talking about water and a lot of these projects would need water, especially the hundreds of houses the Barbados Labour Party built and I am going to get to that in the minutes allocated to me, but I will move on because there is so much that I could say about what the Barbados Labour Party did in its tenure, but I will not take up the good time that is being offered to me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Barbados Labour Party demitted office in 1986, there was a Mains Replacement Project in a plan, and hence the \$13 million that was transferred by the then new Barrow Administration, now the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, and put into the Consolidated Fund. Sir, that was part of the funds for the Mains Replacement Project for the Barbados Water Authority. At that time, the new Election victory had taken place and Barbadians were paying \$40 per quarter for water.

The late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, then in his wisdom, said it was too high. At that time in 1986, there were challenges and, therefore, the bill was dropped to \$30 per quarter by a Democratic Labour Party Administration and that was welcomed.

In another Administration of the Democratic Labour Party, under the then Prime Minister, Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, now Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, the water bill was raised from \$30 per quarter to \$65 per month.

In 2005, the Barbados Labour Party raised the water bill. We understand the need for the raise, but when you look at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over that period from 1994 to 2005, and indeed to 2008, the Barbados Labour Party did not increase rates on sectors like Road Tax, Land Tax, house rents and a number of other areas that were projected by a Democratic Labour Party Government between 1991, and 1994. It remained the same in that area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the new structure that was put in place in 2005, replaced the rate of \$1 50 that was being placed in the domestic area. The new structure was increased by 3 per cent, that is, from \$1 50 to \$1 55 for the first eight cubic metres. Then, a 29 per cent increase, to \$1 94 for the next 12 cubic metres. Sir, that is the band in which most domestic users would fall. There were commercial rates as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minimum charge in the Barbados Water Authority remained at \$20 monthly. The Barbados Labour Party's basic philosophy behind that was underpinning the structure. Sir, was affordability and cost recover on a user-pay basis for conservation. It is registered here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Report of the Barbados Water Authority 2004-2005 for anybody to read. I shall tell the truth throughout.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East might need to do his own investigations in relation to funds that the Barbados Water Authority had in an account in 2007, in an interest-bearing account of 4 per cent per annum to the tune of \$3.204 million.

I would like this Honourable Chamber to be told where that money is now, because that money was being depleted in 2008.

I do not even know if the Honourable Minister is aware, but I would like to know, because we are saying it is a cash strapped institution, but that \$3 million is out there, or was out somewhere and I believe that the Honourable Minister should tell us. The document is here that Honourable Members could have a copy if they so desire, or if they have done their homework, they would know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to say that the Democratic Labour Party, as a Government, must answer the public on the question of the millions of dollars that have been used from that Fund, or from the savings under the two-year period under their stewardship.

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I could quote from the Budget of the Honourable Member for St. John and Prime Minister who spoke in 2009, to the issue of the Barbados Water Authority.

The Honourable Member mentioned in the Report that there should be 100 per cent increase. In essence, the Honourable Member said that too much money is wasted in pumping water of which a great deal, 30 per cent to 60 per cent, is wasted through leaky drains, leaving residents without an adequate water service. This is very true. The Honourable Member also said that this year would begin the process of relaying these mains. It will take a long time to complete the job, but the longest journey begins with the first step.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, first steps were made by a Barbados Labour Party in relaying the mains of the Barbados Water Authority in communities across Barbados. I can speak boldly about the efforts of the Barbados Water Authority and the various Town Hall Meetings with the people in the North.

I had three to four Town Hall meetings in St. Thomas, over the issue of the challenges in the drought season of 2003, and the outages that impacted upon businesses and households in the parishes of St. Joseph, St. Andrew, St. James, St. Peter and other communities in the North.

Sir, there was not any beginning of mains laying. It had started, and it would have been a continuation. The first step that the dear loving people on That Side choose to do, is use the same 60 per cent in wastage to make it 60 per cent increase on the water bill, on the backs of poor Barbadians, who deserve an opportunity to look up in the air and say, thank God, that over the 14 years of a Barbados Labour Party we flourished.

Sir, the revenue in the Barbados economy was more than \$2 billion when this Barbados Labour Party left office. The people of Barbados are now reeling under the pressure of that increase of 60 per cent water rates in Barbados.

House A56, Sequence 29, 3.50 p.m.

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Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what bothers me most is that the Ministry that is responsible for Social Care that encompasses the Welfare Department returned some \$7 million to the Consolidated Fund last year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a Barbados Labour Party looked at a policy, having instituted the Poverty Alleviation Bureau, the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission among others, to ensure that senior citizens, the disabled, the disenfranchised and others, would get their water bills, light bills and so on, paid by that Department.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year, few people seem to have benefitted. Indeed, the people from St. Thomas did not. It is scandalous, embarrassing and heart-wrenching for a Government that says that it cares and that it has come to create change has really created change by sending \$7 million from a welfare budget back into the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that better could be done. The \$150 million that was mentioned earlier was used to both repay loans - I reiterate what the Honourable Member for Christ Church West said - as well as to fund the Mains Replacement Programme after the drought in some parishes in 2003.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree with the Honourable Member for Christ Church East who said that some of the mains are 100 years old. He said 100 years, I say 50 years, because that is the reality of the situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to refer to some areas in the parish where I have the privilege to live, and indeed to represent, where a massive set of work was done over a six to eight-month period in three phases. These are Carrington's Village, Bloomsbury, Sturges, Welchman Hall Main Road, Vault Road, Bryan's Road, Allen View, down to the Holy Innocent's School, Lion Castle and a number of other communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we saw the difficulties with the outages on a daily basis, we met with the Barbados Water Authority and put forward our views, most often in a very pleasant way I must tell you, to have a massive water main installed from Apes Hill in St. James up to the reservoir at Castle Grant in St. Joseph that added to the comfort that people wanted in the various communities. There was also work done in Bagatelle, St. Thomas that is in the Constituency of St. James Central.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this Government wants to say do not politicise, then we must not be interfered with in a way that is not fully expressing the performance of the Barbados Labour Party in a Barbados, where people had confidence in going to a bank, a credit union, or lending institutions and using their funds and making arrangements to improve their quality of life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that now is diminishing under this Democratic Labour Party Government where property taxes and road taxes have gone up. I mentioned the water bills already. Even the fees for liquor licences have gone up, so there are some shopkeepers who might be selling alcohol quite illegally, because they cannot muster the amount of money, from \$350 per year to \$1 000 per year, to open a little rum shop.

Professional fees have also increased. The fees for an architect, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North speaks about a lot of building, have gone to \$2 500. The audiologist has to pay a large amount as well. The fees for a consulting psychologist, with all the challenges, have also increased. The fee for a dental auxiliary has also increased. The fees for a dietitian have increased when so many people are suffering with diabetes and so, because they cannot have the quality of life they had in the past previous years to 2008. Even the fees for the funeral director and the medical practitioner have increased.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what that says is that the cost would be passed on to those who are using the services. All of that took place under this Democratic Labour Party that said, that the cost of living is a major priority, they want to attack it three times, cost of living, cost of living, cost of living.

The Barbados Labour Party in 1994, said job No. 1 was jobs and we were able to raise 30 000 jobs over that period, bringing unemployment down from 23 per cent to 6.7 per cent. Today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the unemployment rate has climbed to a level where it is now in double digits. What hurts me more than anything else are the policies and programmes of this Government and the high expenditure in areas that I consider to be unnecessary at this stage when we are facing local challenges. Many of it, I believe, would be impacted upon outside forces too, but if you are going to trim, you are going to trim, so a fete here today and a fete tomorrow cannot work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a lot of activity in the summer camps of \$6 million. We always had summer camps and they worked well and the Government did not invest that kind of money in them, because people prefer to volunteer their services for free. The millions of dollars also being spent in the Constituency Councils is hurting Barbadians.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Thomas, what is the relevance? We are debating an amendment to the Barbados Water Authority Bill. Please stick to the relevance of the Bill, please.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am framing it in light of the fact that the water bills have been increased by 60 per cent, that these persons who are in that band who are now unemployed cannot pay the water bills, that those who have got increased taxes cannot find enough money to pay their water bills and other utility bills. That is the framework I am using.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the talk now about a wage freeze even makes it worse. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Barbadians will continue to remain poor, peaceful and polite, but not frustrated and broke. There has to be an

answer to their problems and the Barbados Labour Party would bring the answer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to revert to the Barbados Water Authority and to really say how happy I am to have had the experience of working in close association with the Barbados Water Authority, indeed past Ministers and the management and staff of the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they would tell you, or anybody else in Barbados, that wherever I go in Barbados - I believe I am a citizen and that I have a responsibility - and I see a burst pipe, or a challenge with the Barbados Water Authority I make my contact directly to the management for speedy action.

I was in St. John one evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I saw a burst main and it had me so confused. The residents said they had called. I believe that the Member of Parliament for the area knew and that he called too, I believe so. When I made my little call, in a matter of hours, the Barbados Water Authority responded, because they know that I am not going to rest, that I am going to call them the whole day because it is a very precious commodity, and the wastage is something that must not be ignored.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I therefore, want to highly commend them for the efforts that they have been putting into that institution to make life a little easier for Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome the comments made by the Honourable Minister earlier today in relation to the approach for the upgrade of the Customer Service Department. I believe that some prohibition notices should be put in place now, especially when we are looking at a dry season, so that persons who are washing their cars with that precious commodity unnecessarily with a hose, would know and are reminded that they must not waste the water because there are other communities that need the services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a lot of burning of canes and bushes in communities every day which is draining the Barbados Fire Service's ability to be able to treat to matters. Of course, a large volume of water is also being used to put out the fires.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also the issue of slow action. Sometimes when there are burst mains in communities, employees of the Barbados Water Authority have to go in to report and then to be sent back and in the meantime, hundreds of gallons of water go down the road. That is something that I think needs to be addressed.

4.00 p.m.

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Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have another concern. I know there is a plan for further development in the parish of St. Thomas. I know there have been a number of projects that are on hold because of the lack of water to facilitate those new households and those businesses. I believe that some special further measure should be taken for those developers to come up with strategies to determine how the new developments would be serviced.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at Farmers, I can speak with a measure of authority on what has taken place there over the last five years, where the company responsible for the Apes Hill Polo Field has determined that it would dig a dam to collect the water coming from Airlie Cot, Canefield and Dunscombe. Sir, that is a commendable project that should be replicated across the island. It is a forward step in reducing the use of the national resources in relation to potable water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to express my concerns in relation to the inordinate long periods of time that it takes for those areas to be repaved when the burst pipes are fixed. That can create quite some dislocation. It destroys people's vehicles because of the bumpy areas. I knew it was a policy in the past where private agencies were sometimes given contracts to do the paving, but the Ministry of Public Works had ultimate responsibility to ensure that, in the soonest possible time, as soon as the mains are fixed, that the areas are properly repaired. I would like to think that is a useful exercise in helping to ameliorate some of those problems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support the use of water-saving devices in households and businesses. I believe that is a route that the Honourable Minister has determined the Authority will go that route.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know if the Honourable Member would be able to tell me, but my other query is in relation to the different springs and sucks that we have in the country.

I know of a spring in Codrington. At Porey Spring there is never a shortage of water. At Springvale there is never a shortage of water. Sir, I believe that is what helps to contribute to the slippage, not only in Springvale, but in the Scotland District. There are large volumes of water coming through Cove's Cave and I believe that is connected to Harrison's Cave.

Sir, I would want to know what plans Government has of tapping that water in order to make it usable to the people of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I still have a difficulty with how poor defaulters are treated. I know in the past that arrangements were made, and believe that still continues, for persons who have arrears on their water bills, to be able to go into the Department and make arrangements to pay in installments to bring down that rate. I think that is commendable. Sir, that did not start with the Democratic Labour Party. It is an ongoing effort that was started by the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where my challenge lies is in relation to the rumours, though I believe there are some facts to those rumours.

Sir, rumour has it that there are big businesses that owes hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars in water bills, in situations where these companies continue to have water, while the old man, or old woman down the street, who owes the Barbados Water Authority \$25, \$50 or \$100, the water is turned off.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember previously of making a comment in this Honourable Chamber that I believe that every community should still have a standpipe. Sir, I stand by that comment.

Sir, when the people of Hopewell, Lion Castle, Bridgefield, Shop Hill and those communities, as has been the case for the last three months, have been without water and cannot carry out their chores, cannot engage in their agricultural livelihood, they need that standpipe to assist them. When persons are not paying their water bills because of whatever reasons, or the difficulties that have been foisted upon them through this Administration, I believe that a standpipe should be available to them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would appreciate that if my tap is running and I have to pay so much money for my water, I may not be kind enough to offer persons enough water for them to use in their households for washing, cooking and other things because of the fact that there is a cost attached to it.

I too may have somebody in my household who might have lost their employment, might be working on a three-day week, or on reduced pay and, therefore, may not take kind enough in giving to certain households. Therefore, the standpipe in the area would be available for people to access that water.

Sir, you would appreciate that there are still many communities in Barbados where there are persons who do not have waterborne facilities because of certain

circumstances to which I would have previously spoken, for example, the people of Allen View. Sir, because of the zonal restrictions, many of them do not have water and so they deserve to have a standpipe.

Sometimes there are communities of six, or eight households with no running water, because the water might have been cut off, or they might not have had the opportunity to have water installed, therefore, the standpipe will serve a good purpose.

I am not talking about making retrograde steps but in times like these, we need to come up with solutions to ease the challenges that people are experiencing in this particular situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I conclude, I want to speak specifically to those communities that surround me.

Sir, for too long, and indeed for the last 10 years, we in regular communities, as well as persons in the other communities we call the heights and terraces, who are also taxpayers, and also pay bills, would like for a sooner bit of information to be fed. Sir, we all would like to have this information in advance, so that people would be aware that tonight at 6.00 p.m. the water would be turned off.

Sir, the worst thing in the world is for someone to come home to find that the water is off in their home because of the fact that there might have been a burst main, or something to that effect. Sir, people need to know in advance so that they can prepare themselves.

This is a niggling problem that although people are angry to know that an announcement has not been made, can only make people more angry. Sometimes we hear of announcements of persons living in different communities and they are made aware in the very early hours, but when it comes to the regular rural communities, we only know when we turn our taps on and there is no water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other niggling problem is getting tankers to arrive in those communities at an appropriate time with water, then, of course, one or two of them - not all - are so aloof in their approach. When people make comments, some of the persons operating the tankers can be very disrespectful to them. I believe that we need to have a little more user-friendly environment in which to work, so that people can plan purposefully.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the year 2010, we still have many schools that have to be closed because of water shortages. I know that the Barbados Labour Party Government had instituted measures to put water tanks in the schools. I know those measures would not have been completed because we demitted office.

Sir, one day being away from school can discomfort not only children, it can discomfort parents, grandparents, neighbours and businesses. Sir, when there are water outages at those schools, parents have to leave work to collect their children, and the fact that these schools would be closed would mean a loss of knowledge to those children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask for that kind of activity to take place in the Ministry of Education, for them to install tanks in all nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary schools. This would help to minimise that discomfort that would take place, as a result of time wastage and inconvenience in that respect.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended for 10 minutes, to be resumed at 4.20 p.m.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 4.20 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

4.10 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Honourable House is resumed. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to join this debate just briefly to offer my support to the Honourable Minister of Environment, Water Resources and Drainage in enunciating his policy of placing the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission, and he has stated very clearly the objectives of this move.

Sir, it is not something that is done willy-nilly, but it is done with a clear approach to achieving the advantages of having a utility like the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Members on the Other Side have indicated their support for this move, one which obviously they could not object to, having contemplated for many years, but not having the will to

carry through the business of the repairs to the soul and body of the Barbados Water Authority.

It is pointless the Members on the Other Side singing praises about a Barbados Water Authority which, in truth and in fact, we know the public of Barbados has constantly been saying to us, needs improvement and the Democratic Labour Party has embarked on a programme of improving the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Minister has spoken to the question of customer service. He has been to the extent of making sure to define this service as one which encompasses not only answering a telephone, but following through with the complainant on the other end of the phone, to make sure that the objectives are settled and that the wishes and the needs of the complainant are dealt with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the advantages of being under the Fair Trading Commission are to make sure that when the affairs of the Barbados Water Authority are being considered, not only increases, changes in rates, or bands, or whatever, but the whole question of the service of the Authority can be brought under greater scrutiny and can be scrutinised by the public that we seek to serve.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is recognised too that in modern day development, it is incumbent upon Barbados that this move be made, if we are to remain in step with the tenets of the World Trade Organisation and these bodies, these types of moves, towards bringing our utilities under the Fair Trading Commission are important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members on That Side are very tongue-in-cheek in their comments and their commendations about the move by the Democratic Labour Party in this direction.

Sir, sometimes it is not what they say out loud and hard and repeat, but it is what they say and breeze along in their presentations.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North was at pains to point out that he had problems with the kind of members in the Fair Trading Commission. Sir, he said that and I cannot understand what he is talking about decent Barbadians, who seek to serve and who serve at pittance for this country.

Sir, he picks out the likes of Sir Neville Nicholls, Professor Andrew Downes, Miss Monique Taitt, Mr. Kenridge Sargeant, Mr. Gregory Hinkson, Mr. Alfred Knight, Mr. Andrew Willoughby, Mr. Errol Humphrey, Mr. Gregory Hazard, Mr. Trevor Welch and Mr. Andrew Brathwaite.

Sir, he has problems with Barbadians, decent Barbadians serving on the Fair Trading Commission, but we know the problem of the Honourable Member. He only understands a certain kind of Barbadian, but we on This Side have to be responsible enough to recognise that all of us can serve in this development model which we have for Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very important that these little details be dealt with, because when they give support to any measure brought by the Government under the Democratic Labour Party, you have to wonder why.

Sir, I prefer them to oppose it and let us deal with our majority in the House of Assembly as we proceed with our programme, because they leave and go on the streets in Barbados and say something else.

They say that the Democratic Labour Party does not shield Barbadians from increases. The Democratic Labour Party has no such intention of going around the place and burdening Barbadians with excessive costs, but the reality of the economic situation in the world which has been spoken of countless in this Chamber, in public forum in Barbados, internationally and globally, has impacted on all aspects of business worldwide.

The Barbados Labour Party chooses to shut its eyes to this reality, and to attempt to fool and hoodwink Barbadians into pretending that everything that is happening in Barbados now, in terms of increases in cost, reductions in revenues, et cetera, is the fault of a Democratic Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing could be further from the facts and we need not to preach to Barbadians about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point is, that the programme of the Democratic Labour Party is far-reaching, and we have to prepare Barbados for an inevitable development which is upon us. We have to deal with the question of water scarcity in Barbados, and I want to commend Honourable Members for the ideas that were put forward today in respect of water saving.

Sir, Honourable Members spoke to the question of tertiary treatment of sewerage, and this is being contemplated and being considered very seriously in the next step in the West Coast Sewerage Plant, which should see an enlargement of the existing Bridgetown Sewerage Plant Facility and a modernisation, to include a level of redundancy that would mitigate against the breakdowns, which would cause interruptions to citizens who live in the area of these facilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I represent a Constituency which sometimes could be very seriously affected by malfunctions in the South Coast Sewerage Plant. Of course, that plant is a secondary treatment plant built by the Barbados Labour Party, the ones who are preaching about tertiary treatment this afternoon.

H/A56/4.30 p.m. Sequence 33

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Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: To save water, they built a secondary treatment plant in the late 1990s, around 1998, it was completed, or early 2000, around that time, and gave no consideration to the ideas put by the scientists of the day, that we should be looking at tertiary treatment, that we should be looking at inland storage and consequent filtration, to augment the natural aquifers of Barbados. None of that was done by them, but in here now, today, they are ready to recommend to us things that we know should be considered and will be part of our programme.

The question of dealing with the issues at the Belle Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that if you had the opportunity you would be speaking to this.

The question of ground water protection at the Belle and the question of instituting solutions to the way we build housing is to incorporate mini sewerage systems to allow the environment, and us human beings to coexist, and the augmentation of the water supply, either by a Reverse Osmosis located at the Belle, or an increase in the production of the output of the existing pumping arrangement with Ionics.

Indeed, the augmentation of the water in the St. Philip belt, what I call the St. Philip/St. George belt, is now earmarked for massive development by way of housing, by way of hotel infrastructure, by way of schools, by way of churches and by way of building Barbados.

The facility which I was associated with did tertiary treatment, but that leads me to the next point, a micro infiltration plant.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North does not know what he is talking about. He has delved into an area of which he has no knowledge whatsoever. He needs to keep quiet.

Sir, the challenge they face, at least we will face, going forward, is an understanding and a relationship with regulators and the persons who run the plants, like the Barbados Water Authority.

Unless people like the Environmental Protection Department, and those who set the standards come together

on agreement of what is good and safe for Barbados, because sometimes when we import these international standards unchecked, we only realise after we attempt to implement them, that even the people who are preaching these standards internationally are not themselves observing them.

The first world countries are not observing the kind of things which we know should be put in place to deal with climate change, to deal with rising water levels all around the world, the threats that we talk about and we encounter daily, but yet we would want to import these standards unchecked and put them in place in Barbados, so we have to be careful about these.

I am not for one moment advocating an abandonment of standards. Let me make that very clear, but it is where we make sure the water is safe and protected, but at the same time, the water is affordable and these are the kinds of issues which we are grappling with, but which we have put on the front end of our programme in Barbados.

Barbados is a water scarce country. We are going through the throes of a serious rain shortage. The rain we are not getting today is not going to affect us tomorrow, but it is going to affect us in July, August and September.

I was delighted to hear the Minister talk about the plans that he has already put in place, for dealing with what looks to be a challenging period of water availability in Barbados. It is obvious for all to see. All over the world, again, this is a real threat.

We believe that Barbados will be able to manage this situation, and it is comforting to know that the Ministry of the Environment, and the Barbados Water Authority, are already sitting down and putting their heads together to make sure that this situation is properly dealt with.

I want to deal with the issue of water leaks and metering at the level of the domestic consumer in Barbados. I feel the pain, of course, of those users who complain about a difficulty of reconciling between their views of what is happening on their meters and the Barbados Water Authority's view of what is happening at the meter, but one thing is important about the policy at the Barbados Water Authority today, the lines are open.

I want to urge that the lines of communication between the consumer and the Barbados Water Authority are maintained, and in cases where there are obvious discrepancies, there can be some merging of the minds and mediation, because for an account that is normally say, \$60 to run up to \$1 000, cannot be only the consumer's fault. We need to acknowledge our responsibility on both sides of the spectrum in respect to this kind of activity.

Sir, it may require, for instance, that the Barbados Water Authority reads meters more often. It may require a simple exercise, because we have not gone to the completely automatic systems where meters are read electronically, or remotely, so it may be useful to implement a twice-monthly reading of all meters to make sure that information coming back to them. It is in their interest.

Sir, water lost is not something that benefits the Barbados Water Authority to charge someone for water that has been wasted, or lost. It is indeed closing the stable gate after the horse has bolted. It may be useful to implement this kind of monitoring arrangement. I do not think, to my mind, it will cost that much.

Sir, there must be, of course, and there is to a large extent, a programme which allows these domestic consumers to pay for the charges, once they have been agreed, in a gradual way.

Again, I would like to commend the Barbados Water Authority, for the fact that it is already in place, and indeed, where representation can be made, it is even pushed as far as possible.

The Barbados Water Authority cannot easily abandon its revenues. To abandon its revenue would be irresponsible, and for us in here to pretend, that for some reason we can allow people to abandon the revenues owed to the Barbados Water Authority is irresponsible.

Again, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North makes this point, and it is an extremely irresponsible position to take, in my view, in respect of the realities of what we have to deal with. May be, I even prefer the point he made before, that they bring their bills to the Members of Parliament, rather than to suggest the Barbados Water Authority disregard its revenues. That is not responsible behaviour, and the Barbados Labour Party must be cautioned in their anxiety to catch the headline and to garner support among Barbadians without checking, and being responsible for what they recommend. Time will deal with all of these matters.

H A56 4.40 p.m. Sequence 34

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House A56, Sequence 35, 4.40 p.m.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: The people of Barbados will have our record to look at and examine. It is our duty to make sure we put in place programmes that are meaningful, responsible and will redound to the benefit of all Barbados.

I believe, and I know that when the time comes, the programme of the Barbados Labour Party will be out there and will be strongly defended by the Honourable Members on This Side. We do not expect, or look for any support from the Barbados Labour Party Members in this regard, so we have to be very clear on these things.

The other matter that is frequently discussed is the question of cutting the roads, as the Authority will require to do from time to time, either in an emergency, or in a planned intervention, and the reinstatement of these roads. There is always a bit of a debate whenever the cases are border-line.

Certainly, one of the things that we are promoting in the Ministry of Public Works is that when we are going to be doing roads in the particular area, we notify the Barbados Water Authority and we ensure that any replacement of mains can occur immediately. This has continued to be the practice and this is encouraged. Similarly, we notify the National Petroleum Corporation for any mains that they might want to have installed.

Further, it is being considered that the Ministry of Transport and Works know, what has been termed as the Street Works Act, which will draw clear guidelines how and when utilities cut roads. Indeed, I believe that Act should extend even to the Ministry of Transport and Works itself. Their approach should also be one, where cutting of the road is carefully logged, advertised and promoted before the actual execution occurs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the provisions of this Bill bringing the Barbados Water Authority under the control of the Fair Trading Commission for matters of rates, efficiencies, performance and the improvement in the services offered by the Barbados Water Authority, are essential at this time, as we take Barbados into the next stage of development, and as we contemplate the kinds of investments which would move this country forward in the very near future, conditioned upon the achievements of the programme of the Barbados Water Authority and any of the other utilities that are involved in the exercise.

We are, therefore, comfortable on This Side on the part of the Government of Barbados, to put in place the enabling legislation to allow these developments to occur, and to allow Barbados to continue to be competitive and to be a real leader, in terms of development in this hemisphere.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in supporting this Bill, I want to commend the work of the team at the Barbados Water Authority, to commend the work of the team of the Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, and to commend my colleague Minister in having the strength and foresight to bring this Bill to this

House at this time, especially given the history of the particular move.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too would like to spend some time looking at this particular Bill. I share with my colleagues on This Side to say that we do indeed support this Bill because we recognised from early that the Fair Trading Commission was established to look at utilities regulation, especially of a commercial nature, and we supported the move to the Fair Trading Commission.

In fact, this Bill was long in coming, because it was in its final draft when we left office. I think that the Minister did mention the fact that it is not a Democratic Labour Party's revolutionary idea.

It is nothing new. It was first discovered since 2004, or thereabout, that the Barbados Water Authority, being a commercial entity, should have any rate increases through the Fair Trading Commission.

I want to commend, therefore, the Government for bringing this Bill, even though it was long in coming. It was on the Order Paper since 2008, and it has now seen the light of day. Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe that the reason it has taken so long is that, because the Government first wanted to increase the water rate by 60 per cent and then go to the Fair Trading Commission. Barbadians must look at it from the point of view that had it gone to the Fair Trading Commission, one would think that the level of increase that has been put on the backs of Barbadians would not have been occasioned.

I believe that if the Barbados Water Authority was a private institution, the Government would not accept any increase to that tune. Sir, we have to look at it that this is a state enterprise, a state monopoly with full control of the water resources of This country. There is no close competition.

The Barbados Water Authority is a state nationalised enterprise and we in the Barbados Labour Party have always felt that it has some commercial interest and, therefore, it had to look after raising its own revenue.

Today, I believe it is fair to say that the Barbadian public is paying a heavy sum to keep this institution alive. I also believe that it is paying beyond its economic cost, even though I heard some Honourable Member say today that on their way to Parliament, somebody stopped them and said that you only pay \$1 per day more in water cost.

This is quite unfortunate, because some Barbadians do not have \$1 today. Things are so difficult in this country today that \$1 is sometimes too much for some people in our Constituencies. Sometimes you have to give bus fare of \$1 50 to persons who have to go to work, so to say that the increase is \$1, it is still too much.

The Barbados Labour Party saw water as an important item which is necessary for health, and since the early 1950s, when we nationalised the Authority and brought the Barbados Water Authority Bill, we saw water as important. Hence, water for the lowest person was kept at the cheapest rate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Barbados Labour Party left office, the minimum rate to the consumer was around \$20. The 60 per cent increase would mean that more and more Barbadians would now be paying between \$35 and \$40, depending on how you look at it.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, when you look at the increase from 20 per cent, it goes something like between \$32 and \$35 at the minimum rate.

House A56, Sequence 35, 4.50 p.m.

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Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, even though in this economy there is still a minimum rate, there are still many Barbadians out there who cannot afford to pay, therefore, we need to look carefully at how we increase these rates.

The Government is sending a signal to the private sector that 60 per cent seems to be something. I do not know if it was drawn from a hat, or if the rates have been determined through any cost benefit analysis.

Under the Barbados Labour Party Government, the Barbados Water Authority wanted to bring substantial increases too, but we had a Leader who constantly asked the Barbados Water Authority to go and do its homework and come again.

For years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognised that there was a need, not only to rationalise the Barbados Water Authority, but to help it move towards the Fair Trading Commission. We recognised that something needed to be done at the Barbados Water Authority. Over the years a lot has been done to streamline and improve the services of the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that we can say with certainty is that we still have a good water service

in Barbados. That is nothing new. It has always been around. We always had one of the best water services in the Caribbean, if not in the world, and we have always pride ourselves on that.

We recognised that even though the Barbados Water Authority was a monopolist, it had no competition, that something had to be done to improve its revenue, that is why in 2005, an adjustment was given to the Barbados Water Authority to help it in its operational expenses.

In 2005, some assistance was given when we recognised that the four bands had be uplifted, but we still maintained that the rate had to be low. In fact, it was only a 3 per cent increase at the lowest level. Mr. Deputy Speaker, even though the 3 per cent increase was given at the lowest level, the minimum charge was still \$20.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the point which must be underscored, because the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central made the point today that in 2005, we had a 35 per cent increase across the board. I believe that is in some Report. I do not know what Report it is, but in the Report that we have here before us, the 2004 Annual Report of the Barbados Water Authority, on page 10, the minimum charge remained at \$20 by January 2005, and that is important. Today, the minimum charge is between \$32 and \$35, which is still high.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority has a lot of work to do across the country, whether it is in replacing the broken mains, in laying new mains, or in doing other remedial work such as reinstating roads that have been cut.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognise that a lot of this work takes a lot of money. Sometimes I wonder if the Barbados Water Authority goes out to tender for some of these services, or if they only implement these new contracts for the laying of pipes by persons and companies, who do not consider how much they charge the Barbados Water Authority.

I wonder if there is a tendering process for This because you could say one thing and then do something else.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said before, the Barbados Water Authority is a State monopolist with full control of its destiny, yet it is making losses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we know, a monopolist in our side of the world does not necessarily make losses because they have control.

The Barbados Light & Power Company Limited and LIME do not really make losses, they make profits, so why

is this entity continuing to make losses? The question is: Is there too much political interference at the Barbados Water Authority? Is it true that the tendering process is alive?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is going to happen to all of this revenue that they are going to rake in now, because I understand they are making substantial profits? The Minister said today that they would rake in substantial money up there, so we would soon see a heavy replacement of mains throughout the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we rake in all of this money and we do not have the money being accounted for, or we do not have a level of service in the country, then we would be moving from one hand to the next.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, giving a State monopolist more money does not make it effective and efficient. We must insist that This State monopolist, with a 60 per cent increase now across the board, improves the level of its service to ordinary Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Minister talked about a public relations campaign. I hope that is not all we are going to be hearing, where you are paying people who are aligned to a particular entity a lot of money just to talk. I hope that we would see some action.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Minister of Transport and Works speak about a Street Works Act. That Street Works Act was in draft for a long time. It had to go through a number of stages, but I hope that when this Street Works Act is implemented, that it will make sure that the reinstatement process of the roads be done in a timely manner. At one time we were talking about three days at the least.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the public of Barbados has been complaining a lot in recent times about their meters and leaking pipes. Who is supposed to pay if the leak is before the meter, or after the meter? We understand that there is also an interim bill. What is this interim bill all about? I never understood what is an interim bill. Sometimes the interim bill remains the bill so you pay a heavy cost if the bill...

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand that somebody was told recently that they could read their meter, but sometimes it is very difficult for a person getting down in age with all types of ailments and so on, to go out there and read a meter that they really cannot see.

The Minister talked about meters replacement. I hope that these meters he is going to replace would be working and in good order, because there are people in my Constituency who have been complaining that the bills sometimes do not reflect what they use.

One man got on a radio programme recently and said that he went to England and when he came back his bill was still the same and no water was used for the whole three months, so I really do not understand. This is what I hope would be done.

House A56 Sequence 36

5.00 p.m.

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Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that if the General Manager and the team have their own way, they would do their best, but I would want to be sure that the new Board makes sure that we have the best options in terms of selection of meters, and not because the person, or entity might be affiliated with the Democratic Labour Party by their being given the contract to install a number of bogus meters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I say bogus meters, I mean meters that work on their own, so that a man who leaves his home with his taps off would not return home to find the meter working. Sir, you can have that situation where you are paying for water that you have not used.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to look at this very carefully. When this entity goes before the Fair Trading Commission, the Fair Trading Commission must ensure that the Barbados Water Authority installs meters that are reliable and can stand the test of all scrutiny. Too many people have been complaining about this. They have been complaining about their water bills.

Sir, very soon from now the Barbados Water Authority may have to set up a full department to deal only with persons who have grievances about water bills.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to urge the Barbados Water Authority to get value for money. Sir, it is not fair to the general public.

Sir, the Barbados Water Authority has a good service that is second-to-none, I believe, across the Caribbean and long may it remain this way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to look at a number of areas under the Barbados Water Authority's mandate. I want to look at the question of zoning, which is important. We still have a number of large areas across the island that are in need of proper zoning. I have heard the Honourable Member talking about it too, but I would hope that this would not be done with those persons in mind, who want to take large tracks of land out of agricultural production and put into housing, or into some other commercial venture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hope that a study would be done. We hope that it would be a study and not a knee-jerk reaction, so that when Government begins to look at the matter of zoning, that it would be looked at in a scientific manner, so that all persons would know what they are doing. We know, for example, that Golden Ridge, St. George, Hanson, St. George and the Belle, St. Michael are all Zone I areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have noticed, within recent times, that there are a number of persons who have now been setting up homes, either in the Belle, or in Golden Ridge, Ashbury and Hanson. I noticed too that some persons have been getting water connections and others have not been getting. Sir, it all depends on who you know. Sir, that is a bad thing. What is good for the goose must also be good for the gander.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important that if there is a policy of no connection for Zone I areas, then there must be the policy of no connection for anybody. If there is a connection for one, then there should be connections for all. If there is to be no septic tanks in Zone I, then there should be no septic tanks for all, but we have a situation where some persons, because of who they are, can be attached to the water system.

I have been asking the Barbados Water Authority to look at that for a number of years. We have situations today where it continues to exist.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to talk about the question of the Barbados Water Authority working with the Town Planning Department on the question of getting a certificate of compliance when you do not have those water tanks. I believe that the Barbados Water Authority must do its work in a way that would help Barbadians.

I understand that one of the requirements for the Town Planning Department signing off on a house, would be first, that homeowner has been in compliance with the recommendations.

Sir, depending on the roof size, you have to install water tanks. Sir, I believe these tanks are necessary, but the size is important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand that for the smallest sized house, you have to install a water tank of 3 000 gallons. It makes no sense stipulating that people should be installing a water tank of 3 000 gallons, when commercial businesses like Mannings and the other hardware stores are only selling 600-gallon and 700-gallon tanks.

Sir, persons cannot get a 3 000-gallon water tank. Why then would you be asking the ordinary Barbadian to

install a 3 000-gallon tank? We must look at this very carefully. If it has to be corrected, then it must be.

It is the very first time it has come to my knowledge that you are asking persons to install a 3 000-gallon tank for even the smallest house. It makes no sense when those 3 000-gallon containers are not available in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, having spoken to the Town Planning Department, I understand that it is a directive from the Barbados Water Authority, yet people cannot get those sized tanks in Bridgetown.

Sir, then again, in relation to the question of being compliant, it is whom you know. Sir, this has to be watched very carefully.

Sir, I am making a call and I will be at it again and again until this requirement is changed. The majority of Barbadians do not install 3 000-gallon tanks, they normally would install 1 000-gallon tanks. Therefore, it makes no sense in asking Barbadians to install 3 000-gallon tanks, when hardware stores are selling only 600- 800 and 1000-gallons tanks.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House by giving the impression that the policy of having water storage facilities, based on the square footage of a house stipulated by the Town Planning Department, is a policy of this Democratic Labour Party Administration.

Sir, truth be told, that policy was instituted by the former Barbados Labour Party, of which the Honourable Member for St. George North sat in Cabinet.

Sir, not only did the Honourable Member sit in Cabinet, but also as Minister of Housing and Lands and serving in other Ministries, not only did he support that policy, he also enforced it.

Secondly, I am not aware of any instance where the Office of the Chief Town Planner has issued Certificates of Compliance in dubious circumstances. I think it is regrettable that a former Cabinet Minister could stand here today and cast such aspersions on the character of those officers who work in the Office of the Chief Town Planner.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not casting aspersions on the character of anybody. I am only saying that if it is a regulation, then let us look at it. I am

not aware that it was under our time. I believe it was a recent vintage of the Democratic Labour Party where they are asking poor people to install 3 000-gallon tanks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that if it was around in my time, I was unaware of it. Sir, if it was wrong then, I am saying it is wrong now.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot believe that the Honourable Member is telling this Honourable House that he was unaware of the legal stipulations and that there was a requirement for a tank to be placed once the house goes over a certain square footage.

5.10 p.m.

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Mr. C. P. SINCKLER: The Honourable Member has just constructed a fairly massive house and I would hate to think that he has not himself put up a tank.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not talking about myself. I am talking about the smallest size house.

Sir, as I understand it, you are asking a person constructing a smaller size house to install a tank of 3 000 gallons.

Sir, 3 000 is a lot of water that we will not use in a full year. It makes sense, to me, for the Government to look and change that, because a number of persons cannot comply and will not comply with something that does not make sense.

Further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Government needs to look at a number of other areas under the mandate of the Barbados Water Authority at this time.

Sir, not only are there problems in the Zone I area and reinstatement of the roads but, certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there must be a call for the Barbados Water Authority to look carefully at all of its commercial ventures.

I believe those persons we serve in the hotel and those persons who can pay a lot of money and have been asking the Government for a rate review, those big entities who have been asking the Government to look carefully at this 60 per cent increase, the Government has been looking at very carefully, but what about those poor people who do

not have a say, or cannot ask the Government to look at a rate review.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what rebates could be given for those persons who can pay up front. Sir, there are some entities who pay up front. There are some persons who would want to pay on time and I want to know what discounts are available.

Sir, persons have told me that in some cases, like the Barbados Light & Power Company, that you can get 10 per cent discount for paying on time, and I wonder if the Barbados Water Authority ever considered any discount for those persons who would want to pay early. I think some consideration should be made for those persons who want to pay, but who should be entitled for some discount.

Sir, it happens all over the world and I am asking the Government if the Barbados Water Authority could consider a situation where persons who would want to pay, as a means of encouraging those persons to pay on time, where they could get a small discount as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other question is the one of disconnection. Sir, I live in a developed society for a number of years and nobody cuts off water. Sir, I have said this to the Barbados Water Authority time and time again, that notices go out to homes, but before you cut off, you send a yellow note and then a red note is stuck on the house that says "Final Notice".

Sir, too often the Barbados Water Authority cuts off people's water. Sir, it is a wrong thing because sometimes you do not know where the bill is, your water is cut off and then you have to pay a re-connection fee of \$65 for everybody.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: You do not pay a re-connection fee any longer?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that sometimes people are careless. Sir, I am not making an excuse for people, but in this day and age, we should provide better notices for the public. If you are a monopolist, you should provide better notices. I am saying that you could colour-code these notices and that red could be your final notice, which should be stuck on the house and that disconnection of water should be a thing of the past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have gone past this a long time ago. Now, if a person does not pay after you have sent out the red notice, then you can disconnect them. Sir, I understand that you have to miss two payments to be disconnected. I am not saying that you should not send out notices, but that the notices should be colour-coded so that

persons do not have any excuse and so that persons would know exactly if they still owe for the water, because sometimes you do not know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my water taps have been disconnected too. Sir, I went home one evening and my tap was disconnected and then we had to pay a disconnection fee. Sir, what about those poor persons who cannot afford it, so we have to look at that very carefully.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Thank you. If the Barbados Water Authority then goes before the Fair Trading Commission as a monopolist, they have to get their act together carefully.

Sir, a lot of work still has to be done and I would want to find out from the Minister what studies are available over the last two years to suggest that the Barbados Water Authority is moving in this direction.

We have heard today about a number of mandates that were put on other entities like the Barbados Light & Power Company and the Barbados Telephone Company, but what studies do you have available that the public could feel confident that the Barbados Water Authority is moving in that direction to make this monopolist more effective and more efficient in this day, so that we would be happy that you would not want to come for another increase?

Sir, we have had an increase in 2005, and a massive increase in 2009, so what studies are available that you have mandated since you became Minister, to ensure that this entity is moving in the right direction and to ensure that this entity will not come back next year and the year after, to ask for a further increase? Sir, This is what we want to know.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I am glad you know that you would not be able to come again, and that you would have to go to the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister now says that it will be left to the Fair Trading Commission and that he will not have to do anything else.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister must still ensure that the entity is effective...

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. This is becoming very irritating, I must admit, because the Honourable Member would have sat there for the entire day and listened to this debate. I think in all good faith that it is a disservice to the public of Barbados to make those kinds of comments. If we are debating a piece of legislation that once enacted, automatically places the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission, it does not exempt the Government from doing its job in terms of ensuring that the Authority meets its standards. I do not know what the Honourable Member is trying to score, but the Honourable Member is misleading the House and it is terrible.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister says I am irritating him, but the Minister must be able to take whatsoever comments come to him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have asked a question and I will ask it again: What studies are available within the Government to suggest that you are moving this Corporation into a new direction?

I want the Minister when he wraps up to tell us what studies are available, not studies that he has inherited, but the studies that he has mandated in this new Government to move the entity into a new direction, to ensure that this entity complies with the Fair Trading Commission, to ensure that the public of Barbados is protected in everything they do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

H/A56/5.49 p.m. Sequence 38

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Sir, the Honourable Minister, after lamenting the fact that for some years, the finances of the Barbados Water Authority were under pressure, actually asserted today that in very recent times the Barbados Water Authority has recorded a surplus.

However, in a situation where the citizenry of Barbados has, for a long time, been looking very closely at the operations of the Barbados Water Authority, because of the critical role it plays in the country, I would think that later on this evening, when the Honourable Minister winds up, that he would provide further and better particulars in respect of the finances of the Barbados Water Authority.

I personally am not satisfied that there was a surplus without naming the quantum of the surplus and a number of sequelae, because out of the operations of an entity like

the Barbados Water Authority, one would not just look at inflows of revenue, or monies derived from bills paid and their expenses, but a whole host of other financial variables would be involved that go to the capitalisation of the enterprise.

By capitalisation I mean capitalisation in the widest possible sense, current capital, fixed capital and such like, especially at this time when we are hearing that the Barbados Water Authority is actually able to establish new administrative premises.

Sir, I would ask the Honourable Member for Christ Church East to treat the House with information that would help us to better appreciate the current financial standing of the Barbados Water Authority.

I do not recall exactly at what time, or hour of the day there had become a 60 per cent increase in water rates, but the reality is, that the increase itself also invites comment.

One reason why it invites comment is not only at a time when a lot of goods and services are going up in price, but in respect of the fact that we have many different stakeholders in Barbados who use water, from the simple householder, the simple single mother, the elderly, the male patriot, to commercial enterprises, including hotels. Every person in a situation like that has some interest in the Barbados Water Authority as a stakeholder, which brings me to the position of water and agriculture.

Sir, this Honourable House would be reminded that early in its Administration, the Government made a blunder by setting the cost of diesel so high that it actually increased the cost of production for those farmers who use diesel and also increased the cost of production for fisherfolk.

Sir, I come to the question of, are we satisfied, bearing in mind the plight of our farming community and bearing in mind the critical role of agriculture that we have come to a situation, to a circumstance, to a position where we are happy at the cost confronting farmers with water as part of that cost? Therefore, I am making a very special plea for a special ranging for farmers, subject to certain controls.

Sir, certainly, it would not be advisable to drop the cost of water to particular farmers, and then they abuse the generosity by wasting the water by misapplying it and such like. I am asking for a ranging of pricing for water for farmers that will be sensibly applied, that would be fair in its application and that would require the farmers to exercise a sense of responsibility.

In this connection, the Barbados Water Authority has, of necessity to work closely with the Barbados Agricultural Management Company (BADMC), which for years has been struggling to grapple with the whole question of the availability and pricing of water for a select group of farmers.

I believe every Honourable Member in this Honourable House is aware of the fact, that the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation, the BADMC, not the BAMC, but the BADMC has, over the last 20 years or so, seen irrigation as a focal point of its operations, especially in the Christ Church area. As a matter of fact, I believe that Christ Church East, even in times of low rainfall, has a farming settlement west of the airport which has seen many working-class peasants produce food.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: It is close to Parish Land. You go up and rather than go into Parish Land, make a left.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Is it called Gibbons? Sir, Gibbons represents an area where a lowly maid, even an under-achiever in secondary school, a determined old man and a strong old lady come together to do farming in the area of food production. That is important because bigger and more sophisticated farmers with access to capital and resources do not necessarily produce as much food as they are capable of doing.

The history of Barbados has shown that peasant farming has always been closely associated with food production, while in the plantation economy, it has been sugar. Luckily for us, the sugar industry, except for the factories, and there are not many of them anyway, at the level of the field, does not yearn for water to the same degree as particular food crops.

Sir, in light of the virtual undertaking that the Honourable Minister has made in respect of the West Coast Sewerage Project, I want to make a small contribution on that.

I want to urge the Government to check all the files and to ensure that the hiccups and the strains and stresses that accompanied the South Coast Project are not repeated. I want also to urge Government to do as much legal research as possible, to discover whether or not, I as a person operating a small shop, inconvenienced for a month by a sewerage project, can lawfully claim damages, losses and expenses. I want you to research that. You are bound to come across, by statute, some guidance, especially in relation to the powers of the Chief Technical Officer.

Sir, getting back to the West Coast Project, if I understand where I come from, as I ought to and I believe I do, between the bottom of the University of the West Indies, by the Esso Station, down to the other Esso Station, at Holders Hill, where you have traffic jams on that stretch, there are no ancillary, or side roads that will permit you access or egress.

5.30 p.m.

Sequence 39

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

House A56, Sequence 40, 5.30 p.m.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Sir, when we come to do the West Coast Sewerage Project, we are going to have to explore the possibility of going close to the Paynes Bay Methodist Church, looking eastward towards the community over the hill to see if a road can be accommodated to prevent congestion build up and road rage, when the West Coast Sewerage Project gets going.

Whenever there is major building and major construction, there are always in the short-term produce, what I call birth pains. In light of the fact that for more than four miles, you have a stretch of road that does not easily permit persons to travel if there is congestion, then it has to be factored in, that the management of traffic is closely associated with the West Coast Sewerage Project, from the point of view that we have to so manage traffic as to minimise any inconvenience to those who use that road.

Sir, in an era when we have had a special sewerage project for Bridgetown, in an era when we have had a

special sewerage project for the South Coast and in an era, Sir, when successive Governments have seen the need for the proper disposal of sewerage, we on This Side, not only support the substantive Amendment, but we support the West Coast sewerage project.

We have every confidence that it is going to enure and redound to the benefit of Barbados and we are sure, Sir, that this would be yet another signal to the entire community, especially certain landlords that we, as politicians in this Honourable House, are very serious about this question of the disposal of sewerage.

Almost every week, the Honourable Member for the City comes in here with lamentations about dry-pit toilets and before he came, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East used to present similar lamentations, and before the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, I presented some lamentations as well, but clearly as we assert the fact that we are such developed people, we

cannot have landlords deny people the use of waterborne facilities, on the grounds that the waterborne facilities might lead to permanent structures on their land.

Clearly, if the Law is supposed to exist for the public good, and clearly if a Constitution should be established to make sure that there is a balancing of interest and surely, Sir, where factors like sanitation is an issue, the dry-pit culture has to go, and it exists in funny places too.

References have been made in this debate to zoning. There are dry-pit toilets in Zone I and so, Sir, the Honourable Minister is effectively not just the Minister of Water Resources, but he is the Minister of Water Resources and Sewerage and the disposal of sewerage has to be tackled head-on in a bipartisan framework.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been hearing about This notion that like desert countries abroad, Barbados is a water scarce country. We have been hearing that for a decade.

Sir, are we truly a water scarce country, or is it that there is water available, which we have been reluctant, unable, or scared of tapping? The Honourable Member for St. Thomas mentioned particular areas in her Constituency and in St. Andrew, which yielded water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even if you argue that a lot of the water to which the Honourable Member for St. Thomas referred, and other water to which I will refer shortly, would require resources to deal with water which in its original state may present health problems, then clearly in this era, we should be able to tap technical assistance and other assistance from some friendly country that has been able to make maximum use of water.

Sir, trillions upon trillions of gallons of water have been lost in this country at Three Houses. Millions of gallons of water have been lost at Bawdens, St. Andrew. Even in the dry season, there are springs that are seen in full flow in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point I am making is that as we are categorised as water scarce, we still have the Three Houses spring.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the shrewder farmers in the area have developed ways of using some of it, but most of that water at Three Houses ends up in the sea, having traversed a large expanse, or stretch of land. The Three Houses spring has its origin way out and travels far down to the sea.

I am going to take some friends of mine to St. Andrew tomorrow and show them water gushing all over the place in parts of St. Andrew which will end up in the

sea and, therefore, Sir, the position of This Side is that we cannot say that the water is there, but financial constraints are forbidding us from making use of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you are water scarce, or water stressed, and you see any elbow room by which you can access and treat water that is available, then the problem of water scarcity will be diminished.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East and Minister clearly has my support, if he is prepared to find the technology and find the country that can help him, or even with the help of his colleagues, hit on a plan by which we re-access where we are with our sources of water, by which we can re-access our position with water and its use in certain conditions, and sometimes with the help of old people where we were with water.

Sir, up to the 1960s, not every household had water in Barbados and the village standpipe served a significant purpose. I heard one Honourable Member say that we should bring back in some village standpipes. The problem there is that so many people have their own water and so many people might be tempted to waste water at the village standpipe, that in some parts of Barbados, it is not deemed sensible and wise to have as many standpipes as before.

There are those of us in here who are old enough to have headed, either with a skillet, or a bucket, a load which we gathered at the village standpipe and travelled some yards to get home for the purpose of using that water when we had no pipe water in our homes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority would have done a lot to take water to parts of Barbados where water had never been for years.

There is a place near where I live called Spring Head, and way back in time, it was deemed more economical to move the people from Spring Head close to the water supply, than to put water up Spring Head. Now, lo, and behold, in this modern era, there is water in Spring Head, but there are no people there of this hue and colour.

Sir, these are the developments that we have to be aware of that as time changes, attitudes change. Sometimes what was not possible 25 years ago, becomes possible.

House A56, Sequence 40, 5.40 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Let me conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with two observations. First, I get the impression that a lot of Barbadians are unhappy that our golf courses seem to be so blessed that they could access water year round more readily than the average person.

Sir, it is a sense of some grief to me that Mary Smith, a normal consumer, the mother of four children, can say that her water forever goes off, whether she lives in St. Joseph, the Castle, St. Peter and such like, and yet we are hearing that the golf courses never lack for anything. It sounds as though: "To him that hath, it shall be given and to him that hath not, it shall be taken away."

Secondly, Barbadians are not particularly happy that there is an arrangement by which very large ships can come into our Port and access Barbadian waters more easily than particular Barbadians.

Sir, one has to go left of centre from time to time in the interest of social justice, even when one is perceived to belong to a party that is centre left, liberal, a practitioner of social democracy.

Sir, there is the troubling question of Zone I. I do not think that at this stage in our development that the Zone I prohibition can be justified in the absence of hard core scientific data. In other words, if we can scientifically look at the Zone I problem and locate a scientific, or technological solution, then we should be able to bring some land into sometimes better use than currently. In fact, a lot of the Zone I lands do not even see agriculture. A lot of the Zone I lands is not desert, but it is without any kind of production or anything.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what complicates the situation is that the way the Zone I runs here can be Zone I lands and here can be Zone III, there can be Zone I and by the glass there on the Table a different Zone. Sir, this seems to trouble and confuse Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we understand that the rationale for the Zone I lands was the protection generally of the quality of water in the island, that certain areas were sensitive and the watertable was high in certain areas, but at the same time, we are encountering a number of small people in this country who are forbidden from doing any kind of development on Zone I lands, so we have to relook the Zone I situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot pretend that I know of any other country that has that type of policy, or any other country that would be able to appreciate that in Barbados, you cannot build on certain areas and when you look 40 feet away, there is already a building there.

Sir, I cannot support any situation where just because we have done it for 50 years, we still have to continue doing it the same way 50 years after. I would, therefore, urge the authorities to do a careful assessment of it.

I personally do not necessarily believe in all of these overseas consultancies and an abundance of studies, because a Government could find itself trapped by consultancies and studies and a Government could find itself hamstrung as it goes through a study.

Sometimes what happens is, that particular influential persons, not politicians, would do a study on a study to satisfy their own curiosity without reference to the fact that the ultimate policymakers are answerable to the people of Barbados when the delivery of essential services does not occur on time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I close, let me compliment the Barbados Water Authority. It was perceived correctly to be the type of institution that should not have remained a civil service department.

There are those of us who know when the Barbados Water Authority was right opposite Central Police Station where the car park is right now.

There are those of us who know rural Barbados in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, where many people did not get pipe water. We know now that unlike that unfortunate place called Haiti, we do have a good water quality. We also have some workers at the Barbados Water Authority who are extremely alert, but at the same time, as I say so, I would want that any tendency to any wastage be arrested.

Sir, let me give you a classic example of tendency to wastage. There was a burst pipe close to where I live and I saw a Barbados Water Authority truck with workmen close to where I live going back to the Pine. I stopped the Barbados Water Authority truck and told them that a burst pipe is there and asked them if they could fix it. The fellow said: "Yes, but it has not been reported." I said: "I am reporting it here now." He said: "No, you have not reported it. It has to be reported to the Pine and we have to go back to the Pine, receive the report and come back."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that three, or four-hour interval, the question is: How many gallons of water have we lost?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where we find that bureaucracy and old-fashioned systems tend to curb development and to threaten the comfort of our people, we have to get rid of those old-fashioned tendencies and those old-fashioned behaviours if we are to advance as a people.

With these remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me thank you very much for indulging me. I would like to urge Honourable Members to see this as an opportunity to identify a resource that cannot ever be made to be of little, or no use to us. This resource is precious and is a sure sign

of life, life depends on it, and in that spirit, I am going to support this Bill.

I thank you.

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

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this matter before this Honourable Chamber, and to say that I would understand when experts say that Barbados is a water-scarce country, because it is estimated that in Barbados, there is only about 390 cubic metres of water available per year per person.

The designation for water scarcity in terms of country is that a country, is considered water-scarce if the per capita water availability is less than 1 000 cubic metres per person per annum. We are at 390 cubic metre per person per annum in Barbados, so we are way below that threshold, so I agree that we must be very cognisant of the need to conserve and optimise the availability of potable water available to the residents here for drinking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. James North saying that he supports the need to conserve water availability, yet it was the Barbados Labour Party Government of which he was a Cabinet Member, which sat on the West Coast Sewerage Treatment system. They have been in office for 14 years.

We heard talk about the need for the construction of the West Coast Sewerage Treatment system, in view of the fact that in the current scenario with our suckwell situation, a lot of organic matter containing the e-coli bacteria from the human faeces seeps under the surface of the land and ends up on the West Coast, contaminating even the sea water and thereby threatening the reefs, which are important barriers in terms of dissipating the energy of the sea to reduce the erosion of the sea in terms of the removal of the sand on those lovely West Coast beaches that are a very important part of our tourism product.

House A56 Sequence 41

5.50 p.m.

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the construction of a West Coast Sewerage Treatment System is important for the health and general maintenance of a stable ecosystem on the West Coast of our country, yet the Barbados Labour Party were in office for 14 years and did nothing to advance the implementation of that project. We just heard talk. There were a lot of ideas in their heads, yet

they dragged their feet in relation to the execution of This project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I compliment this Democratic Labour Party Administration for taking the bull by the horn and moving in a very serious way, to implement the construction of the West Coast Sewerage Treatment System.

I go further to demonstrate that the Barbados Labour Party did not take waste water management, that is sewerage system, construction and maintenance, in a very serious way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the privilege of being the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown. Sir, you and I know that under the Barbados Labour Party Administration, we in the City have had to suffer for years. We had to suffer from the stench emanating from that plant at Lakes Folly and Emmerton. Sir, the residents ended up getting all types of respiratory illnesses and skin irritation. Some persons died and the residents today are convinced that they died as a result of living close to that stench emanating from the Bridgetown Sewerage Treatment Plant.

Sir, that plant was left to ruin, with half the digesters not working, therefore, there was reduced capacity. There was also the problem with spare parts not being readily available.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember at town hall meetings at the Emmerton Community Centre during the Barbados Labour Party Administration, the experts at the Barbados Water Authority could not guarantee to the public that plant could not break down at a moment's notice, because of the poor maintenance of that plant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not blaming the technocrats. I am blaming the Barbados Labour Party because they did not pump the necessary financial resources to revamp that plant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talked about water conservation, but under the Barbados Labour Party, their view of the way forward, in terms of the West Coast Sewerage Treatment system, envisaged a plant which would be constructed just to treat the affluent coming from the treatment of the sewerage to such a limited stage, that the water outflow would end up in the sea.

Sir, it is envisaged that with the construction of a new West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant, along with the current Bridgetown and South Coast Sewerage Treatment Plants, we could end up with having access to US 6.2 million per day of waste water available for reuse.

Sir, under this Democratic Labour Party Administration, we propose to construct a West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant at Porters, St. James and at Fontabelle, Bridgetown, where we will treat the effluent to such a high degree, that we could then channel that water to be used to irrigate golf courses on the West Coast.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James North talked about that. That water would also be discharged at given fields within our land mass to recharge the aquifers, thereby increasing the amount of potable water available to be pumped from the underground aquifers as time goes on.

Sir, this is a very forward-looking state-of-the-art approach of this Democratic Labour Party to waste water management and water conservation.

The Barbados Labour Party had 14 years and they were out to sea, as it were, planning to push all of the effluent out to sea and losing US 6.2 million gallons per day of waste water by simply pumping it out to sea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Democratic Labour Party Government is seeking to utilise that water for the benefit of our country and they must be congratulated for that very visionary approach to waste water treatment and management.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, under the Administration of the Barbados Labour Party, they built the Bridgetown Sewerage Treatment Plant in the 1980s, they were in office for 14 years, since 1994, and we in the City of Bridgetown had to endure the stench emanating from that plant which was mismanaged by the Barbados Labour Party at Emmerton and Lakes Folly.

Sir, household within Chapman Lane, Emmerton Lane, Farnum's Land, Kensington New Road, all 10 Alwyn Avenues in New Orleans, Gowdy Gap, Lakes Folly were not able to benefit from being hooked up to that plant.

Sir, under the plans of this Democratic Labour Party in building the West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant, having one at Fontabelle and one at Porters, will result, as I understand it, from the experts of the Barbados Water Authority, in these avenues being able to be finally connected to this revamped and modern state-of-the-art West Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant at Fontabelle.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the current system at the Bridgetown Sewerage Treatment Plant is archaic technology, where the sewerage is treated in open-air digestion, as the air needs to come in to allow the bacteria to work and to eat away the sewerage.

Sir, as a result of having This open-air scenario, the stench becomes a big problem. Sir, with modern technology this is not necessary, and we are now able to contain the stench to manageable levels.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can assure the residents of Bridgetown that in short order, this Democratic Labour Party, that as we roll out the construction of the West Coast Sewerage Treatment System, the days of this heavy stench making them ill are numbered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to answer the concern of the Honourable Member for St. James North in terms of the construction and traffic management, as I understand it, as part of the construction of the West Coast Sewerage Treatment System, it is envisaged that a secondary road would have to be constructed, linking University Drive to Holder's Hill.

In fact, estimates have already been made in terms of the final cost of the infrastructure of the West Coast Sewerage Treatment System and the detour road. It is estimated to cost about BDS\$362 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this reminds me of the fact that as this Democratic Labour Party Government has boldly sought to augment the financial resources available to the Barbados Water Authority, the taxpayers can rest assured that This money is an investment in the future of our country.

Sir, these multimillion dollar infrastructures that I talked about, even the issue of the treatment of the waste water effluent, so that it can be used to recharge the aquifers and irrigate golf courses, there is a cost element involved. We even have to factor in the cost of transporting the water to the final user, the golf courses and the aquifer recharged fields. Sir, there is, at least, \$3 or \$4 million to be spent there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of these things cost money. The building of the new headquarters of the Barbados Water Authority, the Mains Replacement Programme are all multimillion dollar programmes that would need to have private/public partnership arrangements, be it the construction of Reverse Osmosis plant at the Belle, to augment the amount of potable water available to us from that source, as we seek to reduce the nitrate levels in the Belle catchment area.

6.00 p.m.

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is the possibility of some water being lost in that treatment process, so we are already in the process of testing water in

that Belle/Waterford area, to see if we need to desalinate and increase the amount of water available to the public in that regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a need to eventually have a sewerage treatment system in your area, the Belle area, so that the water would not go from the dry pits, or even the suck-wells and contaminate the very rich source of ground water at the Belle.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of these high expenditure infrastructural developments require financing, and the taxpayers could rest assured that their sacrifice being made is in good order, because it redounds to the development and the maintenance of high quality potable water which is important, not just for our health, as a people, but for visitors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first thing a visitor does when they are contemplating visiting a country, as a tourist, is to enquire about the quality of the potable water, because in many countries, that is an issue and so people are afraid of getting gastroenteritis, diarrhea and so, from the drinking water.

Sir, with our great reputation in Barbados with a high quality water, these are issues that we take for granted, but these things contribute to persons deciding to choose Barbados as a tourist destination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember visiting St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands back in the 1990s. Sir, I was staying in a stone house that was just outside of the town centre and it was only after a few days I was there, that my host advised me that the house was not supplied with any pipe water, that pipe water was only available within the precincts of the town centre. Sir, this was in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, a part of the United States of America and, Sir, back in the 1990s, they did not have pipe water throughout the entire island.

Sir, that stone house looks like a stone house in Barbados, but they were able to harvest the rain water from the roof and capture it in what they call a cistern in the basement of the house to supply the toilets for flushing purposes and even the taps and the showers. Of course, it was properly secured to keep out rodents and other vectors that could contaminate the water so that best practices are maintained in terms of sanitation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is possible in Barbados, so when I hear the Honourable Member for St. George North pooh-poohing the need to encourage people to harvest water in big containers, I am not sure where the Honourable Member is going.

Sir, just a few weeks ago, we would have seen in the media the British High Commission in Barbados, taking the initiative of setting up water harvesting facilities at their residences to capture the water run-off from the roof in huge drums, that could be used to wet plants and so on, and to capture water that otherwise would have been lost in terms of run-off into the sea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the day when we will see Government offices, school buildings and private buildings, houses and offices being retrofitted to harvest the water off the roofs of those buildings, and that water could be captured in containers, properly sanitized, used to flush toilets and for secondary water uses that we currently use the potable water supply for.

Sir, fire engines could be filled with water that could be harvested from the roofs of the fire stations and other buildings.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must be creative and accept that we are a water scare country and micro-harvesting of water, when you multiply at the macro level, could result in millions of gallons of water saved from wastage out to sea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it can be done. I am sure that this Administration will not, in any way, prevent the necessary experts from being creative and coming up with very practical and effective ways to harvest water as it comes from the heavens in the form of rain.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, who is not in her seat now try to suggest that our Administration is not taking the harvesting of water seriously.

Sir, I know that it was her Administration that installed some storage tanks at some schools, but the truth must be told that this was not fully implemented.

I taught at a number of schools, and I know that in some instances those tanks were not properly serviced, so that when the pipe water supply was cut off, the tanks were empty. There was not enough leadership and guidance in terms of ensuring that those tanks were properly maintained so that in times of need, they could be effective. In fact, in many instances, the capacity was so limited that just a few toilets could be flushed and the schools still had to be closed.

Sir, a lot of work has to be done there and I am sure that the Minister of Education and his team at the Ministry of Education, are seriously looking at expanding that programme to make it more effective and far-reaching.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me talk about housing just in passing as it relates to the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, again, the Barbados Labour Party is seeking to criticise this Administration for being brave enough to pump financing into the Barbados Water Authority. If you want Barbados to increase in terms of its development, there are many people in the City and throughout Barbados, who are renting substandard housing and are looking forward to either renting a terrace unit in the Rent-to-Own Programme, or a stand-alone house and we have a number of housing developments both public and private, which are being implemented, as we speak.

Sir, a few days ago, I saw the houses in Greens, social transformation George; Constant, St. George and in Coverley, Christ Church, where hundreds of zero lot line houses are being built, maximising the space, and I invite Barbados to go and see them.

Sir, these housing developments could only be realised if there is enough potable water available.

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

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

Sir, these housing developments could only push forward at a rapid pace if we have the commensurate quantities of potable water available to them via the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, we must invest in the Mains Replacement and the augmentation of the potable water supply, if we need to go into more desalination and so on but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, This costs money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, look at Country Park Towers that the Barbados Labour Party left abandoned with steel rusting and the place filled with bush. Sir, we have built four storeys up and the Honourable Minister of Housing is talking about six storeys and higher up, but then you would need to have enough water and a high enough pressure that the higher floors of those high rise buildings could be properly serviced with potable water.

Sir, we need to give the Barbados Water Authority the necessary financial resources to ensure that they can do the job, so that we could provide housing to the Barbadian people who are looking forward to housing being provided, not in 20 years, but more like 20 months or less, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard a lot of talk about bottled water, but I would really encourage Barbadians to look more at installing water treatment systems, because around the world, a number of countries have had to reject bottled water and take them off the market because when

they tested them, they were of inferior quality to the tap water.

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: I know that in Russia, Japan and other parts of Europe and Asia, they look at spring water, mineral water, which is a higher quality, and once we can have that water tested, so be it. I think that we must be very careful that we are not follow-patterned, as it were, following the fads, when you are wasting money, as far as I am concerned, in all of this bottled water, when you can use the good public juice, as we say, with the necessary water treatment system.

Sir, with those few words, I would wish to support this Bill. Thank you.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, we have had a long debate and it is one of those debates that perhaps has improved as the afternoon went on. I was a little concerned when I heard the Minister open up.

The Minister's premise for his speech rested on the notion that the Barbados Labour Party had raised a Bond of \$150 million for the Barbados Water Authority and that Bond was for the purpose of replacing mains, and that no money, or no mains could be found. That was the premise of his speech for at least half an hour, as he started this morning, but Member by Member on This Side, and I suspect even one, or two on the Other Side, fortuitously have caused the Minister to realise there could be nothing further from the truth.

The records of this Honourable Chamber, Hansard from 2005, a debate of December 13, 2005, when the measure for the \$150 million was introduced by the then Minister responsible for the Barbados Water Authority, the Honourable Anthony Wood, as he was at the time, at page 4 of Hansard, the record of December 13, 2005, makes it clear that the loan:

"One of the key usages of these funds is to finance the restructure of the debt of the Barbados Water Authority. It allows for less onerous terms for the Barbados Water Authority as it seeks to deal with the various loans accessed over the years. I took the \$150 million of the Barbados Water Authority, \$100 million is what will go towards financing. The other \$50 million is to finance capital works and other initiatives."

The Minister did not stop there, Sir. The Minister then pointed out on page 5 that there was a Mains Replacement Programme in the Northern and Eastern parts of Barbados. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, the Honourable Member for St. George North, the Honourable Member for St. James North and St. Michael North, spoke to that today.

The one for the northern section, \$3.5 million, the one for the eastern section \$2.6 million. He then went on to speak about a loan of \$14.5 million from the National Insurance Scheme which was a one-year loan to the Barbados Water Authority, and that one-year loan would have then been refinanced out of the \$50 million of the National Bank Programme.

Sir, if that was not enough to convince us, the deed between the Barbados Water Authority and the Barbados National Bank Inc., stamped on May 18, 2005, agreed to on March 31, 2005, in the recycles:

“Whereas by a Resolution of the Authority passed on August 9, 2004, the Authority has determined to raise a sum not exceeding \$150 million. The net proceeds from the issue of the Bond should be applied for the refinancing of the existing debt incurred by the Authority and Financing and Capital Expenditure.”

The Honourable Member for Christ Church South said it was the plan. If that was the case, the General Manager of the Barbados Water Authority, then, would have misled the entire country, which I know he did not do because he is an honourable man.

Let us go to the Annual Report of the Barbados Water Authority of 2004/2005, where in his Report, which is already laid in this Honourable Chamber, Review of the fiscal 2004/2005, under the heading \$150 million loan:

“The Barbados Water Authority entered into an agreement with the BNB Finance and Trust Corporation on March 2005 for \$150 million by way of a fixed rate Bond Issue to refinance its \$100 million debt portfolio, repay the \$14.5 million from the National Insurance Board and finance certain capital expenditure.”

Sir, in that same Report, a new General Manager said:

“During the year in review a total of 47 953 feet of main were replaced under the period under review. This included 6 144 feet under the Martindale’s Road Rehabilitation Project and 460 feet from Walker’s to Mapp Hill.”

He goes on to deal with the Bridgetown Sewerage Plant. There is a wonderful photograph on the next page.

Sir, they say a picture is worth a thousand words. Look at the piece of equipment. Look at the mains being laid and look at the then Minister along with the then General Manager, then Chairman and other members of the Barbados Water Authority in the photograph at the Mains Laying Ceremony.

Sir, this Minister told us today that not a cent was spent in the provision of mains, not a cent from the \$150 million. I have not spoken about the mains between St. John and St. Philip. I have not spoken about the mains that were laid in St. Lucy. I have not spoken about the mains from Lewis Gap to Spring Garden, or from Spring Garden to Fontabelle.

I have not spoken about those others because the reality is, it is an exercise in political sterility for a person to get in here for the purpose of a debate, fighting that they would be on the back foot because of an increase in prices which is unconscionable, and seek to deflect the attack by creating a false construct that is easily disproved, not by the words of a Member of this Chamber, but by the documents, both legal and also others made in this Parliament. It is an unfortunate display by a Minister of the Crown.

Sir, I say to you that the debate has improved because, thereafter, we at least got on Both Sides of the House people making sensible suggestions recognising that, yes, not only is Barbados a water scarce country, but we faced the reality this year, as the Barbados Water Authority has indicated to us, and the drought.

Our brothers and sisters in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and other islands in the Region are already in the throes of a drought, and that has led to significant hardship to a number of households and a number of businesses.

Now, there is the intent to emotionally connect the fact of a drought to the rate and scale of an increase. That is also an exercise that is unfortunate and unbecoming of persons who would seek to do so. Sir, let me say why I say so.

Let me start with a number of premises. There is no doubt that Barbados for the last 15 to 20 years has had to face the issue of having to replace an infrastructure that was put in previously for us by a colonial Government, a hundred years ago. There is no doubt about it. There is no doubt that apart from the fact of the replacement of those mains and the attempt to minimise the loss of water, that there will be significant expenditure required on the part of the Government and its public sector programme. There is no doubt about that.

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House A56, Sequence 45, 6.20 p.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is believed that it will be a minimum, probably of BDS\$1 billion in expenditure that may be required to secure the safety of water to the citizens of this country, first for health and well-being issues, and then secondly, for the purposes of economic development, which is necessary if we are to earn our way and provide for ourselves.

Sir, what is unfortunate is the assertion that the way to finance the replacement of mains, pipes which conservatively, I would like to believe, will have an asset life of no less than 30 to 40 years, if what the colonial authorities laid a century ago before technology was available, had an asset life of 100 years, so what is clear is that you finance those pipes over the period of time of their life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, none of us, unless we are awashed in money, can go and build a house cash, knowing that the house has an asset life of 25 or 30 years. We have mortgages for that purpose. Companies get long-term financing for any equipment, or assets that have a long-term life, so that to suggest that the rates have to be increased in order to be able to secure the expansion of the Capital Works Programme, is an exercise in political sophistry that we would do well not to follow.

I go further. If it was that the rate increase would go somewhere towards helping to serve the debt you would have to raise, you would understand that because at the end of the day, one of the major problems that this country faces, is the growth of expenditure in relation to transfers and subsidies to State Corporations. We saw it last week with an additional \$15 million to the National Housing Corporation and \$22 million to the Transport Board.

Sir, if you look at what transpired in 1991, 1992 and 1993, part of the problem we faced was not the increase in wages to people per se but it was, in fact, the galloping runaway expenditure of State Enterprises without the appropriate checks and balances being put in place.

Sir, I do not think anybody can deny that there may be a case for reviewing rate structures, but the issue is timing and as well as the ability of those who are being asked to pay, to be able to do so without incurring significant hardship.

In 1991, the water rates were raised in this country at a time when people were being sent home and wages were

cut by 8 per cent. There was no increase until 2005, and the significant thing about the increase then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that we sought to shield 50 per cent of the residential market from a significant increase. Indeed, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West would have indicated, that for the first 8 cubic metres, the increase was, in fact, 3 per cent. It went from \$1 50 to \$1 55.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we then introduced three other bands and the first and second band, 8 cubic metres and the next band 12 cubic metres. We recognised that those were the persons among those who were either poor, or who were in the middle income categories, but who were on fixed budgets, or who were pensioners and whose volume of usage of water was unlikely to carry them up.

First of all, their house size, the number of bathrooms and number of pipes, et cetera, were minimal, in comparison to houses that were more than 1 500 and 2 000 square feet, so that 50 per cent of the population was shielded in that rate increase. Then you had the next 20 cubic metres and then the next 40 cubic metres, so people who could afford to have three and four bathrooms in their house, who were using water aplenty, would have to pay at a higher rate, but the majority of households and workers in this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, including your constituents in particular - and I will come to them separately because of their unique case - were shielded.

Sir, what has been done by this Government and it is not a case of political football, it is the reality and I will tell you why it needs to be considered.

The Government last year in July, moved the first 8 cubic metres pricing, from \$1 55 to \$2 48 cents, a 98 per cent increase for people who could hardly afford to meet the cost of living, when according to the Government, when they came in it was already too high and, as a result, it became this Government's Nos. 1, 2 and 3 priority.

It was not the international crisis that caused this Government to move water rates for the poorest of the poor from \$1 55 to \$2 48 a cubic metre. For the second band, they moved it from \$1 94 to \$3 10. It was not the international crisis that caused them to move it from \$1 94 to \$3 10, or watching BBC and NBC and seeing how hard things are on the news. It was then for the third band moved from \$2 91 to \$4 66, an increase of \$1 70 per cubic metre.

Sir, that was the kind of increase we saw when diesel prices were increased from \$1 48 by 77 per cent to \$2 30, or thereabouts, and I could go on and on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, ships have gone from \$5 to \$8 and like the Honourable Member for St. James North, they

perhaps can bear that traffic, but who cannot bear it are the ones at the 8 cubic metres and the next at 12 cubic metres.

Now, businesses moved from \$2 91 to \$4 66 and there are Honourable Members in here who would have had representations, individually and collectively on the Government Side, about the extent to which that increase has now made the ability of businesses to survive in this economic environment, that much more difficult.

Banks Breweries has gone on record. Their water bill alone increased by almost \$1 million. Do you know how much beer you have to sell to get back \$1 million in increased expenditure? That is a lot of beer.

Seriously, a company like Chickmont, their prices for water increased by almost \$400 000. A lot of chickens you have to sell before you can pay that increased water bill. The entire chicken industry, because Chickmont represents only about 50 per cent, would have faced about another \$400 000, meaning that the small farmers whose margins of profit were already slim, have had in this country to face the reality of increased expenses, without necessarily having increased sales, and that is what we mean when we say it is a problem.

Sir, why do I say that representations have been made to the Government? It is to our certain knowledge that a paper was commissioned for a review of the water rates on the business sector in this country, so that the Government might be asked to find some mechanism to ease the burden of water rates on the people in the private sector of Barbados.

I can empathise with them because increased expenses in water, diesel, gas and all of these things, mean that their ability to keep people employed becomes more and more difficult.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, a study was actually done by a well-known tax advisor and specialist, a gentleman who has worked with both Governments, and that study was presented to the Subcommittee in the Social Partnership.

What bothers me is that the people who are now paying from \$155 to \$248 and the people who are now paying from \$194 to \$310 have nobody to lobby and do a study for them, therefore, the voice of the Barbados Labour Party has to be heard in defence of these people who have been put on the back foot and who, like the private sector, believe that the scale of the increase is too steep, especially in the current environment and does not take into account

who can bear what, and in the circumstances ought to be revised and reviewed in order to allow people to keep their heads above water.

Sir, when you are out to sea and the water is rough and you are in a Moses, or a bigger boat, the most important thing is to keep body and soul together. If you could get through rough seas and bring the people back to shore, or if you could get through the rough seas until the water gets calm, then people could live to fight another day. However, if you have to be asking people to pay a higher price for the very thing that would help keep them alive as the seas are rough, then we are in trouble and putting people at risk in Barbados.

I say to you, Sir, that I find it a matter that merits the urgent reconsideration of This Government. The facts are now in. The reality is that, were this application to go to the Fair Trading Commission, the Barbados Water Authority would not, in current circumstances, be able to justify a 60 per cent increase.

The Fair Trading Commission is about setting a fair price and a fair return on investment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality also is that the Government must stand in the breach. It is not simply about balancing books, it is about balancing factors in a society, such that people can come through this process.

In the words of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West in that debate on December 13, 2005, water is not just an economic good, it is a social good.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West gave a speech then that all of us would do well to read today again, because he recognised the importance of ensuring that pensioners and people who are gas station workers and maids, who equally have two, three or four children, and who have responsibilities, but whose salaries have not gone up and who, worse still now, face the spectacle of the possibility of a wage freeze, or should I say a moratorium.

Mind you, when I say a moratorium, it reminds me of "mortician", which means certain death, but who face that possibility now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government and the Prime Minister has said, that he would have a meeting with the Social Partnership, I believe on February 19, to deal with not just wages, but a protocol on prices.

I find it difficult at the very least that 25 months to be precise, after the announcement was made, that the cost of living was the No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 priority, that we are only now seeing action on the issue of a protocol on prices.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the price increases in this country have not come as a result of the international economy. They have come primarily as a result of the Government leading the charge.

There has been a bookkeeping and accounting approach in the Ministry of Finance that has discounted the economic impact on people in a foolish way, because the two primary sources of Government's revenue, a Value Added Tax, which depends on the volume of transactions in the economy and Corporation Tax, which depends on a company recording a profit, which means selling more than it is spending in order to be able to have a profit, depends on the volume of economic activity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we start to look at the economic decisions made by the accounting approach in the Ministry of Finance, what do we see? We see that the first foray in March, 2008, was to balance the budget irrespective of the consequences.

The second thing was to increase diesel and energy by 77 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively.

The third thing was to raise \$104 million in taxes, the net impact, which was still high even though the cell-phone taxes could not come about because they could have told him from the beginning that was incapable of implementation.

The other three taxes which were not implemented were not implemented, clearly because of the lobby of the gambling community, and that is why we are lobbying on the behalf of the 20 cubit metres and the 8 cubit metres users, because we know that the private sector is in a position now to lobby for itself in relation to the 60 per cent increase impact on them in water. We were told that this reflected bellyaching.

The next charge on spending in This economy came by broadening the tax base by allowing land valuations to go up without adjusting downward the land tax rates, as has been the practice of previous Ministers of Finance.

The next charge was the water rates. We were told then that there were recommendations also to deal with the VAT. Well, you could increase the VAT, but you are going to get less because when all is said and done, 15 per cent, or 17 per cent of "nuff" is "nuff" and 15 per cent, or 17 per cent of "little" is "little". That is the bald reality. What is needed is a growth strategy and not one that is predicated on a bookkeeping analysis approach of trying to balance books for the sake of balancing them.

I know that there are Members on That Side who share these views, but they seem to be countermanded to the point where, perhaps, the frustration of one Honourable

Member came out of Room 53, and were it not for other Members in the hearing in this Chamber, but not of this Chamber to call to the Lord in prayer, forgetting that the Lord helps those who help themselves that those...

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The truth is that the Honourable Member for St. James Central is coughing because, poor fellow, he had to witness it all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be serious, the point is that what you have is an approach, that has led this country into a deeper form of recession than we ought to be in. It is an approach that is predicated on balancing books and not on generating economic activity.

Why am I saying this? The Barbados Labour Party could let the Democratic Labour Party go on and the situation would get worse and worse, but we are Barbadians and we know that we are in a four-foot hole. We could jump out of a four-foot hole by pulling ourselves out, but we cannot jump out of a 20-foot hole.

There are men and women on That Side who must now stand in the breach, for the people of this country to be able to stem the level of the extent of the fiscal crisis, and pray that you could deal with it before the fragile balance of payments become a balance of payments problem, because the only thing that is saving us, is that the Barbados Labour Party would have left \$2.5 billion in foreign reserves that has cushioned the impact.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there should have been a stimulus when they first came in. They like to comment that they are like President Obama. The Prime Minister starts his Press Conference and speeches: "I am like Obama." I know that they are both the children of mixed races, but beyond that, I do not know where the similarity is.

The reality is that, at least, President Obama understood that he needed a stimulus early on. Barbados does not have the flexibility of going the whole hog, but the Democratic Labour Party Government had room.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: This was not 1991, as it related to the external environment, the balance of payment situation. What you did have was room, instead, you chose to suppress spending in the economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do believe that if you are going to go to the Social Partnership on Friday to speak about a protocol on pricing, that the Government must lead the way by example. It led the charge on the increases, it must lead the way in some kind of moratorium.

Sir, the reality is that under the Act, Government has the power to do so. It has the power to exempt certain classes of persons.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the Barbados Water Authority Act - and I believe it is Section 28(h) and members from the Barbados Water Authority management can speak to the Minister - they have the power to exempt certain classes of persons, which is preserved by this Amendment. Therefore, this Amendment to take you to the Fair Trading Commission gives you the elbow room to protect those who do not have a voice to lobby for themselves, like the private sector and those who particularly are using the first 20 cubic metres of water.

Sir, may I quote the section?

"The Board may, with the approval of the Minister, make regulations for the purposes of this Act. In particular the Board may make regulations...

(k) exempting certain classes of persons from the payment of rate and charges from the supply of water for sewerage services."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, nobody is asking for a permanent exemption, or a permanent reduction, but people need to get through these rough seas, people need to get through these choppy waters.

Sir, in the same way proposals have been put to the Government by Mr. Lindsay Holder, the tax consultant on behalf of the private sector, then in the same way there needs to be an examination of how to shield those using 20 cubic metres, or less. This is not about a Barbados Labour Party, or a Democratic Labour Party, This is about people being able to help.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government chose not to intervene publicly in terms of its voice in relation to the rates of the Barbados Light & Power Co. Ltd. In my view, Government had the moral authority to say that there may well be a justifiable case for an increase, but that now is not the time.

Sir, that is the only thing Government could be going to the Social Partnership on Friday to say that now is not the time for increases in prices, but where was the voice?

Sir, in the same way the Fair Trading Commission can say that the increase in the Barbados Light & Power Co. Ltd. rates are going to start from March, it could have said they are going to start from March, 2011, or June, 2011. You have to give people breathing space.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am appealing on behalf of ordinary people in this country who do not have the ability to hire lobbyists, or tax advisors, that they want relief. The Barbados Water Authority will not die within the year, or within 18 months.

Sir, the reality is that as it relates to the capital programme, Barbados, the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, I am not too sure about the Eastern Caribbean, but I suspect all have the same problem of mains replacement being 80 and 100 years old.

I have said, and I repeat, that I believe that if ever there was an appropriate opportunity for a regional project to be able to pool together the risk, such that the risk to the financiers could be diversified, it would be in this area of mains replacement in the Caribbean.

All of us face the same problem and if we could pool and get the World Bank, or the Inter-American Development Bank to finance that for the countries, as opposed to for a single country as the Minister has indicated they are seeking to do for Barbados, the diversification of the risk may even cause individual countries to be able to save money on the servicing of the interest, because the interest would be less if the diversification is there in terms of the risk.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are talking about a 20-year programme.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I urge the Minister to consult with his colleagues in the Region and see to what extent we could pool the application for financing for mains replacement across the Region to make the cost of financing cheaper in the circumstances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate and to lend my support to the distinguished Honourable Minister for having the foresight and fortitude to bring this matter before this Honourable House at this particular time.

Sir, I would also wish to demonstrate that in spite of the comments by Honourable Members on the Other Side, this Government has nothing to hide. Sir, we are very clear and transparent on these particular matters. I think that when I am finished, you would get exactly why I made that point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I listened to the presentation of the last Honourable Member, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I am reminded of a calypsonian when I was younger, who I believe emerged out of the St. Michael North West area going by the name "Malik", who sang a song called a "madman."

Sir, in one of the lines of that song he asked quite pointedly, now who would cut off their best friend's hand and then jump in first when the ambulance comes? He said it would only have to be a madman.

Sir, when I listened to the presentation of Honourable Members on the Other Side, it really makes me smile. Sir, here it is that on the clear evidence alone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I noticed that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East danced around, if that is possible, all of that issue of responsibility in relation to where we are with the Barbados Water Authority, even though the Honourable Minister made it abundantly clear in his presentation This morning.

Sir, no one on that side wishes to take responsibility at all for the last 14 years, but they will be reminded because all of these crocodile tears being shed in this Honourable House for the working poor and all of that, these same working poor people must be reminded that the so-called 60 per cent increase in water rates, which the Opposition claimed this Government has imposed on the poor, was as a direct result of the lack of responsibility of that Administration when it was in office to make matters better at the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that this previous Government ran up years and years of debt and losses at the Barbados Water Authority. They now do not want to take responsibility for it, but want to shift that responsibility on the Democratic Labour Party, whose lot it is to smoke the poisoned chalice which that Administration has so well stoked with the fodder of mischief and squandermania, in the process of governance in this country. Sir, we have to call a spade a spade.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, from around 1999-2000, the Barbados Water Authority was leaking, not just leaking 60 per cent of the water, but leaking millions of dollars.

Sir, we all know it. The Honourable Member for St. James South is looking at it. In 2000, it was \$10 million; in 2001, it was \$15.9 million; in 2002, it was \$19.5 million; in 2003, it was \$2.5 million.

Sir, the litany goes on and on, and not one word being said from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, instead we get a lot of crocodile tears being shed today for the poor, who are now being made to carry the burden.

Asides.

6.50 p.m.

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Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: The middle class? Sir, we will get to the middle class, who are now being asked to carry the burden of the mismanagement and the squandermania of the Barbados Labour Party in relation to the Barbados Water Authority that forced them by 2005, to come to this Chamber. In fact, they did not come. I will tell you what they did. They increased the water rates and never amended the Law and last year we had to come and validate the increase and, Sir, they talked about transparency. We did not hide behind it. We came to the public. We explained why we needed to increase the water rates and we came here and did the validation and validated the Opposition's illegal acts too.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East were ordered expunged from the records by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Sir, either the Honourable Member is speaking about rates, or the road traffic fees that were raised by his Government that had to be validated last year too. Sir, a year after, it had to be validated.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I see no point of order and it should be struck from the record. Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to bite at that, just as I am going to tell my colleagues on This Side not to bite at the cacophony of noise about Room 253.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East does not have the authority to lecture anybody about

fighting, or biting, for that matter, so I am not going to bite at those issues.

Let me make it abundantly clear that they came here in 2005, and asked for a loan guarantee of \$150 million of which \$100 million was to go to restructure the debt, debt which by 2008, had been worse, so they restructured it so that it would become worse.

Sir, there was not only water in the debt, there was wood too. Sir, I will tell you that there was wood and water in the debt.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the Democratic Labour Party did last year was to plainly tell the country we were going to increase water rates and we gave the reason.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know that in 2005, the Barbados Labour Party not only came for \$150 million to place on the backs of the poor, but also increased the rates as well, so there was a double-whammy, but they tried to wrap the thing around in a lot of political spin, about how they were going to protect 50 per cent of the users.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Sir, Honourable Members on the Other Side cannot take the truth. Sir, we heard it again in here today. It was said then, and it is being said now, that they shielded 50 per cent of the users. What the Honourable Member did not tell you is, that they shifted the burden, and put 63 per cent of the increase on the lower middle-class in this country.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Sir, they shifted the burden on the very middle-class that they claimed to be the bedrock of the Barbados Labour Party, by saying that they protected 50 per cent of the population.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know very well what is going on here, and I want to quote the former Honourable Member who held this particular seat that I am in now, when he spoke on this matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is what he had to say and, forgive me, because the print is very small and I have to read it here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the former Honourable Member said and I quote here:

“ Mr. Speaker, raising \$22 million a year by way of a rate hike, pretending that certain individuals are being excluded on the basis of social justice and economic equity, not allowing 50 per cent of those who use the water to pay,

and then selling that policy on the basis of a particular criterion will not solve the problems of the Barbados Water Authority.”

Sir, that is the Chief Economic Advisor of the Barbados Labour Party who cannot get on a platform to speak now - he or his former boss.

Sir, the former Honourable Member for St. Michael North West continues to quote:

“Therefore, when you make your sales pitch and give it the political essence that you see, by suggesting that 50 per cent of those who use water will not have to pay, but then you impose a 63 per cent increase on the high volume domestic user, what you would have effectively done would have been to transfer the burden of the Barbados Water Authority, on to the backs of the people who currently pay all the income tax in the country.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of this “palaving” about how we could come up with this trick method to try to shield this body and go to the Regulations, is all political spin aimed at conjuring up some idea that in Barbados, we in This country do not have to be impacted upon by things that are happening around us.

Sir, we do not have to carry the burden of mismanagement and squandermania of the Barbados Labour Party in relation to this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to quote the former Honourable Member again, because I am laying the burden of these water rates squarely at the feet of the Barbados Labour Party. He said:

“Mr. Speaker, what I need to tell the Minister is that until this Government seriously approaches the issues of the Barbados Water Authority by looking at the two studies that were done between 1996 and 1997, one done by Stanley Associates out of Canada and the other by Cole and Crippin, which identified that in our distribution system, we are losing almost 60 per cent of the water. There is nothing really going to happen to really correct the problems existing in our water system.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is what the former Honourable Member is saying, so the former \$100 million plus the \$50 million that we have not yet learnt where the money has gone, was not spent on correcting the structural problems of the Barbados Water Authority. It was a patchwork effort by the last Government, because that is what they were into.

Sir, because they knew they were going into the Elections and wanted to curry favour with the Barbadian

public, they did what they usually do, state craft and sophistry.

Sir, it was regime consolidation through state craft and sophistry aimed only at buying temporary, cheap popularity to win a Government without addressing the serious structural problems of the economy of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why when I see all these crocodile tears being wept by the Honourable Members on the Other Side, it makes me cringe, because they are not being totally intellectually honest.

Sir, I would not call them anti-intellectual, because that would be to assume that they are, indeed, intellectual, but it makes you cringe and, Sir, it is intellectual dishonesty and politically dishonesty of the highest order.

They should step up, take responsibility for their lack of action and then, and only then, can the public take them seriously that they are interested in the real problems affecting poor people in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are talking about what This Government did, accounting, bookkeeping and all that but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not caught up by that and, Sir, I will tell you why.

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Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I well remember when the former Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South was Minister of Finance and Prime Minister of this country, when he brought a Budget in this House and imposed certain taxation to help close a deficit on the Current Account. They said that he was a bookkeeper, a housewife and all kinds of things.

As soon as the Honourable Member removed certain taxes in Barbados, and by 1991, the world recession put the Barbados economy in recession, they said that he was a reckless person, he is an errant school teacher, does not know anything about running an economy and all of these things. I am not caught up with all of that. I believe we have to judge circumstances as there are.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East stood up in This Chamber and advised this Government to go and guarantee a loan, just as she is asking us to get another loan to deal with what is happening. The Barbados Water Authority can wait. If the Barbados Water Authority wait another year, it would not kill. We should give Barbados a break for another year. Put off everything, deal

with nothing. Put off everything and walk. Just let it slide and get worse and go in the abyss as they did.

We were told not to pass through the petrol crisis, go and get a loan and subsidise people to drive cars up and down in Barbados as they like. Get a loan to pay back Mr. Barrack for his building. Guarantee a loan to pay for oil. Guarantee a loan so that Chickmont can sell some more chickens to Barbadians.

This is the voodoo economics that the Honourable Member picks up every weekend driving around Barbados, from rum shop to rum shop, city to city, town to town, village to village. This is what a responsible Government is supposed to do.

Sir, we have this in terms of the Barbados Water Authority, but what are we talking about?

The former Minister for the Barbados Water Authority, from St. Philip South, who is no longer in here, thank goodness for that too, introduced the \$150 million. This is what he said.

“We all realised that (1) the adjustment in the tariffs were carefully calculated; that the adjustments in the tariffs were indeed necessary and we all recall that those adjustments would have brought the Barbados Water Authority \$22.1 million on an annual basis to deal with its operating deficit.”

A deficit that has gotten worse each year since then, and he is an economist, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is none. We have been informed that the former Honourable Member is an economist.

All they were saying that they were going to do was not done, and they left the Barbados Water Authority in a perilous and disastrous state, threw it at the Democratic Labour Party and said, you leave it there. Do not do anything. Leave it for another year. Let the debt accumulate. Let 60 per cent of the water go underground. Let the service continue to be poor. Just leave it and do nothing.

Well, Sir, this is not the “do nothing” Government. This is the Government that was elected to fix the problems of this country and we will do so.

Sir, I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church West speaking this morning. I did not bother to record very much of what he had to say because not much of it was of substance. I well understand the problem with the Honourable Member. He spends less time in Barbados than a cruise ship passenger, so you cannot expect anything. He is not in touch with what is happening around here.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I spend more time than most cruise ship passengers.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: The Honourable Member is not around very often. He does not even know what a point of order is nowadays. I ignored a lot of that.

Sir, one point the Honourable Member made, which he felt was a bombshell point, he came into the House all smirking, today, saying that the Democratic Labour Party took up \$25 million from the Barbados Water Authority and put it in the Consolidated Fund and that caused all the problems of the poor Barbados Water Authority. That is their thesis.

No proper analysis of the structural and systemic issues of the Barbados Water Authority, no proper analysis of the management failure at the Barbados Water Authority under the Barbados Labour Party...

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: \$25 million could not replace the mains. Your former Minister said it would take \$300 million to set the Barbados Water Authority right, so how could \$25 million solve all the problems of the Barbados Water Authority? How could it be done?

The point is this. The Barbados Labour Party was in Government for 14 years. If you felt so badly that the \$25 million was taken, you could have put your hand back into the Consolidated Fund, take back out the \$25 million and put it back into the Barbados Water Authority with interest. You could have done that.

You were a Minister of Economic Affairs. Why could you not have advised the former Minister of Finance to take back the \$25 million and put it into the Barbados Water Authority with interest? That was the easiest thing for you, but you all were not going to do that. You wanted to come and get a loan and I will tell you why.

Sir, the former Honourable Member, again, your former Co-Leader that pushed the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East out of the leadership position in a single motorcade - It only took a motorcade for him to get rid of you. Let me quote him. This is what the Honourable Member had to say:

"Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have said repeatedly that this Government has found a way of borrowing money without it being reflected in the national debt. This is a perfect example of Government finding a way to borrow excessively, but when you look at the national debt figures, the borrowing will not be reflected in it."

Sir, I do not know in what the commercial bankers across Barbados are trained, because they go to Canada, or North America, identify that Barbados has a debt problem, that Barbados is overspending, that Barbados is not earning enough foreign exchange, but still say the economy is okay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has to be a diplomatic, or political statement all in one.

Sir, did you hear what the former Honourable Member said, that this Government has lost its way?

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: He gave a better speech than me, and a correct one too. I give him credit. It is a good speech, because it said that your Government lost its way. Your Government overspent. Your Government over-borrowed and then presented, as I say, a poisoned chalice for us to smoke.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East comes into this Chamber as though washed in the blood of the lamb, like a man who sets a bush fire and then wants to claim credit for calling the Fire Service. That is exactly what is going on here.

H A56 7.10 p.m. Sequence 49

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House A56, Sequence 50, 7.10 p.m.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas also got up in here and tried to create the impression that the Democratic Labour Party Government increased water rates and we did not even take into consideration the poor and powerless in Barbados. Sir, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the Honourable Member said that the Welfare Department gave back \$7 million last year and it was a shame.

Could you imagine that prior to 2008, for five straight years under the Barbados Labour Party, the Welfare Department gave back \$9 million on average? In fact, in 2007, they gave back \$13 million.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: It is in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. Go and read the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the real point. The Ministry of Finance and Social Care agreed with the Minister of the Environment, that a special fund will be created to deal with any increases in demand on the Welfare Department, or the Poverty Alleviation Bureau, which they have done.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has not been any substantial increase in people coming with water bills because of what has happened, but those who came have been treated and have gotten their issues taken care of, so to give the impression that this is an uncaring Government is not true, is untrue and deliberately so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that gets us to the state where we found the Barbados Water Authority. If this Government did not act then, as we are acting now with the various projects, the Mains Laying Programme and the Reverse Osmosis Plant - if the augmentation of it comes.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East did not speak about this. The Government of Barbados was not only paying \$9.4 million a year to Freshwater Ionics for desalination water, 60 per cent of which we all agree is going into the ground, but we were also paying under the Agreement negotiated by the last Government, for the excess capacity of unused water.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Speak about the excess capacity that we were paying for, which you negotiated.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael West, you cannot refer to Honourable Members as you.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologise. The Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East helped to negotiate the deal that makes Barbadians pay every day for unused water and extra capacity at the Freshwater Ionics.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they come in this Honourable House in this righteous indignation, saying that, oh, the Democratic Labour Party is going to kill Barbadians, and the Barbados Labour Party that is wonderful, must be returned to office immediately to save Barbadians. This is what we are being told, two years into a Government that is trying to get things cleaned up after 14 years of

squandermania, 14 years of political skulduggery, 14 years of squishing and splashing when things were good, and now we have nothing to show for it, Sir.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are being told that they are now more righteous than anybody to assume the reins of Government.

Mr. Minister, you are on the right track. Continue and you have our full 100 per cent support to make the changes where they are necessary.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Asides.

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make a small contribution to this debate. I want to start at the outset by commending the work of the Honourable Minister under whose responsibility the Barbados Water Authority falls. I want to remind this Honourable House, Sir, in terms of his presentation this morning, where the Honourable Member indicated that Government must lead the situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all have heard the different presentations during the course of today and we can see that the challenges facing our country by water are something that the previous Government had refused to attempt in any way to address the particular issues confronting the Barbados Water Authority and, in general, the whole management of the water resources in This country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the contribution from the Honourable Member for St. George North, and other Honourable Members on That Side, made some references in respect of the rates that were implemented last year and the challenges they have presented on persons at the bottom end of the economic scale.

I want to remind this Honourable Chamber that since coming into office, our focus has been to try to cushion the effects, first of all, the increasing prices of fuel in the early 2008, and mid-2008, which preceded this financial crisis. We introduced a number of measures that have to be mentioned in this environment and I am speaking about the increase in pensions for pensioners, increase in the allowances for disabled persons in the society, the free bus fares which amount to some \$30 per child per week and a lot more to each family than the incremental increase at the

bottom end of the scale in any water bill, a significant piece of social engineering.

Asides.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, persons must also remember that there was a 10 per cent increase in salaries to public servants in 2008.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we address these issues, we have to remember that we have to take all these things into consideration and look at them in a holistic sort of way.

House A56, Sequence 50, 7.20 p.m.

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Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we should not forget the fact that the VAT on building materials and so on was reduced. These are issues we have to take into consideration when we address any increase. The fact remains that we cannot continue the policy of subsidising everything in this country. That is a policy that is not sustainable.

We see what has happened to the Barbados Water Authority in terms of its finances because of the failure of Honourable Members on the Other Side to address the issues of the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first payment on that \$150 million loan, which had a moratorium in terms of capital payment, will be due somewhere around September of 2010, and the payment would probably be in the vicinity of \$15 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is money that the Barbados Water Authority would have to look for to service this particular loan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Honourable Member who spoke immediately before me said, that was purely a restructuring loan and part of it was supposed to be going towards the Mains Programme.

When I look at the Financial Statement, I could see no increase in the additions to fixed assets which would suggest that there was any significant investment in mains during that time, either in 2005, or 2006, which is the latest available Financial Statement that we have for the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question still remains as to what has happened, having repaid over \$92 000 in other loans, to the other \$50 million to \$60 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will offer that it has been lost within the whole

working capital structure of the Barbados Water Authority during that time.

When we look at the Financial Statements, there is no increase in fixed assets that would suggest that the money went into a capital programme, but the Accounts Receivables and the Accounts Payable have gone up, so that money has obviously been lost somewhere within the working capital structure of the Barbados Water Authority, more than likely to finance the losses that it has incurred, since the draw-down of the loan in 2005. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to look at it in a holistic approach.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Minister said that they were trying to address some of the issues in respect of the accounting structures within the organisation, as it prepares itself for going under the Fair Trading Commission.

I believe that there has been a loan of some \$60 million, which was brokered, which will be expended in the re-organisation of the infrastructure within the Barbados Water Authority, both in terms of work within the engineering side and within the increase technology.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am told that work in respect of increasing the technology and the engineering capabilities of the Barbados Water Authority, will enable the Barbados Water Authority to be able to identify leaks and burst pipes across the island as part of that particular programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority will no longer be dependent on people to call in when there are burst pipes. Sometimes these ruptures in the mains could go undetected for weeks and months. Sometimes those said mains that are ruptured are in parts of the island, that are not close to houses and so on so they would go undetected for a long time.

This upgrading of the operations of the Barbados Water Authority, will allow the engineers and so on, to be able to identify where some of the major leaks and so on are across this island, and address that issue of the 60 per cent loss.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, part of that money as well, I am told, would be going towards the purchase of 50 000 new meters. One of the challenges has been that the current meters are over delivering, so that in itself would be a loss of revenue to the Barbados Water Authority, because it means that some persons would have been paying for less water than they have actually received, or used. All this goes within the framework of what we call unaccountable water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a fact that that level of unaccountable water, 60 per cent, regardless of whether it is going from leaks, or burst pipes, or whether it is poor consumer management of the water, the fact remains that any business that is losing 60 per cent of the cost of the items that it sells in a supermarket, it would be thieving. If this was a supermarket operation, how long do you think that supermarket would be able to survive if 60 per cent of its goods are stolen, or unaccounted for, by-pass the cash register in some way or fashion? The business would not last a couple of months.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority has to address, as a matter of principle, that whole question of unaccounted water. This is why this programme has started and this is why the \$60 million loan has been sourced, to address these issues within the operations of the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must commend the Minister on having the courage to address some of these issues, and to try to get this organisation's Act properly restructured and on sound financial footing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am also advised that there is another \$30 million of funding that would come from the National Insurance Board, I believe, which will enhance the Mains Programme within the housing programme of this Government. That is a challenge that we have.

The Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands is proceeding at such a pace with the development of his housing programme, that we have to try to address those issues of the water mains, and make sure that we have proper services to persons who are moving into these new housing developments, that the Minister of Housing and Lands is undertaking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Housing and Lands has assured me, that the housing programme in Lancaster will shortly be on the way. My constituents have been bombarding me with requests for housing just like the constituents in every other Constituency.

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Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are looking forward to having the infrastructure at that development. Sir, at this point, the roads have not been cut, so obviously this is something that needs to be done with haste.

Sir, surely we will be able shortly to benefit from the work that the Honourable Member is doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to say that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas - and I believe it was echoed by a number of Honourable Members from That Side - had made mention of the springs at Three Houses, Porey Spring and other areas. This is the issue that has been highlighted several years ago by the various studies done.

Sir, the fact is, that relative to the overall consumption in Barbados, there are insignificant amounts of water that are produced by these springs. Sir, less than 1 per cent would be available from these springs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that also raises the question whether it would be economical to try to harvest that water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have, at times, to cut the emotions out of these speeches. The Barbados Water Authority would have to make economic decisions, whether it is financially viable to harvest that water from those springs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other challenge is, that those springs are also controlled by an Act. There is the Three Houses Act which goes back to sometime around the year 1713, which prevents the Barbados Water Authority from accessing water in those springs. The Act designates specific persons to be able to benefit from those springs, therefore, obviously that Act would need to be repealed as part of the process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is interesting, is that for 14 years, the Barbados Labour Party had these issues and they were neither raised by the Honourable Members for St. Thomas, nor St. George North, when they were in the Cabinet.

The Honourable Member for St. George North was in a decision-making position, as far as water management was concerned in this country. Sir, today we are hearing that everything must be instant.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House.

‘Sir, I have been consistent for the last 10 years in making such requests to both Administrations. Sir, it is quite untrue to say that I have not been doing it. I have been consistent.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, obviously this is a time that everybody “brek” for themselves, so we are going to hear in this Honourable Chamber, where Honourable Members on That Side now want to distance themselves from that Administration. What do we expect?

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, I have been consistent in This Place and in the Other Place when I had the privilege.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the issue as far as it relates to the springs. Obviously this is something that the Barbados Water Authority would need to look at in terms of its own development, and in terms of how it addresses the challenges it faces, in terms of the wider approach to water management within our country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the other initiatives that the Honourable Minister has highlighted, was the question of the operating cost of the Barbados Water Authority.

The Honourable Member mentioned the cost of electricity, which is approximately \$25 million. There is also a significant payroll cost. I am advised that the Barbados Water Authority, in terms of its staffing, is some 8.2 per cent, 8.2 per cent staff for every thousand service connections.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am told that the recommended position would be more in the vicinity of 3 per cent to 5 per cent staff per thousand connections. I think that is a correct interpretation of the figures. That is according to the technical people. Obviously that is one of the challenges that faces, not only the Barbados Water Authority, but at the Port and at a number of institutions of Government. It is a challenge in terms of how we go forward in terms of the rates and so on.

Sir, these things have to be factored in, when we are looking at the operating cost of the institution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that leads me to make the comment in respect to the finances.

Sir, one of the challenges facing the Barbados Water Authority in relation to its financing, is the whole question of the servicing of its non-contributory pension.

Sir, the term “non-contributory” means that the workers do not contribute to the pension benefits, to which they would be entitled at the time they would be required.

Sir, when you are in an institution that is highly loaded in terms of its payroll costs, that pension contribution is significant. The pension cost of the Barbados Water Authority is more than \$6 million and climbing, and as that payroll cost increases, the pension contribution will automatically rise. The unfunded liability which still has to be funded, is in the vicinity of \$40 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in going forward, these are challenges that the management of the Barbados Water Authority need to address, that is going to be embodied by the consultants which are being funded partly by this new loan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are real challenges that the Barbados Water Authority needs to address.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to refer to the number of challenges that face us in St. James Central.

The Honourable Member for St. James North alluded to some of the issues that we have with the West Coast Sewerage Project. I want to reassure my constituents, particularly those who live along the coastline, Prospect, Fitts Village, Derricks, Paynes Bay, that this Democratic Labour Party is aware of the traffic problems that we have along Highway I.

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Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Sir, we are conscious of it. We will address the whole issue of making connections between Highway 1 and what I would call the Durants/UWI link road. Sir, that is something that has gone for the decision of the Cabinet.

We are in the initial stages of putting the funding in place and getting the different engineering studies and so on and those sorts of things will soon be done.

Sir, hopefully, within the next few years, we can actually get some work done in terms of that particular project and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this preparatory work has to be done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say this afternoon that one of the roads that will be identified is Chapel Gap, and that there is already a rough road that one could go between Chapel Gap and Durants. Sir, then we have Prospect Road, and I will tell you about the challenges with Prospect Road.

Sir, my understanding with linking Prospect Road to the ridge is that the area where the road would normally come through is part of that same property, and I am told that is the property which the former Prime Minister acquired from the National Housing Corporation. Sir, that

is going to give us a challenge to find that link road and to get that link road from Prospect up on the hill but, Sir, that is a decision we will have to make.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Chapel Road will not, in itself, solve the problem, because we also have to have roads going into the Prospect area, and probably the Fitt's Village area, to make sure we are not having any bottlenecks in there.

Sir, these are the challenges that we will have to deal with coming out of the preparation for the West Coast Sewerage Project.

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Sir, of course, the history of the challenges we have with the South Coast Project, I am hoping that those challenges would not be repeated. There is substantial commercial activity in terms of our hotel properties and so on, and we need to ensure we do not have a problem with that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last point before I take my seat is the whole question of zoning. Sir, this is an issue we have, particularly along the West Coast, where there are large tracks that are currently listed as Zone I, and we are anxiously awaiting the final discussion of that proposal to reduce the areas that we have allocated for Zone I.

Sir, the Lancaster Project would be one of those projects that I believe in doing it, we would have to look at the whole question of sewerage treatment plants for that particular development, because that development would be in the vicinity of 200 houses to 300 houses within the whole framework of what is being proposed with the re-zoning, and that would be a typical example of where a sewerage treatment plant would probably be recommended, to address the issues that we have in maintaining the integrity of our ground water supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, again, I want to say how supportive I am of the Minister with responsibility for the Barbados Water Authority, in terms of his challenges before him in addressing this problem, and having the fortitude to be able to bring this to this Honourable Chamber at this time, and look forward to it being put under the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 8.25 p.m.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 8.25 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

7.46 p.m.

Sequence 53

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Honourable House is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Sir, it is late in the evening so I will be as brief as possible. I just want to comment on two matters in particular.

Sir, as you would have heard for most of today, the success of the Barbados Water Authority is essential for the way of life of all Barbadians. There is no compromising that fact.

Over the last couple of years, whether the Barbados Labour Party wanted to increase the water rates, what they did that was fundamentally flawed, they did not ensure that the Barbados Water Authority had the necessary capital at its disposal to become the efficient animal that it should be, if it is to provide the level of water resources required to take Barbados forward in the future. There is no doubt that water is essential for our way of life.

Sir, as a Government, we are not attempting to do as a Government is not to be in anyway unfair to the people of Barbados, we would have preferred not to increase the water rates if we had a choice.

The fundamental difference between us and a former Administration is that they made decisions that were in the interest of their self-preservation. We are making decisions that are in the interest of the continued development of Barbados. In other words, we are not placing ourselves first.

I think the people of Barbados, when they analyse the facts behind our stewardship, and in particular on this matter, would accept that we could have continued as the previous Administration, to allow the Barbados Water Authority to continue in its inefficient way of providing water to us, but there are some serious challenges, this is why I am making this intervention because there are two serious challenges in particular.

Sir, my information is, from my reading, even if there was some measure of replacement of water mains in Barbados over the last couple of years, the reality is, if it is not accelerated to the extent where I believe over the next year, or 18 months, that potentially come 2013. In other words, during the next three years, it is quite possible that Barbados would be importing water.

Sir, just let me repeat that. We are in serious times. That is why we had to take measures to ensure that we can continue to deliver water to all Barbadians.

Sir, just let me repeat that. If we do not and if we had not taken serious measures, immediately, to ensure that the Water Mains Replacement is accelerated, it is quite possible for the first time in the history of Barbados - I do not know of any other time, if there was it is because my history is lacking - that we would have had to import water into this country. I am not talking about bottled water from Canada. I am talking about water to provide for everyday survival.

Sir, we would rather not have had to increase the water rates in this country, but we did not place self first. We are trying to put the country first.

Sir, in that regard, one other issue I want to touch on is the whole issue of climate change. The scientific data would suggest that by 2050, again, Barbados should have some very serious challenges in terms of its ability to provide water for its people because there should be less water at our disposal.

Again, we have to be very cognizant of that from now, and ensure that we have an efficient organisation as possible in the Barbados Water Authority. In that regard, we have to give the Barbados Water Authority the necessary resources, not only to plan, but to execute a plan to ensure our continual survival.

Sir, that is why we recognise that there are challenges, and we have to take the bold step necessary to counter these challenges.

I listened to the Honourable Minister today. We have a situation where they are expected to deliver a 24-hour service within an eight-hour normal day and pay overtime for the difference. It makes it very difficult for them to survive because:

- (a) it compromises the delivery of their service; and
- (b) needless to say, I think, if we are honest, that

practise has been among some of the - I do not want to say unscrupulous, but to ensure a practise among some of the workers to take their time, so that they can make overtime as much as possible.

Again challenging the Barbados Water Authority when they found it financially difficult.

We, have to move to a culture where we can, indeed, deliver a 24-hour service without unduly burdening the Barbados Water Authority, in terms of its financial resources. If it means that we must go and talk to our social partners, we must speak to them, but we must speak to them as equals, and ask them to do what I have said we are doing, to place Barbados first and not the Barbados Workers' Union, or any other trade union.

There is no doubt that we must look at restructuring the Barbados Water Authority and make it as efficient an organisation as possible.

The Other Side would speak about the cost of water, but how can you be efficient with all the other inefficiencies that go with it? Obviously, you pay either for the cost by allowing the increase in water rates or, in fact, you pay for the cost by Government to continue subsidising it, in which case, the money still comes from somewhere else, so at the end of the day, the people of Barbados will pay for it.

We are saying that the better approach is to have an organisation that is efficiently run, providing the level of service that we want to be proud of, but moreover, ensuring that 50 or 60 years from now, we are better off than we were, given the type of situation that we are in financially. Sir, we are taking the steps from now.

Sir, there is no more blatant difference between the previous Administration and ourselves. The fact is, if I remember correctly, last year the members of staff walked off the job at the Barbados Water Authority Headquarters, the Pine. They were very dissatisfied with their conditions.

Sir, in the time of plenty the Barbados Water Authority had land, and still has land, I believe, near to the Pine Hill Dairy. In a time of plenty they approached the Government of the day to build a Headquarters and the Government of the day said, if you are to build a Headquarters, find money from somewhere else. We are not supporting you.

The difference between us, again, is, we have accepted that we want not only to provide housing for all of our people, but proper accommodation when they come to work. That is why we have taken the step to ensure that they will have a new Headquarters. We did not say to them, times are hard and we cannot provide you with new Headquarters. We recognise your challenges.

We recognise that if we want you to be more efficient, then you must have these accommodations when

you come to work. That is why, again, I want to compliment the Minister for taking that hard decision.

Sir, like I said, there are just two areas that I want to touch on. The fact that we are indeed challenged, if we do not correct the mains situation immediately. This is not, again, about self, this is about putting a country first.

Sir, we are indeed challenged if we do not recognise that we have some issues in terms of climate change, which means that we have to look at our water resources differently, planning not only for the next five years, but for the next 50, so that my children and your children, although most of your children are older than my children, will not suffer as a result of our mistakes that we have made in this day.

Sir, I think we all recognise that we have to look at the mains situation. Yes, we all recognise that we have to look at a culture of conservation.

HA56 8.40 p.m. Sequence 54

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

House A56, Sequence 55, 8.40 p.m.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Again, Sir, it is quite obvious and I have said before, that I lived for 10 years outside of Barbados and at least nine of those years, I used water that was collected straight from the roof and pumped back up into my house. There was no, as we call it then, street water. There is no water available from the Barbados Water Authority equivalent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph would do well if he adopts this.

Asides.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that we should control our water and ensure that we develop a means of conservation and ensure that we practise conservation because, again, every little counts.

I urge the Honourable Members on the Other Side to recognise that we want to do what is best for all Barbadians and we want them to join with us. In a Bill like this, Sir, it is regrettable that it is almost tongue-in-cheek. Everyone gets up and says we would have done This. We actually had plans since 1998, to bring it to the Fair Trading Commission, or 2004, whatever date was meant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am winding down. I am only using five minutes.

Sir, the difference though is that they had plans, as usual. Everything that we have discussed over the last two years, they had plans for but, Sir, we recognise that it had to be done. We understand what we are trying to do and we are taking the steps necessary, to preserve the water supply in this country for all Barbadians, including your grandchildren, and the grandchildren of the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, and I am sure the Constituency of St. Thomas and, of course, the people of St. Philip South.

Asides.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I said from the inception that what we are doing is not for self. What we are doing here is for the people of Barbados, including the people of St. Philip South. There is no doubt about that, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I consider Barbados to be a very socialist country. We recognise, for example, that the Barbados Water Authority being probably the largest user of electricity in Barbados, basically subsidises electricity for other ordinary Barbadians. We recognise that, and we recognise that it is not an easy matter for us, therefore, to take the Barbados Water Authority off electricity grade because, in fact, it would mean that Peter pays for Paul, and that would mean that the ordinary people of St. Philip South will pay.

Sir, that does not mean we do not have a responsibility to find more economical means to produce water in this country, because you cannot say, well, fine, we have that responsibility on the one hand, but knowing that we still have a responsibility to the most efficient organisation, in terms of the production of water.

It is a difficult situation, but we cannot continue saying that let us keep things as it is, because it might mean less electricity being used. I think if solar is an option in terms of producing water, we have to use it. We have to explore all options in terms of the production of water.

Sir, in closing, I want to ask the Minister, as I would normally say, as the young people say, to keep on keeping on. The Barbados Water Authority has always been a difficult organisation to manage.

Ministers have come and Ministers have gone, but the Minister recognises that it takes bold leadership, in particular.

Sir, bold leadership usually means that you will not always be popular but if he is guided by the overwhelming principle that he is doing good for the greater Barbados; then I reckon, Sir, that at the end of the day, he will be successful.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it would do us well at the outset, to acknowledge what I consider is a fundamental principle and that is, Barbadians use significantly more water today than they did five years ago, and five years ago they used more water than they did five years prior to that time.

Sir, our water resource is not only finite, it is arguable that it is diminishing. I do not know if the Minister would care to contradict that, but it is clear that the incidence of drought over the last decade has had the disastrous effect of causing less water to reach our aquifers.

Sir, while the supply of water reaching our aquifers has, as far as I understand, been diminishing, Barbadians by virtue of their lifestyle, by virtue of many more people having their own homes, contrary to what they might want to argue, Sir, by virtue of the very appliances that we now have in our homes, instead of putting a tray with some water in a freezer to get ice, we all have these fridges that have water constantly running producing ice. We all now wash with washing machines and dishwashers.

Sir, our lifestyle, which has become one that is more convenient, one that is certainly more comfortable and one where, especially given the boom years of the last 14 years when we were in Government, people were able to afford more, so we have two conflicting interests, almost, the drought causing less water to reach the aquifers, and Barbadians demanding much more water from the Barbados Water Authority.

It is, therefore, no doubt, Sir, that the Government, when we were in Administration we had to move towards a desalination plant which in the year 2005, produced more than five million gallons of the 42 million gallons that were produced.

Sir, since becoming the Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, I have listened and heard the complaints of my constituents. There is not a day that the water supply in St. Joseph is not interrupted for five, or six hours.

There are communities, Lammings, Parks Road, and others, where, having water for only three, or four hours a day, has now become an accepted way of life for them, not that it is acceptable, Sir, it is not, but because it has been happening so often for so long, it is now something that they have resigned themselves to and have come to accept.

Sir, there is no parish in Barbados that has the amount of rainfall that St. Joseph has, and so we are fortunate in that respect because things that have to be irrigated in Christ Church and St. Philip, the people in St.

Joseph can expect a drizzle once a day at least, and therefore, the Josephines are not the ones who go out with the hoses and so on, and contribute to the excess use of water. The problem is that they do not have a reliable access to water and it is that, Sir, I wish to raise before this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot fool this Chamber. It is not an occurrence that is recent. It seems from my own investigation that St. Joseph has, perhaps, over the last three decades, been plagued by shortages of water, and various things have been attributed to it.

Sometimes it is argued that Andrews Factory during the crop season uses water and it takes that water out of the reach of the people. I have discovered that is not true, because Andrews Factory uses water from wells that are bored on their premises, but we are constantly looking for explanations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority has explained to me that there have been difficulties in terms of Bowmanston, Golden Ridge, and there is always one difficulty, or another, but our challenge, and my Constituents are bellyaching because, faced with a 60 per cent increase in water rates, there is no prospect of any soon improvement in their condition, and that is what worries us, Sir.

House A56, Sequence 55, 8.50 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me make it clear. I made the same representations that I am going to make tonight when we were in Government. It would be foolish for me to say otherwise. I have just said that this has been a problem year after year. It was a problem during the years 1986 to 1994, when the Democratic Labour Party was in power. It was a problem when "Tom" Adams was Prime Minister. It is still a problem and the Democratic Labour Party is here again.

Sir, what I think we have to orient ourselves towards is the fact that the demand for water has now outstripped our ability to supply it and we, therefore, have to use other means of obtaining that water.

I have had discussions, together with the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, with the Barbados Water Authority and the then Minister, Minister Wood. In fact, a task force was formed to deal with the issue of the water outages that our constituents were experiencing. One of the things that had to be looked at was the question of yet another desalination plant. We have one already, but because of the network, the water that is produced by the desalination plant cannot, in a cost effective way, reach the

upper parishes. It would be prohibitive to do so. That is a fact, and the engineers have said that to us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we now have to look at alternative locations for desalination plants so that we are able to satisfy the urgent need of the people in my Constituency and in other parts of rural Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not a technocrat. I cannot tell the Barbados Water Authority where those plants should best be. What I can say is that my constituents are crying out to have their problems solved. I can say that there are solutions that are well-known and technologically feasible, and I will ask and do ask the Minister to ask the Barbados Water Authority to look towards solving those problems.

I do not believe that the Minister is unaware of the problems of the constituents that I represent. I also believe that he is aware. I believe that he is aware of areas in St. Andrew where there are water shortages.

The Minister has connections I hear in St. Joseph, but I know of St. Andrew. I am asking the Minister - I am not pulling at his heart strings because his heart strings are now in Christ Church - to remember where his navel string is buried and look at the plight of the people in rural Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am most reluctant to appear to be slugging, or being overly critical of public servants. I can only tell This Chamber what is told to me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my constituents complain to me daily that when the water goes off no notification is given. It may be that it is not possible to notify the residents. I imagine sometimes it is, and if it is, they should be notified, but I accept that there may be problems and you cannot tell the people.

Sir, it is scandalous that the individuals who are responsible for driving the vat, pay almost total disregard to the sensibilities of individuals who need access to water.

I have got complaints of drivers being on some occasions impolite and on some occasions driving way past and individuals who have to almost run behind them with a bucket. I have also had reports of the vat simply not coming at all despite many calls from people in Horse Hill to Golden Ridge.

Sir, this is not acceptable because these individuals have to pay their water bill month in, month out. Whether or not they get a fresh water bath, the water bills still come. They have asked me, Mr. Marshall, do you think we should pay?

As a lawyer, I say you should only pay for a service you receive, but the fact is it is difficult for them to say to the Barbados Water Authority that the meter is running, but no water went through it.

Sir, the people of my Constituency are no different to any other Barbadian. They are not different to your constituents, or the constituents of St. Thomas. We are all equal when it comes to access to fundamental human needs and water is one of them.

An interesting point was made by my colleague on This Side when he spoke about standards that have to be met. I would assume, if I could extrapolate anything from the stringent conditions that have been imposed on the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited by the Fair Trading Commission, that it would be reasonable to argue that similar kinds of standards could and probably would be imposed on the Barbados Water Authority. The Honourable Member has said that if you do not reconnect the supply, the utility has to pay.

My constituents are not interested in getting \$10, or \$20, but if water is not supplied to them, the utility should pay. If there is a burst main that runs for days, there is a cost, there is an inconvenience and the utility should pay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the reality that I expect the Barbados Water Authority to face.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it will make it incumbent on the Minister, and on the Administrators, if they want to secure what they consider to be the Barbados Water Authority's financial future, to ensure that there is not such a slippage of resources back out. May be it would call them to a higher standard, I do not know. I could only say that the time has come when any Government must approach water in a way that Barbadians are not to feel that by replacing a main, you are doing them a favour.

The people of my Constituency are not being done a favour when the water runs for 24 hours, it happens so infrequently that they would want to celebrate. The Barbados Water Authority is not doing them a favour by providing a consistent and predictable flow of water in their taps. The time has come when the Barbados Water Authority has to take the measures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did not support the 60 per cent increase in water rates because I did not think it was the thing to do, but it has been done.

Sir, I am here to say that while there has been a 60 per cent increase in the water rates, that the service to my constituents has remained dismal, or nonexistent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my constituents cannot be expected to bear a larger financial burden in these times when the Barbados Water Authority is not prepared to step up to the plate and match what is extracted from their pockets every month. It is morally wrong and must not continue. If we are being asked to pay, then the appropriate level of service is what we are entitled to and what I demand tonight on behalf of the constituents that I represent, and the others in the surrounding areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know that we will get anywhere by arguing over whether the \$150 million was for debt consolidation, or for the laying of mains.

The Minister posited a certain proposition earlier today in his opening and I believe that sufficient facts have been put before This Chamber that he would now feel reasonable in resiling from the statements that he made originally.

There is no doubt that in one year alone, we laid 50 000 feet of mains, but the fact is that the 50 000 feet we have laid and the 50 000 feet that the Barbados Water Authority may lay in this year, or next year, and the year after, will do us little if we do not accept that what we are dealing with is a total Mains Replacement Programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am satisfied that our Administration started the Barbados Water Authority on that particular road and I am pleased to know that it is continuing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it avails us very little to stand in this Chamber and quarrel over something like that.

House A56 Sequence 56

9.00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we need to consider is whether the Barbados Water Authority is able to carry out its mandate, whether it will, or is carrying out its mandate, and what is in it for Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that goes past any parochial boundaries, any political divide. Water is something that we all produce and consume. It is common to all humanity and the right to it must not be seen as something that is favoured for just a few, while the rest are ignored.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe it is important to say that as a part of the strategy of our Government when we were in office, we tied development needs to the availability of water resources. Sir, it was not a simple

issue of saying: "Well, there is no water there, so you cannot do development."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are developers in Barbados whose companies were required to take certain measures with regard to dealing with the water needs of those developments, before permission could be given. It is a novel.

There are other entities that want to do developments and they are being told that they have to deal with their sewerage needs as well. It is not an unreasonable thing. In fact, it is definitely the way in which we should go.

Sir, quite frankly, I believe that we ought not to pass on the cost of water improvement in areas where there are high-end developments, and in areas where those developers are able to put water strategies in place to provide water for themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South spoke about living elsewhere and pumping water from his well. Sir, I believe that is something that Barbadians have not had to do, and I hope that the time does not come when we would have to do it, it is alien to us. In fact, it would mean retrofitting practically every home in Barbados for that purpose. It is something I would not like us to contemplate.

What I would like to say though, is that we have an obligation to secure a modest reserve of water when water is available.

I would like to suggest that this Administration considers initiatives, or incentives to encourage people in the water-scarce areas to acquire water tanks. Sir, it may be by way of a tax break, or by way of a subsidy, but I think that we have to accept that since we only get water for about two hours a day, that it will be a number of years before that problem is solved.

The Barbados Water Authority should consider it their obligation, to encourage individuals to install moderately-sized water tanks, so that they can have a small reserve.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we said that we support this measure. I support it too, because I think it will bring the Barbados Water Authority to a higher level of scrutiny that it has not had before.

Sir, the fact of the matter is that as much as we may huff and puff, as Members of Parliament and as Ministers, our ability to provide proper and stringent oversight to any public utility is lacking.

I do not think that a Minister could properly provide oversight to the Barbados Water Authority. There are too many technical issues, even if the Minister was an engineer at one point in time.

Sir, the resources that are available to the Fair Trading Commission, will be able to delve into the minutiae of everything that the Barbados Water Authority has to do and if that will bring a better service to the people of Barbados, then we are obligated to support it and we have indicated that is our stance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

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

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a very brief intervention in this debate. I think most of what needed to be said in this debate has already been said.

Sir, I certainly want to compliment the Honourable Member for St. Joseph for the very mature speech which he has just delivered. It was quite an unusual speech, but a quite mature speech, I have to confess.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, obviously the Barbados Water Authority has been challenged for a number of years and has been the target of public criticism over a long period of time. I happen to be in this Honourable Chamber as the Honourable Member for St. Philip South between 1994, and 1999.

Sir, I was witness to a debate on the Barbados Water Authority in which I got a good sense of the challenges posed for Members of Parliament by the Barbados Water Authority. I got a good sense of how Members of Parliament viewed the Barbados Water Authority. That debate I want to refer to, just to quote the most experienced Member on the then Government's Side, the present Opposition at this time, the late Sir Harold St. John.

I am quoting from the Debate of August 8, 1997, page 56. Sir Harold had this to say about the Barbados Water Authority, and I quote:

"I frankly do not believe that many of the people who manage the Authority care about the rest of us. They are interested in their closed-shop view as to how they think it should be run - in a most indifferent and insensitive manner which I have seen for a very long period of time.

It is a public utility and we must carry the charge for them. They must understand that they are accountable to this body because it is a utility and it belongs to the public of Barbados.

It does not belong to this Government, or that Government, it belongs to the public of Barbados. I want to tell them this, that if they continue in their present pattern of behaviour, it may well be that they may so irk with the community, that they will be out of a job because we must not underwrite incompetence in management."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is representative, I would say, of the views which we have heard expressed about the Barbados Water Authority over a very long period of time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Water Authority came into existence around 1981. The Act creating it was passed in 1980, and indication that we were going to have a Water Authority was given as far back as 1976, when the Democratic Labour Party was in office, when we were securing a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank for the purpose of the Bridgetown Sewerage System.

Sir, one of the conditions imposed by the bank was that what was then the Water Works Department, should be delinked from the central Civil Service and that water and sewerage matters should be managed by an independent authority. That is how the Barbados Water Authority came into existence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was talk at the time of calling it the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), but that name has been so sullied by the performance of the Water and Sewerage Authority in a neighbouring country, that it was thought wise not to so name it but to call it just the Barbados Water Authority.

9.10 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Hon. F. J. STUART: Sir, the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) has rendered a commendable service to Barbados, although it has never been able to meet the expectation of the consuming public.

Sir, at the time of its creation, Ministers in the successor Government, the Barbados Labour Party Government of 1980, warned that, from time to time, the Authority would come in for harsh criticism because they would have to impose rates on the public that the public might not necessarily want to absorb.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us be very frank as politicians and Members of this Honourable House. There has never been a time in Barbados, or perhaps in any other country, where increased rates for public utilities or increased taxes, have met with resounding applause in any community. It just does not happen. If things are increased by one cent, people complain because it is human not to

like increases because increases reduce disposable income and that, Sir, is a fact.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, necessarily, the Barbados Water Authority has had to be the target of criticism from the public over the period of its existence and that has continued to be so in respect of the recent increase imposed by the present Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a little unrealistic to say, as did the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, that since the imposition of the increase, things have not improved at the Authority.

Sir, quite frankly, if you say in one breath how old the problems are, it is really a little disingenuous to suggest that a three-month increase, or a four-month increase, would solve problems that are decades, or years old.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality has to be faced, I think, that when the Barbados Labour Party took office in 1994, the financial position of the Barbados Water Authority, was showing a net profit. Sir, that had been so in 1992, 1993, 1994, and it continued up to about 1997, and thereafter.

Sir, thanks to the quality of the management of the Authority by the Barbados Labour Party, and thanks to the attitude of the Barbados Labour Party to the Barbados Water Authority, the finances went into decline and except for one year, I think 2006, the decline was uninterrupted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the time we came to office in 2008, we faced a Barbados Water Authority that was in financial crisis and the Government had to take a decision.

The public, as the Honourable Member for St. Joseph said, and he is quite right, that his Constituency and the Constituency in St. Thomas and others, have been complaining quite stridently about the quality of service they receive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the parish in which I have lived all my life, St. Philip, after the construction of the prison at Dodds, water service to the people in adjoining areas began to be affected and there were complaints up there as well.

Sir, the Government had to decide to listen for the next 10 years to consumers in Barbados complaining about the Barbados Water Authority and the quality of service that it is providing to them, or do we do something about it?

Sir, the something about it, we judged, based on all the information that was available to us, involved putting the Barbados Water Authority, as far as that was possible,

in a financial, sustainable position and that could not be done without increasing water rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Governments and Oppositions have always argued over the timing of taxing imposition. The time is never really right for a taxing imposition because people do not like tax increases, or rate increases, but the Government had to take a stand on the issue.

The Government knew that people would complain about the increases, but the choice was between hearing people complain about the increase, or hearing them complain for the next decade and a half about the quality of service they were getting from the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, we took a position on the increases on the understanding that we could put the Barbados Water Authority in a sustainable position and pursue all the other initiatives about which the Minister so eloquently spoke this morning to ensure that this dark period in the life of the Barbados Water Authority is put behind us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have decided to put it under the Fair Trading Commission.

The Honourable Member who just sat down has wondered aloud whether putting the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission, will call the Barbados Water Authority to a higher standard. I am not wondering aloud, because it has to do it. I know that the bureaucrats in the Barbados Water Authority and some other persons may feel that this is not the time, but no time would be the time to put the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission, if we resign ourselves to the prevailing culture at that Authority.

Sir, it has to be called to a higher standard. Its management and its structure, all of this has to be re-examined and the Authority has to rise to the challenge of rendering a high quality of service to the people of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that regard, I am satisfied that the Minister, in particular, but the Government, in general, intends an unfailing oversight of what goes on at the Barbados Water Authority to ensure that it maintains the highest possible standard, having regard to the fact that the people of Barbados are putting their money at its disposal to get its house in order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing that I have said is intended to suggest that some employees at the Barbados Water Authority have not been doing their best for the Authority. The ones that have been doing their best, I want to urge them to continue to do so, but those who have not been doing their best, had better understand that this

Government's patience can run out, and that if standards are not improved, and there is not a higher level of discipline, the Government will have to look at what is going on there with a view to ensuring that the taxpayers of Barbados get value for money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is really no need for any further debate on this issue. There is bipartisan consensus on the Bill before the House and this Government intends to ensure that a curtain is drawn across the dark past of the Barbados Water Authority and that the people of Barbados can, in future, after the elapse of a reasonable time, and after we have had ample opportunity to take all the corrective measures needed to put the Barbados Water Authority in order, people would be able to boast that the sacrifice they have been called upon to make at this very difficult time in their lives, was worth it after all.

H/A56/9.20 p.m. Sequence 58

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are surefooted on the step we are taking today, and I look forward to the Fair Trading Commission holding the Barbados Water Authority to the highest possible standards. I am confident that, faced with this challenge, the Barbados Water Authority will rise to those standards.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I rise to wrap up this debate. First, let me take the opportunity to thank all Honourable Members who participated in this debate for their contribution. I would especially like to thank the Honourable Members on This Side, who fully endorsed the Government's plan for the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, I should also like to thank the members of staff of the Barbados Water Authority, who have so ably assisted in the preparation for this debate, and the members of the staff of the Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage.

Sir, we have had a full day of discussion and the speaker who just took his seat was careful to note, that there is bipartisan support for this particular proposal by Government to move the Barbados Water Authority under the Fair Trading Commission for the purpose of regulating its activities.

Sir, a number of issues were raised and over the course of this debate, references were made to those questions and I am satisfied, that we have been able, from Both Sides, to glean some of the clarifications needed to give further clarity to a number of these issues.

Sir, at the end of the day, what is significant about this debate is the fact that the Government of Barbados has decided that it would take the lead in ensuring that full correction is brought to many of the challenges at the Barbados Water Authority. We could have chosen to continue to borrow. We could have chosen to continue to postpone critical decisions that are needed to be taken, but we, as a matter of policy, have chosen to take the necessary steps, steps that would have had their journey started in the previous Administration, but steps that we believe are appropriate. I think that really distinguishes political Parties and Governments from each other.

If the proposed process that we inherited, in our view, is the right process, then we have a moral responsibility to follow the course. I do not find that there is anything wrong with that. I do not find that there is anything that belittles the strengthening of this Government.

This Government intends to do the right thing and we cannot in good faith, allow the Barbados Water Authority to continue to struggle when we, in fact, have a solution that will not only determine the regulation of rates, but perhaps most significantly, that would give rise to the Barbados Water Authority responding to a raft of standards that will be imposed by the Fair Trading Commission.

Sir, as I would have noted in my presentation, the enactment of the Fair Trading Commission brought along with it a set of requirements, that anybody that is subjected to its regulations would have to respond to. For example, principles, rates, standards of service for regulated service providers, monitoring general business conduct and to take enforcement action when needed. That is just part of the routine of the Fair Trading Commission in terms of regulating an entity such as the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, I have to say this. Over the years the staff of the Barbados Water Authority has had to operate in a climate that was most debilitating, including the accommodations from which they delivered their service from.

I noted earlier in my presentation that we have moved swiftly to put the mechanisms in place, to begin the work at the construction of a new Headquarters for the Barbados Water Authority.

I believe that it is important that we outfit the Authority with all of the requisite requirements, skills and resources to do what has to be done in that regard.

I do not think it is necessary at this late hour of the evening to rehash a lot of what was done before, but it is important that the Management and Staff of the Barbados Water Authority know, that the Government is fully behind the effort to ensure that it succeeds at every single level going forward, and whatever struggles that may be behind, or around them arising, we are determined, in the Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, to ensure that all of the staff at the Barbados Water Authority are enabled, wherever necessary, that they can pursue the delivery of their service to Barbadians in a way that sets a new benchmark for water services provision in this country of ours.

I am pleased to note that all of those who would have contributed in some way, shape or form, were able to make reference to the fact that we have a very good staff at the Barbados Water Authority. They have been able to make reference to the fact that what we need to do now, is to ensure that the way forward is clear and that all the enabling mechanisms are provided, that day after day, we work collectively to ensure we surmount any challenges that may lay ahead of us.

Again, I want to extend my deepest appreciation to my colleagues, all of them who have participated in this debate, and have lent their full support to the Government's effort.

I do not think one person, one entity, or one group can solve problems. I think that people have to work together.

One of the things that we have tried to do in the Ministry, is to take an integrated approach to how we do our business, and all the agencies that come into contact with the Barbados Water Authority's work, that we work together.

We want to go beyond the Ministry of the Environment to work with the other people within the other agencies of Government to ensure that the Barbados Water Authority does a more excellent job.

I believe it is about indicating what standards are required, enabling people to achieve those standards and rewarding when those standards are achieved. That is why I believe that any problems that we may have experienced in the past, any challenges in the past, that the Barbados Water Authority has now demonstrated a new commitment, and they are willing to take the bull by the horns, as one of my colleagues said earlier today, and to work towards a more excellent way in how we do business at the Authority. HA56 9.30 p.m. Sequence 59

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

House A56, Sequence 60, 9.30 p.m.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot solve everything at the same time, and I want the country to understand that we are working in a methodical way to address issues as we come across those issues. Yes, we have looked at the whole issue of road reinstatement and yes, we in the Barbados Water Authority have come up with a new proposal, a new plan to deal with road reinstatement issues to make sure that we reduce the time between when the Barbados Water Authority goes in and digs up, and when the road is reinstated, but we said those things earlier.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also know that the public had concerns with how swift we move to correct issues of concern that interrupt their water supply, and we have asked that the mechanism be looked at and it has been looked at. It has been simplified and we have identified every single officer, who is now involved in the delivery of that critical service, and that is a new way forward. Sir, that is not only a plan, but that is a plan that is being executed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we understand where we need to go and what needs to be done. There must never be a time in the future when the Barbados Water Authority is not able to meet the standards' bar, as they go forward in the delivery of their service.

I am fully convinced that, based on what I know, see and interact with on a daily basis, that we have men and women who are serious about the delivery of services that can add value to the life quality of all Barbadians.

Sir, we are not going to be distracted by the murmurings of certain individuals. We are not going to be distracted by the incompetence of those who would have gone before us. We are committed to this task.

We are confident that we know how to lead this task and we know that we, in partnership with the Barbados Water Authority, will be able to meet every single required standard that the Fair Trading Commission would ever impose, as part of its regulatory standards for the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, therefore, we never doubted that there would be a requirement to follow standards. We never doubted that new standards would be introduced. Sir, we understood it when we read the legislation. We know what will be required. We did not willy-nilly walk the Barbados Water Authority into the Fair Trading Commission. We understood it is the way to go, and if we are going to be serious about improving the Barbados Water Authority, why would we be afraid to take the Barbados Water Authority to the Fair Trading Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say in closing, that as we begin this journey, we will work hard, perhaps, harder than ever to ensure that we achieve the successes that are ahead of us.

Again, I want to thank all colleagues, and I certainly want to thank the management and staff of the Barbados Water Authority for the excellent work that they continue to do, and we will continue to achieve that goal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those words, I ask that this Bill be now read a second time.

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 Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clause 1 was called.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Chairman, there is a slight amendment to Clause 1. Sir, it is cited as 2008, and it is to be amended to 2010.

I beg to move that Clause 1, as amended, do stand part.

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

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

Clause 1 was passed.

Clauses 2 to 5, inclusive, were called and passed.

On the motion of Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the DEPUTY SPEAKER the passing of one Bill, with amendment in Committee, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Barbados Water Authority (Amendment) Act, 2010.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government's Business for today's Sitting and I beg to move that this Honourable House be adjourned until Tuesday, February 23, 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that this Honourable House be adjourned until Tuesday, February 23, 2010 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

House A56, Sequence 60, 9.39 p.m.

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BRATHWAITE, Mr. A. D. (St. Philip South)

CLARKE, Mr. G. A. (St. George North)

DUGUID, Dr. W. F. (Christ Church West)

EASTMOND, Mr. R. C. (St. James North)

FORDE, Miss C. Y. (St. Thomas)

HUTSON, Hon. E. G. (St. James Central)

INNIS, Hon. D. O’N. (St. James South)

JONES, Hon. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)

KELLMAN, His Excellency D. St.E. (St. Lucy)

LASHLEY, Mr. S. A. (Christ Church West Central)

LOWE, Dr. the Hon. D. S. (Christ Church East)

MARSHALL, Mr. D. D. (St. Joseph)

MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M. A. (St. Michael North East)

PAUL, Mr. J. D. (St. Michael West Central)

SINCKLER, Hon. C. P. (St. Michael North West)

STUART, Hon. F. J. (St. Michael South)

STUART, Hon. J.

THOMPSON, Hon. D. J. H. (St. John)

TODD, Hon. P. M. T. (City of Bridgetown)

TOPPIN, Mr. R. St.C. (St. Michael North)

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Dates in the text. The source gives ‘Tuesday, February 10, 2010’ (10 February 2010 was a Wednesday). The weekday and date do not agree; printed as in the source.

Q3. Opening. The convening sentence in the source begins mid-sentence and gives no time: ‘met on Tuesday, February 16, 2010.’ Printed as in the source.

Q4. Minutes. The seconder’s words (‘Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.’) are run into Hon. R. D. Jones’s motion in the source rather than set as a separate speech. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Suspension, about 12.30 p.m.. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce moved that the Sitting be suspended ‘until 1.45 p.m.’, but the procedural note records the question ‘that the Sitting be suspended until 1.30 p.m.’. Printed as in the source. Please confirm.

Q6. Speaker labels. The Member for St. Lucy is labelled ‘His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN’ in most places and ‘Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN’ in others; one seconder is labelled ‘Hon. J. STUART’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Tuesday, 16th February, 2010, with the Deputy Speaker, His Honour K. St.C. Best, presiding for the business of the day; prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood. The Minutes of Tuesday, 10th February, 2010 were confirmed, and the Attorney-General, Hon. F. J. Stuart, laid the Duties, Taxes and Other Payment (Exemption) (The Barbados Light & Power Company Limited) Order 2010. Standing Orders were suspended for the rest of the Sitting.

The only Order was the Barbados Water Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2008, moved by Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe, Minister of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, to make the Authority’s power to set water rates and charges subject to regulation by the Fair Trading

Commission under the Utilities Regulation Act. He said the Government had found the Authority bankrupt and saddled with a \$150 million loan for mains replacement, had raised rates by 60 per cent to save it, and was now preparing it for regulation with an Inter-American Development Bank loan. He gave unaccounted-for water as estimated at between 29 and 62 per cent, a mains replacement programme of over \$236 million, an electricity bill of about \$2.8 million a month, the planned replacement of about 50 000 meters and a reverse osmosis plant of about \$40 million, and noted Cabinet decisions of 27th August, 1998 and 21st October, 2004 under the former Government.

Dr. W. F. Duguid said the Opposition supported the measure because monopolies should come under the Fair Trading Commission, which was set up in 2001, but that the devil was in the details of standards and banding; he and Mr. D. St.E. Kellman exchanged repeated points of order, and the Deputy Speaker asked Members to use correct titles. Mr. Kellman said nothing had changed after the \$150 million was borrowed. Mr. R. St.C. Toppin argued that the Bill should have come before the rate increase, and Mr. S. A. Lashley recalled a 38 per cent increase effective 1st January, 2005. Mr. J. D. Paul welcomed a transparent process for setting rates. Miss C. Y. Forde, warned several times on relevance, spoke of the effect of the 60 per cent increase on the unemployed and said the Ministry responsible for social care had returned some \$7 million to the Consolidated Fund.

Hon. J. D. E. Boyce spoke on ground water protection at the Belle. Mr. G. A. Clarke said the minimum bill had risen to between \$32 and \$35, drawing points of order from Hon. D. O’N. Inniss, Hon. C. P. Sinckler and the Minister. Mr. R. C. Eastmond and Hon. P. M. T. Todd spoke on the West Coast Sewerage Project. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley challenged the Minister’s account of the \$150 million bond, said at least BDS\$1 billion might be needed to secure water supplies over a 20-year programme, noted the power to exempt classes of persons under section 28(h), and urged regional pooling of financing for mains replacement. Mr. Sinckler replied that a former Minister had put the cost of setting the Authority right at \$300 million and that a special fund had been created for welfare cases arising from the increase; Hon. E. G. Hutson said subsidising everything was not sustainable.

After a suspension until 8.25 p.m., Mr. A. D. Brathwaite urged water conservation, Mr. D. D. Marshall noted that Barbadians used more water each five years while drought reduced the aquifers and Mr. Stuart also supported the Bill. In reply Dr. Lowe described plans for road reinstatement. The Bill was read a second time without division; in Committee, with Mr. S. A. Lashley in

the Chair, Clause 1 was amended to change the year from 2008 to 2010 and Clauses 2 to 5 were passed. The Bill was read a third time and passed as the Barbados Water

Authority (Amendment) Act, 2010, and the House was adjourned until Tuesday, 23rd February, 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

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