
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: The Sitting of this Honourable House is resumed.

When the suspension was taken last, we were at Order No.5 and with that we shall now continue.

The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this aspect of the annual Estimates debate to say that I am very happy to stand here as the Member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown, and hear our Minister of Finance and Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, reaffirm this Government's commitment to fully execute the Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, which you know is a multi-million dollar loan facility, which will seek to transform the landscape of working-class districts within our country, and of course, I am particularly interested in the neighbourhoods within my Constituency, namely, Cats Castle and Greenfield.

Sir, since you cannot speak for yourself in this debate, I know that within your Constituency, The Garden Land, this project will also upgrade that neighbourhood.

Sir, I, therefore, take this opportunity to assure the good people in my Constituency - Cats Castle and Greenfield, notwithstanding the years of empty promises made by the Barbados Labour Party with regard to their neighbourhood upgrade, this Democratic Labour Party Government is forging full steam ahead to ensure that this project is executed beginning this financial year, such that in summary, we would see the eradication of what the Americans call "outdoor plumbing". That is the dry pit

toilet, so that none would exist in these communities when the project is completed, over a couple of years. This is very important.

Sir, I make no apologies for boasting about this, because this is what the people of the City elected your humble servant to do, to represent their interest. The Honourable Member for St. John mentioned, in relation to the issue of the free access on the publicly-owned Transport Board by our school children, whereas the affluent in our society would see this as insignificant, the working-class people of our country would be very appreciative of this Administration's approach to giving them ease.

Sir, when you have four, and sometimes five or more, school aged children within a household, with the nature of our extended families in our country, that could save hundreds of dollars yearly in terms of bus fares for those children. That goes a long way.

We in this Administration clearly delineate the difference in terms of ideology between this Democratic Labour Party Government's approach and the approach of the more conservative Barbados Labour Party.

The rich and the famous have the wherewithal, financial and otherwise, to represent themselves. Of course, this Administration represents the whole country, but it is the vulnerable groups, the poor and the dispossessed who rely on a caring Government, such as the Democratic Labour Party Administration, to represent their interests, their enabling rights to ensure that their interests are protected. This is the commitment of the Democratic Labour Party, to ensure that the masses of our country are not in any way marginalised.

I fully support the access to buses by school children, free of cost, and make no apologies for this. Sir, by the same token I am saying that those persons who have never used the dry pit toilet may not be interested. It does

not make a difference. They were born with the comforts of these modern amenities, flush water borne facilities.

HA60B 9.40 a.m. Sequence 1

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Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 02, 9.40 a.m.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: There are still thousands of people in Barbados as we speak today, who suffer that insanitary indignity of using dry pit toilets, and this Honourable Member will not rest until they are eradicated from the face of the City and, indeed, the rest of Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Sir, this Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme is exciting because it is a pilot, that is to say, apart from the four pilot sites identified, there are 10 additional sites as I understand it, which will be upgraded to a lesser extent.

Sir, once this project is executed successfully, then there are possibilities to negotiate further funding to extend the programme to other districts throughout this country. In this programme, as you know, we will see streets being widened to enable access by emergency vehicles, be they fire trucks or ambulance.

Drainage, Mr. Speaker, this Honourable Member is not ashamed again to talk about drainage. Drainage is important and the Barbados Labour Party sort of condemns this Government and humiliates this Government for creating a Ministry, headed by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East dealing with drainage, water resources and the environment.

I am very proud of the Honourable Prime Minister for having the foresight to emphasize and concentrate resources to alleviate the problem of drainage in our country.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, Headley's Land in your Constituency has been flood-prone for years and, of course, within the City, most of which is low-lying, areas such as Cats Castle, Reed Street, Mason Hall Street, Murphy's Pasture, Chapman Lane, Vine Street, River Road, are all flood-prone.

In the past, people have had to be rescued by boat, including old ladies and little children. Sir, lives were in perils, and I was disappointed in the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East's presentation yesterday.

As the Leader of the Barbados Labour Party, in her reply to an Estimates debate would seek to sort of ridicule

your humble servant, saying that the Member of Parliament has distinguished himself primarily dealing with issues of drainage. Then, I heard a high-pitched voice coming from the Honourable Member for St. Peter to include rodents.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, your Constituency like mine, is flood-prone and this Honourable Member was elected by the people of the City to address these very serious issues. If there are not of concern to other people, that is their business, but this Honourable Member was not elected to speak for speaking sake, but to represent the working-class people of Bridgetown, and I make no apology for doing that to the best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable Member is very much aware of the fact that it was the vision of the stalwarts like the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, and the Democratic Labour Party in general, that we created the free access to education from primary to tertiary level, which enabled all of us, regardless of our background to be able to rise to the highest level.

This Honourable Member will not be sidetracked by any petty bourgeois approaches to seek to humiliate this Honourable Member as he seeks to represent the interest of the masses of our country.

I remember, your learned, Mr. Speaker, as the Member of Parliament for your Constituency, St. Michael West, highlighting in the same Garden Land and Headley's Land area, the issue of rodent infestation. It is a serious issue and I saw again, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East in her presentation yesterday, seeking to ridicule the Honourable Member for St. James South, talking about he is now the Minister of Polyclinics and then adding on also the Vector Control Unit.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying we must take our role in this Parliament to be very serious. Is the public, therefore, to conclude that the approach of the Barbados Labour Party, since its Leader is seeking to ridicule the Honourable Member for being the Minister responsible for the Vector Control Unit, that the Barbados Labour Party would shut it down, Mr. Speaker, the Vector Control Unit, which is responsible for having oversight in the sanitation and health of our country to ensure that leptospirosis which kills, and I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East lamenting about two of her constituents, or two people known to her that died.

Sir, this Honourable Member can also allude to the fact that just over the Christmas period, within a week of contracting leptospirosis, one of my constituents, a young lady, the late Tracy Griffith, succumbed to leptospirosis. This is really heart-rendering. I was at the funeral and she left two young school aged children, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is seeking to ridicule

the Vector Control Unit and the very invaluable role which they play in educating and alerting the public to ensure that proper sanitation is maintained.

I remember attending an event organised by the same Vector Control Unit. The Honourable Member for St. James South gave the feature address and your humble servant as the Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, made an address as well at Lester Vaughan School, when we brought in primary school children from around the island, sensitizing them, making them aware of these issues, in terms of rodent control and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is pooh-poohing the effort of the Vector Control Unit.

Mr. Speaker, it goes further. Mr. Applewhite, Head of the Health Inspectors, has been very proactive in terms of deploying his environmental health officers throughout the City and other areas in our country, including your area, St. Michael West, where you see the modern rodent traps, made of concrete being deployed.

I take this opportunity to urge the public as I have seen that the officers have complained that some members of the public have been so callous, that they have been taking these concrete rodent traps and piling them up on each other to prop up vehicles, or to use as legs on which to put card tables or dominos tables. This is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker, because these play a very important role in reducing the rodent population in our country, which as I said, can cause serious threats to life and limb.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Vector Control Unit also deals with the control of the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito, which can spread dengue fever and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is trying to pooh-pooh the Honourable Member for St. James South for being the Minister responsible for the Vector Control Unit. Shame, Mr. Speaker, shame and we must rise above this sort of condescending approach to represent the safety and health of the country as a whole, in a more responsible way.

Sir, we will note the difference between the approach of this Democratic Labour Party and the Barbados Labour Party.

Let me proceed, Mr. Speaker, to also congratulate the Honourable Member for St. John, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for ensuring that, for example, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, the Minister of Transport and Works mentioned that this Democratic Labour Party Government is serious about ensuring that the proposed Sea View, minibus, ZR terminal, just west of the General Post Office at Cheapside, will be constructed in the near future.

I have been able to sit in at meetings of the Infrastructure Committee of the Cabinet, taking an interest as Member of Parliament for the City, because my approach is, Mr. Speaker, that anything within the geographical boundaries of the Constituency of the City is of interest to the Representative for the City.

I remember a few years ago, the former Member of this Constituency was put in an embarrassing position when the Barbados Labour Party rehabilitated the Cheapside Market, and it was only while on the verge of being reopened that the former Member of Parliament for the City, realised that in the interior of the building was just an open area and there were no stalls on which the vendors could put their trays, and then the Barbados Labour Party had to scramble to rectify that situation.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable Member is taking representation more seriously than that and, therefore, every opportunity given to me to sit in on these meetings, to see these projects in their infancy, to ensure that the input of the interest of the City constituents, made by your humble servant, would be taken, wherever possible.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen the plans and they are very exciting plans.

Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 02, 09.50 a.m.

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: I would not go into the details and speak out of turn, but they would seek to ensure that the amenities provided for the Transport Board buses, be they in the Speightstown, or the Fairchild Street Terminus, would be provided to those ZR and minibus drivers and the commuters who patronise them at the proposed Sea View Terminus.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable Member would have looked at the plans in terms of the areas which currently house the old Fairchild Street Market and the River Van Stand Terminus, where there is a wow factor. We are looking to ensure that vendors are not put one side as if they are the scum of the earth and nuisances to society, but are recognised as small business owners, and so you cannot just hide them away as the Barbados Labour Party did.

They rehabilitated the Cheapside Market, but they did not market the property properly, so the vendors who remained inside did not get many customers coming in and they had to go on the sidewalk.

You have to have the vendors integrated within the infrastructure of the City, or whatever the area is, to ensure that they can be situated within the normal route taken by the pedestrian public, so that as they walk along the streets

of the City, the vendors would be within their sight and would, therefore, be able to make the quantity of sales significant to the extent that their businesses are viable.

Mr. Speaker, this is being prioritise in terms of our proposals for the upgrade of that Fairchild Street area, all within the capital City of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy and excited to have been given the opportunity by the Honourable Member for St. John, the Prime Minister, to focus my efforts on the issue of small business development, entrepreneurship and empowerment.

Mr. Speaker, this aspect of the economy of our country is vital, because not everyone will be able to get in the short-term a Government job, or a job in the private sector, so there is a very important role to be played by the small business person who is taking the initiative and the financial risk to invest their limited resources with the hope of being a successful business person.

Mr. Speaker, I would wish the public at large to respect these vendors, however small they are, as entrepreneurs. People may start as a fruit vendor, a vegetable vendor, a clothing vendor, a textile vendor, or what have you, but by dint of hard work and determination, they can end up developing their businesses into businesses that employ a few people, and then eventually hundreds of people.

People have done it before, so the sky is the limit, therefore, I congratulate the Prime Minister again as Leader of this Democratic Labour Party Administration for “taking the bull by the horn” and insisting that we create these open markets, as illustrated by the efforts of the Minister of Agriculture in the Other Place, as was set up at Pinfold Street between where the Plaza Cinema used to be and the Bethel Church.

This Honourable Member, as Member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown, took up the invitation of the Honourable Member in the Other Place, the Minister of Agriculture, to go with him one Saturday morning to promote this open market. We were carried live on one of the radio networks. I saw for myself young people and older people.

One lady from my Constituency told me that morning, as she displayed her cucumbers and other vegetables for sale, that she works otherwise during the week, but found that the salary was not sufficient. As some people say, you have more months than money because half way in the month the salary may be completely utilised, so many people are looking for extra income. This young person was overjoyed that this Democratic Labour Party has provided the opportunity for them. They are not

licensed vendors, or full-time vendors, but they want to make a little berry on weekends, and this Democratic Labour Party Government provided this opportunity for them by way of the open markets.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand, it is spreading in a very spontaneous way in other areas near Queen’s College and other parts of the island. I understand that it has been going on in St. George for quite a while with the affluent sector of the community patronising these open markets, so this is a wonderful opportunity.

We have stipulated that on weekends in this open market forum, no issue of licensing would be required, so nobody would be harassing you, or trying to run you off the streets asking you for a license, because it would not be required. It is organised to allow vendors in textiles, craft and food and beverage to make an extra dollar, therefore, I take this opportunity to encourage Barbadians in general to look into this issue of entrepreneurship.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to get into racial divides, but it is a reality that in certain ethnic groups in our country, it is sort of ingrained within their psyche that you do not just go and get educated to get a job, but you look to open your own business. Many of them started as itinerant traders with a suitcase of clothes, or what have you, and they have moved up to build mansions and stores in our country. Mr. Speaker, if they could do it, the masses of our country of African descent can do it as well.

I have heard the Honourable Member for St. John, the Prime Minister, at the University of the West Indies at a lecture recently inviting the Pro Vice Chancellor and the Principal of the Campus and the campus community as a whole, to not just produce graduates for producing sake, but to ensure that they can be matured in terms of their outlook, so that they are not just limited to finding a job, but that their training would be relevant to the developmental needs of our country and even entrepreneurship would be promoted. Subsequent to this, I have seen the Principal buy into this and is now talking along those lines.

Mr. Speaker, it must be a mindset where we see the opening up of business as a viable option in terms of a career path in our country, because oftentimes we just assume that all we can aim for is to get a job, be it in Government where you do your 33 years, and hope to retire.

Mr. Speaker, in North America and in other developed countries, some people have two and three jobs. I am not saying to over-work yourself and threaten your health. I am saying that having a little business on the side is very viable.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, some people have a dream to open a business, but they have to wait until they retire in Government and get their gratuity to invest in a business. Thrift is important. You must save, but you should also invest wisely in terms of small business development and not just leave your money in a bank and the bank makes investment with that money and makes a tremendous profit.

Mr. Speaker, this Member of Parliament is very excited. I have not even gotten an office as yet, so it is still early days yet, but already a number of small business leaders in our country have been approaching me, very excited about the fact that this Administration is providing this additional oversight in terms of an additional Minister within that Ministry, because that Ministry is so large that it actually has two Permanent Secretaries.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here fully at the disposal of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, as we seek to empower the people of our country in terms of promoting small business.

I am very happy, Mr. Speaker, to tell the public that this is no neophyte that is speaking, because this Honourable Member has benefitted from the visionary policies of the Democratic Labour Party in terms of free education, that has resulted in this Honourable Member graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Mathematics.

Mr. Speaker, leading up to the last General Election, you heard from the Barbados Labour Party that there were no Economists on the Democratic Labour Party side. This Honourable Member does not blow his own trumpet, but this Honourable Member has been trained by the best in our country and would use that training to give back to the country as a whole.

House A60B Sequence 3

10.00 a.m.

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I have been fortunate to have been given the opportunity to act as Minister in at least 80 per cent of the Cabinet; on two occasions I have acted as Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce, including this portfolio, and on one occasion as Minister of Economic Affairs. Therefore, I am not a neophyte.

Sir, I remember while as Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, I was approached by the Small Business Association. Sir, the Minister was not available to make a presentation at the Graduation Ceremony of an

Information Technology Training Course and the Small Business Association approached your humble servant. Sir, I was able to make that presentation and I met a lot of those young and prospective entrepreneurs. Sir, this Honourable Member has already been developing good relationships with the small business community in this country and I pledge to walk the walk.

Mr. Speaker, there are hundreds of small businesses located in the City and this Member of Parliament will not be afraid to walk and talk with these people. I will not be afraid to hear from them, from the small business to the big business, to ensure that their perspectives can be factored into the overall Government policy with regard to small business development.

Sir, if you have ever heard about the American dream, in Europe there was the elitist situation where you had the lords and ladies, then you had the commoners; you also had the rich and famous, where many of the lords and ladies were born into the riches, but in the American dream, you had the immigrants, be they Jewish, or Caribbean nationals, going to the United States of America literally, growing from rags to riches. If they can do it, they breathe the same air as us, they have the same brain as us and we in Barbados can succeed in small business development.

Sir, once again, this Honourable Member of Parliament will do all within his power to ensure that the interest of the small business community is seriously taken by this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I take note on the issue of empowerment. I remember while in the Ministry of Social Care, in the first year of our Administration, being exposed to the concept led by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West. Sir, the concept by the Honourable Member was about seeking to empower the vulnerable groups in our society, to move them from welfare to work.

Sir, in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport and Works, we initiated the National Environmental Enhancement Programme, which gave an opportunity for people to move from being dependent on the State, to working for themselves. This Honourable Member was fortunate to be at the initiation ceremony at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, where we met hundreds of these persons, some of whom had CXCs, who were not waiting on Government to give them a hand-out. They wanted to earn an honest dollar for themselves and their families and were very excited to use this opportunity given by this Democratic Labour Party for them to be gainfully employed.

Mr. Speaker, I always keep reminding the Honourable Member for St. Thomas when the Honourable

Member talks about the fact that it was a programme of the Barbados Labour Party, but I would wish to say that this Democratic Labour Party inherited a situation in which the Welfare-to-Work Programme was being manned by one officer, who was already over-worked in terms of his normal case-load of welfare clients to look after. There was not that much financial, or human resources provided in that programme.

Sir, you have now heard the Prime Minister in his presentation making the point that the Democratic Labour Party will be expanding the Welfare-to-Work Programme, which continues to empower the vulnerable groups within our society, enabling them to be trained.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the same officer in the Welfare-to-Work Programme has been working, I remember Pinelands Creative Workshop, through UNESCO and other agencies, were able to conduct a number of training programmes in the heart of the City, in the Nelson Street/Ribbit Land area, at St. Ambrose Church Hall, for the poor and unemployed. Some of those programmes include airbrushing, C.X.C. English, Mathematics, batik, tie-dye and other skills, and then seeking to enable those persons to start up their own businesses. Therefore, this Democratic Labour Party will be expanding that Welfare-to-Work Programme.

Sir, in that same training programme at Nelson Street, welfare recipients were sponsored by the Welfare Department to participate in those courses. Sir, there are tremendous possibilities in terms of empowering these persons that rather than becoming perpetually dependent on the State, they are enabled and empowered to fend for themselves and to propel themselves in terms of contributing to national development.

Mr. Speaker, I will not prolong the debate in the aspect of the Estimates. I will wait until we get into the other Heads, but I would make the point that this issue of small business development and entrepreneurship will result in this Ministry having to liaise with other Departments within Government.

Sir, I see Government as a whole, as a family, as an entity, and so we should not have territorial delineation in terms of saying if this is about economic affairs, then you should not become involved in other Ministries.

We have the issue of the Welfare Department within the Ministry of Social Care also involved in the Ministry of Empowerment.

Mr. Speaker, when we get under the Tourism Head, I will be able to speak more about the issue of community tourism. Sir, this Honourable Member is very excited about the prospects of community tourism, and I congratulate the

Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, the Minister of Tourism and International Transport, where he has embraced this concept of community tourism, whereas other people were not very interested in this.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy have bought into the concept of empowering the small working-class communities and the residents therein, to ensure that they could get first-hand access to some of that foreign exchange spent by tourists, rather than having to wait on the trickle-down effect as the rich and larger players in the tourism sector cream off most of the profits.

Sir, by having tourists go into the working-class districts - you heard the Prime Minister talking about it: the issue of rum shops.

Mr. Speaker, I remember a few years ago on Barbadian radio, we had as a promotion a group from St. Vincent coming into Barbados promoting tourism, whose highlights were the rum shops in St. Vincent. They raised that as an intrinsic part of their culture.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Prime Minister talked about the need of ensuring that the glory days of Baxter's Road can return. I am saying that this Member of Parliament has spoken about this, and that I will do all within my power to ensure that we have Baxter's Road Mall going again, that we upgrade the infrastructure there. I know that it has been made a Special Development Area and we need to facilitate the development of that infrastructure. We have to improve security and lighting and so on, and the product available, so that cruise ship passengers, who have a limited time on the land, can therefore go quickly to Baxter's Road.

I have spoken to some of the tour operators and they are very excited about it, where they could come in their hundreds, as they now currently go to Oistins, with organised entertainment, where there is proper bathroom and other facilities, so that the small shop owners and fish fryers like Patsy, Gloria and others, my lovely people of the City, could get some foreign exchange from these tourists.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you did say you were winding up and so I did not bother to trouble you, but your time has, in fact, expired. Please wind up.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I can say more but I will leave that until we get into other Heads.

Mr. Speaker, I am very excited and long live this Democratic Labour Party Government.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to make my contribution in respect of these Estimates. Sir, despite whatever is said by Honourable Members on the Other Side, I live in this real world Barbados, and I believe I can boast of being on the land before many of the other Honourable Members on the Other Side. Therefore, I have a better understanding than a lot of what I am hearing. I am hearing a lot of rhetoric. I have heard, for many years, from the then Leader of the Opposition, now Prime Minister, a whole lot of innuendos, but when one investigates, nothing comes out of it.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is a very good character when it comes to innuendos.

10.10 a.m.

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Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Sir, to me, he is more of an actor than is the Prime Minister, because the Honourable Member spoke of hundreds of houses missing. I call him the Minister of losses now. We cannot find the houses and then the houses appeared. You cannot find the wells and then the wells appeared. You cannot find the toilets and the toilets have reappeared and, Sir, we are hearing so much.

The public of Barbados will make their own judgment and, Sir, that is the fundamental point I wish to make this morning.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to dwell on that too much except to say that the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto spoke of "Pathways to Progress", and what I have witnessed over the last two years, clearly indicates, to me, that it is more a pathway, or a cartroad to poverty. Sir, I say that in the truest sense and with honesty from my heart.

Sir, I have said this because when the Barbados Labour Party demitted office in January 2008, it left the unemployment rate at approximately 6.7 per cent. The Honourable Members on the Other Side, particularly the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, always criticised the reports and the statistical information from the Department about unemployment, but yesterday, I would witness that the Prime Minister referred to those same statistics.

Mr. Speaker, today, in Barbados, on March 16, 2010, unemployment has climbed to double digits. In essence, for the ordinary public to understand, about 5 000 odd people are now out of employment, when a Government says to me to give it a change, and that it would be the best Government you could ever want in the world, and that it would ensure that there is no arrogance but, Sir, I would not even talk about that today. It said it was going to ensure

there was transparency, and that when it comes to contracts, it would come to Parliament.

The Government said that when it was going to pull certain aspects of property out of the system to be able to build houses, that it would come to Parliament with the necessary Resolutions to have it properly documented from this Floor.

Mr. Speaker, when we look around Barbados and hear who got contracts, who did not and so on, when we hear about who got consultancies and who did not get consultancies for the Democratic Labour Party, would be something of the past. I am saying it is talking and talking, but not the walking.

Sir, one must remember that the Democratic Labour Party of a past Administration said, clearly, that the Manifesto is not a social contract and I am beginning to believe that they do not match what they put in these documents that have been circulated in the country.

Mr. Speaker, while I agree that there is an economic crisis, and while I agree that every effort must be made to improve the situation, I believe that the Democratic Labour Party, as a Government, could have done better.

We, as a Government, had what we called the "Planning and Priorities Committee", where projects went to that Committee. It comprised Ministers, senior civil servants and the private sector, and we always put that documentation there, have discussion and brought them to the fore.

Mr. Speaker, the private sector has sent home some people too because of the economic situation. Sir, if they are meeting it hard, we cannot expect them to continue to employ, because the Government started it first. We heard that there would be no more long knives, but people at the Urban Development Commission, as recent as last year, were sent home because the Minister and other cohorts of the Democratic Labour Party believe that they are Barbados Labour Party supporters and, therefore, they should be sent home.

Mr. Speaker, there are Barbadians who have played their role in helping with the development of the Urban Development Commission. Sir, at the Rural Development Commission the Director is still at home and a consultant is there for nearly two years, although they said there would be no more consultants in that place.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, people are going home left, right and centre, because if they think they belong to the Barbados Labour Party without displaying the evidence, they are sent "helter skelter". Sir, I believe it is wrong. I call it "political victimisation" and I will die saying that

because, at the end of the day, those who are suffering, are still Barbadians and they have not been told that ever so welcome that they should wait for a call.

They are Barbadians whose navel strings are buried here, who have children to send to school and educate and they are Barbadians who owe mortgages. Sir, they might have bought a little car, but they have to survive.

I have tremendous difficulty when you walk the length and breadth of Barbados that innocent Barbadians at all levels, even maids are being sent home because of this Democratic Labour Party that says it cares.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot say we care, we cannot say there will be equity across the board and then people are being sidelined as a result.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make mention of some of the Departments that have had serious cuts, or have not performed in a way for revenue to be brought into this country to help with the programmes, particularly those that are social.

Sir, tourism is down, \$100 million less in revenue last year and construction is down, down, down.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party determined it would open up Fund Access for black businesses, that small business would be expanded and so on, and we saw growth in the construction sector, where people are freighting and some are making concrete blocks, and many of them are artisans, et cetera, but they are now sitting at home.

Mr. Speaker, I will make this point again. When we are in a society, where a lot of households are headed by women, but we know that traditionally, we have socialised our men to be the head of households and to look after their families, Sir, any time that the percentage of males, unemployed, is higher than that of females, we can look for trouble.

Sir, men will now be put in court even more, more of them will go to prison, many more of them will steal and get involved in crimes.

Sir, woe betide the males of Barbados that people said were in crisis before, but they are in deeper crisis now as a result of what is happening, that this Government is not performing in the way that it encourages and coerces the people of Barbados to vote for the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, they were going to build 500 houses in 500 days and so far, they have not built 100 houses yet on land that the Barbados Labour Party left ready. Sir, some

roads were put in, the sites and services were there, but all like now the Minister is boasting.

Sir, who got the first set of houses that were made available? Sir, two sets of houses were being offered, cousins of the Minister, nephews and nieces, and they are saying that these people were on the list for 25 years and 30 years, but those persons who received the first set of houses were 18 years, 21 years and 24 years. Where were they when people were on the list for 30 years, or more and have not got a house yet? The Honourable Member needs to explain that.

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by stating that nephews and nieces of mine received houses from the National Housing Corporation. Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Honourable Member withdraws her comment.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, unless you can substantiate it, please withdraw it.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I will withdraw nephews and nieces, but the Minister should be aware that there were friends and other people. I do not want to include his family, because I respect his family and I respect him too.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please move on, Honourable Member.

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, the second set of houses for any Minister, or anybody to take away the dignity and pride that I have, to take me to St. Philip to hand me a key that is dangling, as though I am getting a free house, to expose me to all of Barbados and then, my report indicates that 15 people were given keys, of which three of them have not even been able to secure a mortgage. The Honourable Member needs to tell us, because I have constituents who have applied too, not only previous to 2008, but since 2008, and none of them have been called.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as a matter of fact, I have constituents who need, or lack housing, and when the Honourable Minister, a few days ago in this Honourable Chamber said that I wrote him, or called him about somebody named Pradash Pradash, that was a Guyanese for a house. The Honourable Member was misleading the House but, Sir, I am not going to deal with it in that way except to say that the Honourable Member did give a non-national a three-bedroom house, because a former candidate in the Democratic Labour Party had made a request when others of us, including the Honourable Members, on His Side, have been begging him, where they

have families with six, seven and eight children living in a garage, and in half of a room, but the Honourable Member gave a three-bedroom house to a non-national.

H/A60B/10.20 a.m. Sequence 5

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Miss C. Y. FORDE: I have a difficulty with that, because I have never asked the Honourable Member to help me with any house for a non-national, except for a young woman with six children whom I believe deserves another chance.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just a minute Honourable Member. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

His Excellency D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House when she stated that the Honourable Member gave a non-national a house. It is easy to say that someone is non-national because they speak a different language, but one must check to see how long the person is here and whether they have a legal right to be here. If they have a legal right to be here, they cannot be branded as non-national.

Mr. SPEAKER: Of course the difficulty here is, Honourable Members have freedom of speech. It is not going to be very easy for me to rule one way, or the other when I am not seized with any particular facts. Okay? Continue Honourable Member.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I know you will defend me.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas were ordered expunged from the records by Mr. SPEAKER.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, the Honourable Minister may feel that he does not have to interrupt, but you cannot suggest that Honourable Members are dishonest. I was of the view that allocations were made by the particular Departments. I will not particularly get into any of that. You cannot accuse an Honourable Member, nor suggest that he is dishonest. I want you to apologise to the Chair, and want those words struck from the records.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I would apologise. I am beyond that.

Sir, the point I am making is, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy cannot speak for the Honourable Member for St. Philip North. Therefore, if I am misleading the Chair, the Honourable Member will eventually make

that clarification. I have absolutely no problem with that. I respect him as a man.

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

His Excellency D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, because to the best of my knowledge, the only place that can allocate houses to anyone is the National Housing Corporation and no Minister has the power to allocate houses. That is a breach of the Law.

I am saying that the Honourable Member cannot continue to make these statements. If it is something that used to occur under their Administration, it cannot occur under this Administration.

Mr. SPEAKER: I tried to point that out along the way. Since the objection has been made, I think you will recognise now that you cannot do that, because you are in fact accusing the Honourable Member of a dishonesty and a breach of the rules. Please continue.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on. I will get my forum.

Sir, I want to indicate that with what I consider to be mismanagement, the Democratic Labour Party has Barbadians reeling under pressure, causing some of them to return to their families. They cannot pay their rent, because the utility bills have increased, they have lost their work, and sometimes when they go to the social agencies, they are treated very unkindly.

Sir, I witnessed in 2008 - I do not know if it was a project for a small contractor, or a big contractor to make some money - some guard huts were built by the Minister of Education.

Yes, we have some security problems in some schools, but not all. A school like Holy Innocent's Primary School, Sharon Primary School, Hillaby/Turners Hall and Welches Primary School, are not schools that ever had security problems at all.

Rural people do not experience the challenges that rural people in urban schools experience, so I have absolutely no problem because a Barbados Labour Party Government ensured, that some security guards were placed at schools where we considered security to be a terrible risk.

Sir, for us, there was absolutely no reason why this Government has built a guard hut at every school, and since last year, and 2008, the doors have never been unlocked.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

His Excellency D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Sir, I am sorry to interrupt the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that they did nothing to interfere with the security of these primary schools. If one would only go to these primary schools, they would see not only guard huts, but they are also surrounded by guard walls. The question is, what will be security? The guard hut, or the guard walls? Because all of them have fences.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, before you continue, just let me pause here to acknowledge the presence of Dr. Douglas Slater, the Honourable Minister of Health for St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I want to welcome you, Sir.

Honourable Member, please continue.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Sir, I have just indicated that there are some challenges at some schools, but there were not guard huts. Fences were also installed around the schools. I am one who would advocate forever to install hedges.

HA60B 10.30 a.m. Sequence 6

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 07, 10.30 a.m.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: When you look at the international world, Mr. Speaker, people join any and every organisation tithing their time. I wish to highly commend those persons who are helping the Learning Centre, because I saw the volunteers this morning, speaking about their role in helping the young adults to be able to make candles, to cook and so on. This is laudable. The key word there is "volunteerism".

Mr. Speaker, there was little, or no volunteerism and camps were named after Members of Parliament, when we were told it is not a political thing and some communities did not get a single summer camp, even though persons were working in the community for many years.

Mr. Speaker, let me move on, because if I have to go back to the GIVE Programme, where 360 houses were to be upgraded, between January 2008, and Christmas 2008, approximately 40 of the 360. Mr. Speaker, what happened to the materials and equipment?

Mr. Speaker, the paints and the equipment that were donated were taken away and sold in communities in Barbados. Gallons of paint that would cost \$70 and \$80 went at \$12 per gallon.

Do you know why? Mr. Speaker, persons who were recruited were not properly told you are to be volunteering. They were given the impression that they would get something out of this. We are going to pay you. When those young men and women realised there was no money coming, the rollers gone, paints gone, everything else for that project, and not a house in St. Thomas got touched, although 12 were recommended.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on. The Auditor General's Report will tell us what has transpired, because the Democratic Labour Party spoke of this thing about the Barbados Labour Party - excuse me - the morass in the place and the cost overruns. Mr. Speaker, what about the cost overruns at Bath? There are other cost overruns, but we will bring them in due time.

Mr. Speaker, do you know why more Barbadians are reading than ever? A Barbados Labour Party Government never carried up the Road Tax, house rent and all of those different areas. Mr. Speaker, Road Tax was put up in a very high way, when this Government knew that there was a recession, because the Barbados Labour Party cautioned Barbadians before the Election. They were told what to expect, when they were gauging the international arena.

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House with reference to the fact that the Democratic Labour Party Government has increased house rent. Mr. Speaker, again, the Honourable Member is misleading the House and I ask that she be corrected, and that it should be struck from the record.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Thomas, please continue and you have five minutes more.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you, Sir. Road taxes have been raised beyond the pockets of Barbadians, whom a Barbados Labour Party ensured that employment was offered to them in every sector.

In the informal sector, Mr. Speaker, people have gone home now, those women that were selling from the back of the vans. Construction is down. Four Seasons was closed in February 2008, and every week you hear Four Seasons will open soon. It will open at the beginning of this. It will begin at the beginning of that. Four Seasons is still shut down and 800 men in construction have gone home, Mr. Speaker, and there is no effort by this Government to get the construction sector going.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude. The liquor licence has since been raised, so that if I want to hold a little function

as a fund raiser for a fire victim, instead of \$50 now, I have to pay \$100 on that one-off occasion. The small shops in Barbados, Mr. Speaker, are reeling because they are not able to raise that \$350 for the liquor license. They could not raise it properly then and it is worse now because they now have to pay from \$350 to \$1 000.

Mr. Speaker, Property Tax has gone up. Water bills have gone up. Alcohol has gone up by 40 per cent. Food has gone up, because the theme for the Democratic Labour Party, “cost of living”, “cost of living”, and cost of living is climbing by the minute.

Mr. Speaker, energy bills have gone up and the minibus men and the ZR men are in a tangle, because any night, Mr. Speaker, and I believe you are in your Constituency in the evening, Roebuck Street is blocked. They are closing off the pump now from half past six, and the minibus men are grumbling. All last week and the week before there was chaos on Roebuck Street, a whole lane is blocked because people have to go there to get the little “taraba”.

Do you know who hurts most? Mr. Speaker, to hear on a Sunday night that gas has gone up by 10 cents, two weeks later, it has come down by one cent and the people in the gas stations every time have to re-calibrate those machines to be able to bring it back in order, and we are not seeing it. We are not benefitting, Mr. Speaker, except the cost is going up and we are feeling it in our pockets.

Mr. Speaker, we hear about “Team Barbados”. “Team Barbados” will not suit me. Team Barbados says that we are working in close association with each other in a bipartisan way, but for the past couple of years, and more particularly, 2008 and 2009, every time we made a suggestion, if the Honourable Members had listened to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, a lot of what has happened here to cause this economy to be in a rut now, Mr. Speaker, could not be so, but you know why? Constituency Councils must happen because it is a Democratic Labour Party idea.

I am hearing the Constituency Councils have started a homework club. Mr. Speaker, I started a homework club seven years ago and it is as vibrant as anything, every Saturday morning, 9.00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Holy Innocent’s School. There was no Constituency Council, and there was no money from anybody, except the funds that I have, because I believe that I should give back to my alma mater.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I do not have to go anywhere and pronounce that, Mr. Speaker, but I hear Constituency Councils. Where is the money going to go? What about the

accountability because I know another Auditor General’s Report will come and I know this Government is pursuing other recommendations from the International Monetary Fund.

My Honourable Leader spoke about it yesterday at page 8. It is there for everybody to be aware of, unless Barbadians pay closer attention to what is happening in this country and defend their rights, Barbados is going down the hill and because of how we are seen by others, we will become the laughing stock.

I want the Prime Minister with his Cabinet of distinguished men and women, to lead by example.

As I close, finally, Sir, I support the Commissioner of Police and I strongly support what the Minister of Education has said that there should be no permission - this is for me.

I am not speaking on behalf of the Barbados Labour Party now, but I believe that we are on the same moral base. I also believe that no person from any Caribbean country, or any part of the world, can come to Barbados to tell our children that they are role models. We have enough role models in Barbados. We have the likes of the Right Excellent Sir Garfield Sobers. We have Miss Hazel Francis, one of the best social workers you could ever want in the place, Mr. Ralph Walker.

Mr. Speaker, we also have former Commissioners of Police, who are still alive. Mr. Speaker, we have teachers, police and politicians, who are perfect examples of being role models.

When I heard two of the songs by Movado and others by Vybz Kartel this morning, Mr. Speaker, it hurt my heart, but you know what, Barbadians need to get back to basics. We cannot preach in here and go out there and every minute be a “fete Government”, a fete to give people keys, and a fete at Ilaro Court every week. Mr. Speaker, some of the Honourable Members are out there in those fetes with the young people. Sir, to drink in that kind of language and behaviour, for me it leads to the further moral decay.

Mr. Speaker, then our children have the ipods, cell phones and they have a version that is not edited as will be the radios. The language is horrible. I strongly support the development of young people and all of us in here as role models to work with those young people to help them to overcome some of the challenges and the negative influences, particularly the cultural penetration of other countries. All of us have to be in this together.

Mr. Speaker, I will speak again on other matters as the Heads come up.

Thank you, Sir.

Asides.

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I will apologise to you by indicating in a forthright way that there are three documents to which I will refer and all draft documents, and not the final documents that I had hoped to have in my possession.

Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 07, 10.40 a.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: I want to begin by referring to the Barbados Estimates 2008-2009 in draft, and then I will refer to the Estimates 2009-2010 and then the Estimates 2010-2011. I do so, Sir, in circumstances...

Mr. SPEAKER: Just a minute Honourable Member. Honourable Member, I am just a bit concerned. These are documents from when? Are the final documents not available?

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: I was searching for them, but I could not find them, Sir. In fact, I was searching for other documentation, which I could not find, some of which was not even laid, but it is no big thing.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please indicate to the Clerk which documents they are, so that we could try and get the final documents. I think that is probably...

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: It is not that critical, Sir. It is just to do with one little point I want to raise.

Mr. SPEAKER: You will proceed?

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Yes. I am in your hands, Sir.

Sir, what I really want to say is that the estimated current revenue for 2008-2009 was \$2 762 070 891, the estimated expenditure was \$3 441 383 576 and the excess of expenditure over revenue then was over \$679 million. As far as 2009-2010 is concerned, the estimated current revenue was \$2 792 251 327, the expenditure was \$3 614 319 520 and the estimated excess of expenditure over revenue was over \$822 million.

Sir, we have a situation now where for this current period in draft, 2010-2011, the estimated current revenue is \$2 490 180 854, the estimated total expenditure is \$4

billion and the estimated excess of total expenditure over current revenue is \$1 510 129 865.

Sir, that last point is significant because, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church West said, this is the first time that we have had the deficit run this high. This is the point the Honourable Member for Christ Church West was making.

Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns, or fears that we have on This Side is the size of the gap between current expenditure and revenue. Every Honourable Member in here knows of what current expenditure is comprised. Every Honourable Member knows also where current revenue should come from to meet the current expenses.

Sir, we do have a situation where it is a fact that what confronts Barbados today is a very serious challenge to the Government to find money to fill that gap. One question would be: Would this money come from taxation? Another question would be: Would this money come from borrowing? Another question could even be: Would each line Ministry and Department so manage its finances as to achieve needed savings to be able to ensure that no money is wasted?

Perhaps, Sir, you would permit me to continue where the Honourable Member for St. George North left off last night. The Honourable Member for St. George North lamented the fact that as far as sugar agriculture is concerned, there has been a problem where we have not had a coherent and well-thought out policy on where our sugar is to go.

We know that for some time now the single factory option has been in the air. The divide between the Democratic Labour Party and the Barbados Labour Party is that the Democratic Labour Party wants the sugar factory to be sited at Andrews in a situation where we do not think the site is suitable while the Barbados Labour Party is hopeful of having it sited at Bulkeley.

Mr. Speaker, even more important to this whole debate about sugar are two things. Firstly, our total cost of production of a tonne of sugar has to be carefully watched and monitored in circumstances where our market in the European Union has started to offer lower prices to us for our sugar.

The second thing that the Honourable Member for St. George North raised last night was Barbados' failure in the last two years to capitalise on initiatives designed to diversify product range.

Mr. Speaker, for years, we had been committed to bulk sugar and we produced Muscovado Gold and one other brand, the idea being that branded sugar was more

marketable and more attractive, both overseas and in the local market.

Sir, where we would have recorded losses on the bulk sugar, we could have recouped some of that money on the branded sugars. What we want from the Government is a marketing strategy in respect of our branded sugars like Muscovado Gold. We do really need that. We also need a clear, cogent and coherent policy on those scores of Barbadians who try to make a living out of agriculture.

The Barbados Labour Party, as the Honourable Member for St. Thomas and other Honourable Members on This Side would tell you, developed land for the Landless Programme. I notice that at least one Honourable Member on That Side has been nodding his head. We evolved a programme known as the "Land for the Landless", recognising that many people wanted to be involved in farming, food crops and livestock, but that they had no land and so, we developed a programme for them and today we ask the Democratic Labour Party Government where is that programme.

We also ask the Democratic Labour Party Government this question. In circumstances where many self-employed people and people formally from the informal sector had been answering the heed to become entrepreneurs, where is our coherent policy on the fishing industry, especially in view of the setbacks that occurred in that industry between June and August of 2008?

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East suggested more than once that the Estimates do not add up, and questioned the integrity of the Estimates.

I have a question, and in that respect, if you would permit me, I want to refer Honourable Members to page 274 of these Estimates under Head 69: Ministry of Agriculture, 040 785, where we have for the year 2010-2011, under Assets Under Construction, the sum of \$200 being allocated.

House A60B Sequence 8

10.50 a.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, Assets under Construction. Sir, \$200 for a year is \$200 over a 12-month period, which is less than \$10 a month. I really want to know what is the purpose of that figure? It seems to be tied to something to do with capital. It is extremely small and I have no idea what that is about.

Sir, a careful perusal of the Estimates beyond this shows that sometimes little figures pop out of the sky, calling themselves sometimes contingencies and the like.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard in this debate that during the last financial year, imports have fallen. We have to be cautious there. I do not disagree that imports have fallen, but to look at imports in a purely generic way is not the way to consider imports. Imports of things which are consumer goods would have to be treated separately from imports of technology, raw material and factor inputs.

A country at Barbados' stage of development has to differentiate between imports that are purely oriented towards consumption and imports which are brought in to promote productive activities.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether this Honourable House would hear during the course of this debate exactly the extent to which imports for productive activities either rose, or fell, contrasted with, or compared with imports purely for consumption.

Sir, I think that for the future we are going to have to give this Honourable House more details in respect of how much we spend on what and for what purposes and its impact on the economy.

Sir, what is clear is that ordinarily, even if we treat imports generically and these imports decline, then the logical concomitant is that the money spent on imports ought to have declined.

Mr. Speaker, despite that fact, we are here in a situation where two short years ago our foreign reserves stood in excess of \$2 billion, while today it stands about half that figure.

Sir, this is not satisfactory at all, in circumstances where there was an enormous amount of goodwill generated towards the Democratic Labour Party, in circumstances where principal spokes-persons for that Party have been trumpeting that we have so diversified our approach to our leading earner of foreign exchange and that we so approached our tourism business that tourism looks good.

Sir, this contrasts with the views of a technocrat because my memory permits me to recall the lamentations of a Mr. Harold Codrington, an advisor and researcher of the Central Bank of Barbados, who suggested that tourism did not look as good and that prospects for tourism did not look as good as we had hoped.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is speaking on Head 69, page 274. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House by giving the impression that a figure was plugged into the Estimates and that he did not know the real picture.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, would this have taken place about some five minutes ago?

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: No, Sir. It is all in the debate.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am prepared to treat this essentially as a point of elucidation, if the Honourable Member wants to give way, but in my view, it is certainly not a point of order.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is a point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have made my ruling.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Very well, I will sit, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, would you like to give way so that we can get this point of elucidation?

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I am not giving way because the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is not making anything that is substantive, or helpful.

Mr. Speaker, it is true that we should diversify the range of productive activity; it is also true that we should look to new opportunities. Sir, the most recent development as far as I know in respect of our thrust forward in tourism, is a proposal to return to the Brazilian market.

Sir, we have to bear in mind that a few short years ago, BWIA had actually started a route between Brazil and Barbados, which was seen as an energetic initiative to further diversify our tourism product. Sir, that did not succeed and in a matter of weeks that programme collapsed.

Sir, I listened carefully to what the Honourable Member for St. Thomas was saying. I agree with her to the same extent that I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Sir, if we look at this Barbados, in recent weeks outside of economic matters, we have heard many a pronouncement. We have heard people forever saying that the school is a microcosm of the society, which is a

macrocosm. We have heard the Honourable Prime Minister say that Barbados is not a mere economy, it is something beyond an economy.

Sir, the position is that of all the many things that our beloved Barbados is, we have been witnessing some trends and behaviours in Barbados.

Sir, I am going to venture into the realm of the litotes. As a patriot, I will not be driven by hyperboles. I have been driven more by litotes because at the end of it, I am optimistic that solutions will be found.

Mr. Speaker, let me put it this way. There is a lot of uneasiness in Barbados. There is uneasiness among sugar farmers, there is uneasiness among people who have invested in insurance policies. In the business we call life insurance, the whole integrity of the insurance business is under attack. There is a widespread loss of confidence in the insurance business. I am not singling out any particular entity for special mention, but if you walk the streets of Barbados people, some of whom were always suspicious about life insurance anyway, are very suspicious of entities not embroiled in any insurance controversy.

I recall a fairly animated discussion I had a few months ago with a young man, for whom I am very sorry today. He was of the view that my forecast that he would have been in serious trouble, job-wise and otherwise, was a forecast that was going to ring true. I told him that based on every indication, British American was going to find itself embroiled in the same type of controversy as CLICO.

Sir, it seems as though policyholders at British American had been asking for answers in the last five, or six months and they have not been getting satisfactory answers. It seems to me too that a form of financial megalomania was inflicted upon CLICO and that CLICO ventured into some so-called products that did not offer life assurance, but were financial instruments offering investments, which purportedly were bearing massive returns, both for those who invested and for those who sold the product. Sir, all of that has now come to nought.

We now hear the Honourable Member for St. John admit that we are not far off from the judicial oversight of institutions like CLICO.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East gave an example yesterday where one of the associate agencies of CLICO had no confidence in another of the associate agencies of CLICO.

11.00 a.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Sir, I accept what the Honourable Member says to be true, because these are things that we in Barbados hear.

Sir, there is uneasiness among sugar farmers. There is uneasiness in Barbados among food crop farmers. There is uneasiness in Barbados among livestock farmers. There is uneasiness among small contractors. There is uneasiness in families. There is uneasiness among vendors. Sir, there is uneasiness among the ZR people, the school children and the Transport Board.

Mr. Speaker, Sunday night somebody called me and told me they are fed-up with...

Mr. SPEAKER: Please continue to address the Chair and ignore the asides, if you can.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Sir, there is uneasiness in St. James South.

Mr. Speaker, the Transport Board has, as a board, to take the Ministry of Transport and Works into its confidence. The average worker at the Transport Board is concerned about the high incidence of breakdowns.

I, like many Barbadians, at this time of the year, in particular, am very concerned about the high incidences of fire, but even worse, it seems as though the Barbados Transport Board has some fundamental, systemic problems with tyres. It seems as though they are importing the wrong tyres.

Sir, those fat, big able tyres should be able to knock aside a nail, and comfortably so. They cannot be going flat through nails only, it must be something, whether it started within the last two years, or whenever, it must be something about the quality, so the Transport Board now has to think about quality control. It has to think too about energising systems.

Mr. Speaker, it has a big challenge and its challenge comes in managing its affairs prudently in circumstances where it is going to have less finance.

Sir, in a situation where we have had a number of signals where we hear that there is a possibility that the Transport Board may be required to carry more people, then it means that the Transport Board ought to be equipped to handle more challenges.

Mr. Speaker, we on This Side, are also concerned about the diminution of activity, the decrease of activity at the Rural Development Commission and we are also concerned about the decrease of activity at the Urban Development Commission.

Sir, we over here, on This Side too, are concerned about the cuts affecting tourism. We are concerned about construction and permit me, Sir, to make this observation.

When the Democratic Labour Party sat on This Side - you were not here yet, Sir - its principal spokesman pronounced a policy that a Democratic Labour Party Administration would pass measures by which a minimum amount of contracts would be awarded to small contractors.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, remembers that the Democratic Labour Party spokesmen at the top indicated that, on coming to office, the Democratic Labour Party would allocate a certain number of contracts to small contractors.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know of all the agencies that were awarded contracts, whether proper monitoring, screening and assessment have yet taken place. Sir, two years is in excess of 700 days. You can do 15 and 16 things in one day, therefore, 700 multiplied by 16 things over a two-year period.

Sir, we in the Barbados Labour Party would like to know what efforts are going to be made to ensure that the equity referred to as regards procurement is so handled, that the small man would not feel disadvantaged.

Sir, as regards procurement, I think the Democratic Labour Party would be well advised to, in relation to regional and international dealings, to watch this whole question of procurement where bigger, mightier countries might want to impose their way on us. Sir, we have to be ready for that too.

Mr. Speaker, in a situation where trade liberalisation and globalisation are on our doorstep, and are very much involved and, in a situation where certain big countries, with their own interest to promote, are going to be looking to make money out of small countries, we have to ensure that we master this whole question of procurement, that we understand what it is all about and that we proceed.

Mr. Speaker, I want before the end of this week to be in a position to be advised by the Honourable Member for St. Philip North as to the true position in housing. The Democratic Labour Party has succeeded in promoting the Honourable Member St. Philip North as its energetic opening batsman with skills as a wicket keeper and skills as a fast bowler but, much as he may have learned those skills in an earlier dispensation, under careful guidance, it is not what it used to be in his heyday and we would want some answers to a number of things.

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Thank you very much, Sir. We think that where a country is confronted by these kinds of problems that Barbados has, that the country should explore new and creative ways by which it should go forward.

Sir, Barbados has come to a point now where none of us, whether in Opposition, or in Government, should be accused of not having the ideas to take Barbados out of the kind of economic morass into which the country has fallen. We need ideas how to improve our exports, visible and invisible.

Mr. Speaker, talking about the improvement of exports, brings me to this whole question once again of our foreign reserves position. We, in the Barbados Labour Party, know where the reserves are today, 50 per cent down from where they were when we were in office.

We are counting, as part of our foreign reserves inflows of capital in the same way that we count inflows of borrowings but, at the same time, when the question was put in respect of our future investments, we only heard a repetition of old investments that have come to nought. In other words, the programme for investment over the next 18 months to two years, is really the programme of two years ago that had come to a halt.

Sir, there is nothing new being offered to this country that would propel this country forward, restore it to its position of the six-month import cover. They seem happier with three months to four months, but the three-month import cover to four-month import cover is a thing of 20 years ago. We have passed that stage now. We are more thinking that to be on the safe side in an uncertain world that six months' import cover in foreign reserves is the standard. Sir, it used to be three months in 1974.

Mr. Speaker, in 1978, there are Honourable Members who were not born yet, and if they were born they had not yet been able to develop the type of intellect and sophistication as to entitle them to be Honourable Members of this Honourable House.

Sir, let it not be said though, that the Honourable Members on the Other Side lack the intellect and the sophistication to carry the country forward, but let it be said, Sir, that the expectations which Barbadians developed in January 2008, are expectations that have not died.

Sir, let it be said that the Democratic Labour Party has taken the expectations of the people to a new pinnacle, to a higher height, where they told the people to give them a chance and they will deliver.

H/A60B/11.10 a.m. Sequence 10

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: We on This Side are waiting to see the delivery of goods and services, and the quality of life that Barbadians deserve. If they continue to disappoint, then I believe there will come a day when Barbadians will see and produce a deliverance of sorts.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Sir, I enter this debate on a rather serious note, except to say that the last speaker did not share that vision of seriousness in this debate.

I want, first of all, to express my sincere humbleness at the opportunity of being able to serve Barbados from the Cabinet of Barbados. I wish to acknowledge the assistance in this from the Almighty God, certainly the support of my constituents, and I wish to also say "thank you" to the Honourable Prime Minister for reposing that confidence in me, in terms of the great work that this Government has embarked on, and certainly the great work that this Government will do.

Sir, I listened expectantly in this debate, because I believe that this debate is a very important debate. It occurs at a time when the entire world is in an economic crisis, the gravest crisis that affected world nations since the Depression of 1930.

I was listening to hear what great pronouncements, what alternative strategies that we would have heard from the Other Side. I listened to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, and indeed, all Honourable Members on the Other Side who spoke in this debate.

I must say that I am left very gravely disappointed at the lack of vision, the emptiness, share rhetoric, no clear direction, lots of repetitions, a lack of focus, and clearly no alternative strategies coming from the Other Side.

Sir, I listened to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and heard her repeat more often than not, I counted about 20 times, at least, where she repeated that, do not worry, I will get back to that. I will get back to that, and we are still waiting, Mr. Speaker, for her to get back to these things. The speech was replete with so many repetitions and emptiness.

At this time in our history, this debate will be seen as, perhaps, one of the most important debates in the history of our nation. I believe that what our young people, in particular, and the citizens of Barbados would have been waiting for, would be some measure of significant

contribution from the Opposition, in relation to where we are going as a country.

I heard the Prime Minister saying to our country that we inherited a very embattled economy, and that certainly the current state of affairs in Barbados requires us to proceed on the basis of a programme designed to protect the less fortunate, but one that is designed to pave the way for economic growth in our country, by rekindling our productive sectors, re-igniting the fire in relation to the losses in tourism and looking at inspiring a nation built on entrepreneurial activity, rather than simply obtaining a job.

Sir, we had a number of accusations about the state of the economy and the level of performance of this Government. I always say that it is very important to set the right tone in these debates.

We know, from the record of this Parliament that the Barbados Labour Party Government embarked on systematic propaganda in Barbados in relation to the state of the economy. That was from day one. They painted a picture of GDP growth over the years that did not bear any resemblance to reality. I am simply and very openly accusing the Barbados Labour Party of misleading Barbadians as it relates to the state of this economy, the state of the GDP. It is quite clear. It is quite open.

The documentation in relation to what has happened in this economy is there for all to see. While we should be here in this Honourable House debating a transformation of the economy, looking to see how over the years, particularly under the Barbados Labour Party Administration, that as a nation, we have failed to transform, we have failed to re-position the economy, so that this economy was left open to all kinds of exogenous shocks and the only pillar of economic development, which the former Government had, was to try to grow an economy based on foreign influence. Sir, that was totally not sustainable. It could not be sustained at a time when you have the impending global recession.

Sir, I want to refer to a number of documents in this debate to show that while they are accusing us of only talking and not acting, the Barbados Labour Party Government embarked on a clever strategy of withholding very vital information from Barbadians.

Sir, it is not us that said that the Barbados Labour Party Government did not have a clear debt management strategy. They did not have a clear debt management strategy and that was based on the International Monetary Fund's Report of 2007.

The country's report of the International Monetary Fund indicated quite clearly we were heading on a collision

course and the level of the national debt was not sustainable.

Sir, you had a Barbados Labour Party Government that was boasting of growth rates in 2006, and beyond, of 4 per cent and up. These growth rates were artificial in nature. They were not founded on a diversified economic base. This is why the embarking on private/public sector projects, which were denounced in the Auditor General's Report on numerous occasions, by placing large junks of debt off the balance sheet, created a disastrous situation for Barbados, and gave this Government a wicket to bat on that would always have been slippery. That wicket was paved and rolled by the greatest economist in Barbados, who is never in his seat to hear the truth of the Barbados economy, and who makes appearances in and out of this Honourable House.

Sir, the truth of what happened and the truth of what kind of economy we inherited is there for all to see. It was cast and exploded by their major economic advisor who was in this Honourable House, and who advised them on economic matters, and who the Honourable Leader of the House has very gladly and, I would say, very happily replaced in this House.

Most of the flaws in relation to the economic management of this country were recognised and identified by that former Honourable Member, where you had a situation of seeking to sustain a fiscal deficit in 2005/2006 of 2.5 per cent of GDP.

HA60B 11.20 a.m. Sequence 11

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 12, 11.20 a.m.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, you suggested that to the international agencies, but you embarked on a plan of spending off-Budget, through private/public sector partnerships, where we had the Prisons, the ABC Highway and numerous projects that were placed off-Budget, at the time when the Government was using a cash basis of accounting.

The tragedy, Mr. Speaker, is that as soon as we moved from a cash basis of accounting to one of an accrual basis, we had our national debts being significantly increased to a point of being unsustainable.

Mr. Speaker, we have to look at that background to paint a path of where we have come from and why we are here today. When the Honourable Prime Minister indicated that Barbados is not an island on its own, and that we live in a global economy, where all of the major industrial countries continue to experience significant economic

challenges, that all of the countries, Mr. Speaker, with the exception of very few in the Caribbean, have been hard hit, in relation to the global economic challenge and that we have, over the past two years, been forced to proceed on the basis of prudent management and pruning, Mr. Speaker, these are the facts of where we are today.

Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the Honourable Member for St. John when he continued, much to the benefit of this country, to come to Barbadians and to indicate quite clearly what the real position of the Barbados economy is, and I cannot say that existed under the former Government. We continue, Mr. Speaker, to place our trust in Barbadians and be very clear.

The reality is that the economic situation that we face, requires a certain financial and economic response, which has been that across the Government, we are determined to utilise the monies available in a prudent and efficient manner. Certainly, the Ministry that I have the honour to lead at this time, we have already started the process of reviewing and to re-prioritise the projects that we have to execute.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we are not engaging in a cutting exercise that does not take account of the vulnerable interest in our country. Most of the projects that are designed to buttress poor families in Barbados, that are designed to buttress the young entrepreneurs, that are designed to buttress black business, remain intact, and they remain intact, Mr. Speaker, because of the vision of this Government to ensure that we have a social protective net in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, my dis-appointment in this debate is that we continue in this Honourable House to hear all kinds of allegations and counter-allegations from the Other Side, no real significant leadership, no alternative strategies that the public in Barbados would wish to hear.

Mr. Speaker, we have had exposed to the Opposition, two major documents, two major instruments of financial and economic management, one being the Medium-Term Development Strategy of Barbados 2010/2012, and the other one, Mr. Speaker, being the Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy for the period 2010/2014.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East call in this House for the establishment of a special Committee of Parliament to allow the Opposition to have an input in relation to the financial and economic management of this country.

We have two significant works of art, Mr. Speaker, designed and construed by Barbadians that we are yet to have a single response, a simple input from the Opposition in Barbados so I cry shame.

While the Opposition should be committing on these documents, giving the country the benefit of the expertise they claim they have, they come in here, Mr. Speaker, with lame excuses in relation to where this country should go.

I have always said, Mr. Speaker, that while I remain in this House, I am ever cognizant of the need to lift the standard of this debate, because Barbadians are not out there listening to this debate to hear the kinds of excuses coming from the Opposition. They are waiting to hear from you, what alternative strategies you wish to put on the table.

Mr. Speaker, we are waiting to hear from the Other Side, what are the strategies that you believe that this Government and this country should embark on. You are not paid to sit down in here and quarrel among yourselves as to whom the leader should be. You are not.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, try to keep it down, please.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: You are paid to come in here and give alternative strategies to the country, you are not giving it to the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I get very annoyed and concerned when you have the Honourable Member for St. Peter duly elected to represent the constituents of St. Peter, failing to come into this House and engage the Government in the kind of economic and financial debate that this country demands, and walking around the corners and street lights of Barbados, Mr. Speaker, trying to create all kinds of mayhem, fright, scare and terror, talking about panic and economic magic, when in fact, the stage is set for him to come in here and to really give us the benefit of what he is constitutionally elected to do. I challenge them.

Mr. Speaker, when we are talking, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East accusing this Government of being inactive and lacking ideas, and she is yet to have the gall to stand up in this House and denounce the attitude of the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Asides.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: His absence in this Chair cannot be tolerated anymore and while the Opposition members remain silent on it, you are continuing to condone the kind of inability, irresponsibility, and lack of attention in this House. I am totally annoyed and I know the country is annoyed by it.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot address any issues in relation to what this Government is doing unless you get your act together and I send out that challenge to the Honourable Member.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to level a further accusation at the Barbados Labour Party, because they appear, and they tell Barbadians that the only economic brains in this country, reside over That Side. You would not believe it.

The Honourable Member yesterday exploded a document, the “Medium-Term Strategy Strategic Framework of Barbados 2007-2009”, which is a document created by the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, what the Government has said repeatedly is that the kinds of large fiscal deficits created by the Barbados Labour Party former Government cannot be allowed to continue in Barbados and that is what we have said.

Mr. Speaker, at the last Consultation on the economy, where the Government has put as a strategic objective, moving the deficit to a point in relation to the GDP, I believe it is 1 per cent of GDP, within a five-year period. This has been put out as a strategic objective of this Government to ensure that we do not end up in the kind of financial and economic state left by the former Government. Mr. Speaker, that initiative has been lambasted.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East raising alarm that it cannot be, that you can move the reduction of the fiscal deficit to 1 per cent over a five-year period, because it will create significant shocks and hardship in Barbados.

Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 12, 11.30 a.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, they speak from two sides of their mouth when they want to. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that when things were a bit rough in 1991, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, who was then the Leader of the Opposition, came in this House and made some very telling observations in relation to the same issue that we are now concerned about.

I want to refer to that debate, Mr. Speaker, which took place on the Public Service Reduction of Emoluments Bill, 1991. The good thing about it, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a record.

If we did not have the ability to research well, the Barbados Labour Party in Opposition would continue to fool Barbadians about so many things.

Mr. Speaker, I plan to get to a number of misleading and mischievous statements made in relation to the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports and the various programmes that Ministry is charged with.

Mr. Speaker, you have situations in that debate on the Public Service Reduction of Emoluments Bill, 1991, where the Honourable Member for St. Peter addressed the question of the need to move the large fiscal deficit from a position of one of being out of control to one of being manageable.

They have denounced our strategic objective of seeking to control the fiscal deficit over a five-year period of moving it from 8 per cent to 1 per cent between the period 2010 and 2015. Mr. Speaker, Barbadians were told by the Barbados Labour Party that was unsustainable and that it was economic madness to engage in such an economic strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read from that debate of 1991 when the Honourable Member for St. Peter addressed this issue of the fiscal deficit. I read from that debate in Hansard which is at page 993 and I quote:

“In our 1981 programme with the Fund - meaning the International Monetary Fund - and again it is contained in my Paper, the fiscal programme was designed to reduce the overall deficit from 9 per cent of GDP in 1981 to 2.5 per cent of GDP in 1993.”

A massive contraction at that time was proposed by the Honourable Member for St. Peter. Mr. Speaker, that would have meant untold hardship, and it did. It resonated because of the economic occurrence that occurred in 1991. That is the advice, Mr. Speaker, that the Honourable Member for St. Peter was giving at that time.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a very serious time where Barbadians are ready to hear the truth about the Barbados economy, and we have determined that the truth about the Barbados economy will be told. That is what the Honourable Member for St. John has done in this debate. This is not a debate for the normal kind of political grandstanding which we have seen from the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, we have had a number of things being said in this House, that is why I have taken the line I have taken. We have had the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East accusing the Government of mortgaging away this country's future, and I wonder about that. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said that this is a Government that says one thing and does another, and we have been accused of so many things.

We have been accused of moving away from the path of growth and that if we want ideas we should ask for them. That is the approach adopted by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Mr. Speaker, that Honourable Member was present at a very important International Monetary Fund Consultation in 2006, on the Barbados economy. Mr. Speaker, when I read this, we will begin to understand who really has mortgaged the birth-right of Barbadians and who has put our economy into peril.

The Honourable Member, as Deputy Prime Minister, was present at that Consultation, along with a former Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, who moved from One Side of this House to the other and who now writes a column in the daily Nation displaying all of the after-thoughts of how an economy should have been run.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read a bit of what was said and what was discussed, so that the public of Barbados could then judge for themselves who mortgaged this country. This country was mortgaged by the Barbados Labour Party, long before we entered the realms of Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Directors of the International Monetary Fund noted at that consultation the envisaged reduction in public debt ratios, but considered that the slow pace of debt reduction left Barbados vulnerable to exogenous shocks. The Directors envisaged, that is a nice word. Mr. Speaker, a lot of what the International Monetary Fund was told that it was never intended to be done by the Barbados Labour Party Government.

It gets better, Mr. Speaker. They said that Barbados' economy continued to grow in 2005, but the macro economic imbalances worsened. GDP growth is running at about 4 per cent, but inflation of more than 6 per cent and the widening of the current account deficit to 12.5 per cent of GDP are raising vulnerabilities. That is what they said. The Honourable Member was present at that consultation.

It says further that particularly in the context of the exchange rate pegged, the fiscal position was relatively stable in 2005-2006, but Government's debt remains above 80 per cent of GDP.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes more, and please keep down the asides, please.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, although this Government would not have opted on its own to make any increases in any taxes in 2008, the playing field left by the Barbados Labour Party left this Government no choice, but to seek to have a win-win situation that would have caused

a reduction in the fiscal deficit without imperiling our peg to the US dollar.

Mr. Speaker, it got worse because when we got into Government, we had a consultation with the International Monetary Fund in 2008. Clearly, what was happening is that this country was being told that this country was growing at 4 per cent, but the other information was not being told. There was a debt management programme that was out of whack and non-existent. That was what was being put on the backs of Barbadians by the Barbados Labour Party Government.

House A60B Sequence 13

11.40 a.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, in 2008, when the International Monetary Fund came back to Barbados for their country assessment, I want to read something else that the International Monetary Fund said, and this was at the beginning of our term of office. Mr. Speaker, in that country's assessment report of 2008, the International Monetary Fund said, and I quote:

"Despite strong economic growth..."

Mr. Speaker, it has always been the case with the Barbados Labour Party that they left us with strong economic growth, but when you have economic growth fuelled by artificial foreign inflows, and you grow an economy solely on foreign inflows that could be very susceptible to exogenous shocks, then you have a problem. This is what the International Monetary Fund said in that 2008 Report:

"Despite strong economic growth during the past three years, total public debt rose to 95 per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP)."

Sir, this was in 2008, when we came into office.

"Despite strong economic growth during the past three years, total public debt rose to 95 per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP)."

Mr. Speaker, the internationally accepted level and standard is 60 per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Report continues:

"Or a still high of 87 per cent if earmarked Sinking Funds are netted out. As much as the recent increase reflected off-budget projects..."

Mr. Speaker, off-budget projects that this Government is forced to bring back to book. Sir, I will continue:

“And deficits in public enterprises...”

Mr. Speaker, does that sound familiar? Deficits in public enterprises like the Barbados Water Authority.

“The Mission welcome the Government’s decision.”

Mr. Speaker, that is this Government’s decision to re-assess the cost and benefits of earlier planned projects such as the multi-purpose sugar factory.

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of economic madness that they left us with. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, led by the economic guru, who is the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Sir, the young people of Barbados want to hear economic discussion of a high standard but based on the truth and based on solid economic indices. That is what they want. They are tired of hearing sub-standard kind of excuses coming from the Opposition in this Honourable House. They want a Parliament that will come with the facts and be truthful.

Sir, I want to applaud the Honourable Member for St. John in his presentation for coming and levelling with the people of Barbados, for coming and being very frank with the figures, and for assuring Barbadians that while all Ministries now have to be very prudent with their spending, that the vulnerable of this country will be protected by a safety net. That is the action of a prudent and responsible Government and, therefore, I certainly hope and expect that when we get to the Heads, I will have further to say in this debate.

Sir, this debate is not a play toy. We are here to conduct the serious work of the country and of the public of Barbados. I certainly expect that as we go further into this debate, we would have much more to say in relation to certain issues.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

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

Hon. D. O’N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join this debate at this point in time, after sitting here and being enlightened by the Honourable Member for St. John and those on This Side of this Honourable Chamber and being most entertained by those on the Other Side of this Honourable Chamber.

Sir, I think that people need to realise that Barbados, like many other parts of the world, is having its economic challenges which, by and large, is not of the making of this Democratic Labour Party. It is time for a reality check in this country.

Barbados is facing a recession that we all accept has been ignited by the kind of reckless behaviour of the former Barbados Labour Party, and it is fuelled by a global financial meltdown of un-precedented proportions. Sir, that we must all accept. That is the reality that Barbados and Barbadians have to face with today.

Sir, what we are seeking to do as a responsible Government, ably led by the Honourable Member for St. John, is to bring a sense of sobriety and stability to this particular situation. We seek to minimise the fallout and so structure the economic situation to safeguard the economy and the people who reside herein.

Mr. Speaker, only last Sunday at a gathering of individuals in a beehive at the St. James Secondary School, the former Honourable Member for St. James Central talked about a lack of focus in the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, he said that on Sunday, but it was so well-manifested in this Honourable House yesterday and again today in the comments from the Other Side of this Honourable Chamber, that one has to accept that the former Honourable Member for St. James Central certainly understood and clearly understands the kind of characters he is dealing with in the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, it is sad to say that this country and this Honourable Chamber have to deal with such day in and day out. The reality about it is that we come to this Honourable Chamber expecting to have robust and intelligent debates. We come here understanding the gravity of the situation that exists in this economy and putting our heads together to find solutions therein.

Mr. Speaker, occasionally this Honourable House is visited upon by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West who is in a very unique position where he travels to Parliament via Air Canada, so we are very grateful to be occasionally entertained by him, but we expect that individuals should come into this Honourable Chamber and add value to what is happening.

Sir, in the late 1990s, and early parts of this century, under the stewardship of the Barbados Labour Party and the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, who is not here too often - I believe it is almost lunch time so the Honourable Member must be somewhere lurking in the precincts of Parliament. Sir, but never before did we have so much money in this economy and yet we did not get the chance to have the economy restructured, or structured in such a manner that with the kinds of crises that exist in the

world today, we could perhaps have been buffered and going along the path that we should be going today.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please keep it down. Let us hear the Honourable Minister.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, what this Administration is seeking to do today is to do what the former Administration had an opportunity to do, with all the financial reserves they had, and did not do. Therefore, when we talk, for example, of economic enfranchisement, ensuring that more and more Barbadians are getting a fair share...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you are getting too loud and I cannot hear the Honourable Member properly.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, there are issues, for example, the development of a cultural industry which I hope we could get to debate and discuss in this Honourable House in the not too distant future. There is also the issue of focus on the family.

Sir, every time we come to this Honourable Chamber, or wherever we go, you could hear Opposition Members continuing to decry and ridicule this Administration for its focus on getting things right among families, and especially among young people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we have accepted that even in the throws of economic challenges, we still have to focus on maintaining the social fabric of this society. We have to ensure that our young people who are our most vulnerable are protected, sometimes through changes to the legislation, sometimes through the action and behaviour of Government on the whole. We are also seeking to diversify the economy.

Sir, the Honourable Members on the Other Side had the chance to diversify the markets in our tourism industry and they did not do it.

11.50 a.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: What we have been having now is the Honourable Member St. Michael for South Central being out there, leading charge and doing exceptionally well in terms of increasing airlift and expanding our reach into various markets. Sir, that is something that this Administration should be commended for.

Mr. Speaker, in respect of agriculture, we have also been making strides there and likewise, in the international business and other arenas. I hear Honourable Members oftentimes crying down this Administration and pooh-poohing things we have done, but if you take, for example, the decision of this Administration to open an Embassy in China, which is the second largest economy in the world, but there was not an ounce of support from the Barbados Labour Party. At a time when China has been investing all around the world and doing well, we are being ridiculed for a decision to open an embassy in China.

Mr. Speaker, we have opened one in Cuba but, there again, for political reasons and other reasons, that is expected to do well.

Sir, Brazil, the most vibrant economy in this side of the hemisphere, we have also decided to open an Embassy there, but there was not an ounce of support from Honourable Members on the Other Side of this Chamber. Clearly, I do not expect, as a Government, what Kerry Symmonds referred to as a rather un-focussed and misguided group, in his own Party, could be expected to do otherwise. Mr. Speaker, we certainly accept that lack of focus would take us nowhere.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John spoke well in respect of addressing some of the social concerns in this country and ensuring that whatever financial challenges there are in this society, we are able to protect the most vulnerable.

I have heard Honourable Members on the Other Side comment now specifically in respect of what they consider to be cuts in social services. They say we have cut the health sector budget, we have cut family and sports and we have cut a few areas.

Sir, the reality about it is that it cannot be business as usual. One must not get the idea that a reduction in expenditure in a particular Ministry like the Ministry of Health would necessarily result in loss of any services in the health sector.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that I have seen an abundance of wastage and duplication in the public health sector of Barbados that tells me, we can do much more with a few dollars less.

Sir, I wholeheartedly support the principle that we cannot continue every year to be adding millions and millions of dollars more on to some of these Ministries and getting less in return.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party Administration would have gladly liked, every year, under their sojourn, to be adding more and more to the public

health care system expenditure side, and we know of all the sweetheart deals, the kick-backs and all these things that existed there and then but, Sir, those are things of the past. What we are demanding now is value for money. Certainly, I expect that...

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

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is imputing improper motives on Honourable Members on This Side by talking about kick-backs under the Barbados Labour Party Administration. Sir, that is imputing improper motives. It is certainly against the Law and I ask that it be struck from the records.

Mr. SPEAKER: He did not accuse the Administration, although he did mention the words. There is no point of order.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Sir, I continue to hear some very reckless statements being made around this country.

Yesterday, I sat here and I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, who holds the office of Leader of the Opposition, got up in here and made some misleading statements and pronouncements that do not add any value to what is happening in this country. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East talked about people bringing bandages to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, that might have existed when "Dr. Doolittle" was Minister of Health, but it does not exist under this Administration.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East talked about the food in the hospital being prepared elsewhere and that might have been happening when the Barbados Labour Party was the Administration, but it does not happen under this Administration.

Sir, what I find most reprehensible is when you can get up in a public setting from your lofty office and seek to cast aspersions on health-care professionals in this country. To get up and impute that physicians and nurses in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital are deliberately causing the death of any individual in this country is reckless and misleading.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member⁵ for St. Michael North East.

Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I can well understand the fact that the Honourable

Member has been destabilised as a result of the Parliamentary Secretary coming to his Ministry.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what is the point?

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. I find no point of order. Furthermore, I ask that those comments last made by the Leader of the Opposition be struck from the records.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. SPEAKER.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Speaker, we have to be very careful with what we say. It is all right to make comments in jest, but we ought to realise that as leaders of this country, that our words carry far and wide. I will never stand here, or anywhere else in this country, and tell you that all is perfect, but I have a great difficulty when we seek to impute such behaviour on the parts of those who labour in this country like that.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member has asked what has been happening. Yes, there may have been reduction in expenditure in the public health care system, but the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in particular, which suffered tremendously under the Barbados Labour Party Administration, despite all the monies they had, but we have been able to start major electrical upgrades around the hospital to the tune of \$11.5 million, an electrical upgrade, which when completed in the 12 months, would ensure that all Departments of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital are adequately supplied with power and that there is adequate stand-by power in case of emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, under the former Administration, it was the norm for selective surgeries to be cancelled, because there was not enough bed space for people to recover. We are about to open a 12-bed high-dependency unit in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has a staff complement of over 2 000 employees and over 1 000 individuals visiting there on a daily basis, but to show their love for the staff and to show their love for public servants in this country, they closed the cafeteria and with all the money in the world, could not find the money to re-open it but, Sir, it will be re-opened in a few days.

Mr. Speaker, for years, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been in a very risky position where there was one boiler that was condemned and hardly functioning

effectively, but a few weeks ago, we commissioned two new boilers at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, most of the Departments have gotten new equipment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to ensure that things stay afloat. Sir, staff can walk around the hospital now showing new uniforms, so the former Government obviously does not have the moral authority to speak about anything in terms of health care in this country.

Sir, I am very grateful for the Prime Minister's wisdom in providing assistance to the Ministry of Health. I am not going to be drawn into any little pooh-pooh, and what Kerry Symmonds calls the "pami mami" behaviour of the Barbados Labour Party because this is serious business.

Sir, the Ministry of Health is one of the largest and most complex Ministries. I have had my discussion with the Prime Minister and I am sure that myself and my Parliamentary Secretary will work as a team and move this country forward.

Mr. Speaker, I am not getting into any little pooh-pooh issues because there are serious issues in this country to be addressed. The Prime Minister yesterday announced that a new ambulance headquarters will be constructed. Sir, for years, the Ambulance Department has been drifting hither and dither.

Sir, for World Cup 2007, the Barbados Labour Party spent almost \$3 million renovating the Nightengale Home in Jemmotts Lane as an emergency centre for the World Cup Cricket. It was shoddily done.

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Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: We are committed now to providing the Ambulance Service with a brand new Headquarters, starting this financial year. You asked how we can do it with such a reduction in budget. Let me make it abundantly clear.

This Administration has embraced philanthropy in this country. We have ensured as part of our development in this country to ensure that those who are in a position to give and to donate are able to do so with tax incentives, and that their contributions go far and wide. The Ministry of Health is in discussion with a few Trusts to work with them and to provide the necessary facilities and training in the public health care system.

I am proud to say that thus far, discussions are leading towards the Ambulance Service acquiring additional equipment.

Sir, we are not sitting down on our laurels, under this Administration, waiting on any "pooh-pooh" advice from the Barbados Labour Party. You all have had your chances. You have failed miserably. I urge you to take out your pens and note pads and take note, not just take note of what Kerry Symmonds started to say last Sunday, praising the Honourable Member for St. Peter as the most outstanding leader the Barbados Labour Party will ever see, and the only one who was absent from that bench was the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, who knew why she could not attend that meeting.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Her candidate Rommel Marshall did not go.

Sir, the reality is, there is much happening in this country. It goes beyond that.

This year's Estimates and financial position certainly capture the fact that in the Geriatric Hospital, come June this year, the new kitchen facility will be completed, a project they have been asking for in the public health care system for years. They could not get it done at all, and they want to come in here and tell us what to do.

Sir, the St. Lucy District Hospital has been renovated and re-opened. Two Wards at the Geriatric Hospital will be re-opened. Sir, road works at the Gordon Cummins District Hospital, that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas has been asking and calling about day in and day out. She is happy to know that despite the fact that her Government, for 14 years, could not get it done, we have been able to complete it in a few months. Sir, there is much in this country.

We have also launched our Health and Wellness Tourism Development as another plank of economic diversification in this country, and I am sure we, certainly, will continue to do well.

Sir, I wish to return to the fundamental issue which the Opposition has a difficulty with. I do not want Honourable Members in this Chamber, or Barbadians, to feel that this Administration is in any way not paying attention to social services.

The Democratic Labour Party has a long and proud history of caring for the less vulnerable in this society. We can hold our heads high and say that we are the Government of choice when it comes to the marginalised and vulnerable in this society.

As a Government we have sought to go out and embrace all and sundry who can assist us in delivering on the promises we have made. If you take, for example, the

Non-Governmental Organisations, we have sought to embrace them. The Ministry of Health is cognizant of the fact that Non-Governmental Organisations have been making a sterling contribution to the delivery of public health care in this country and we will continue to embrace them.

We will not behave like the former Government, who took a Non-Governmental Organisation that has been doing excellent work in this country and said to them, the leader of that group supports the Democratic Labour Party, so we are not giving you a penny. That is how the Barbados Labour Party operated. They made their decision to give subventions, based on who was in whose political bed at the particular time of day, or night. That is the kind of recklessness that existed under the former Administration.

We have certainly recognised that NGOs have an important role to play and we have embraced them. We have established a Non-Governmental Organisation Desk in the Ministry of Health and we are going to ensure that even in the face of financial cut backs, the public health care system work can be augmented by the outstanding work of the NGOs in this country.

Sir, we need service level agreements. Gone are the days when the Government just dispensed a cheque to Non-Governmental Organisations and others, and did not seek to get reports on them, did not seek to get value for the dollar. I am satisfied that what I have seen thus far, not only in the health sector but other sectors of Government, we are on the right path to ensuring that Barbadians are getting the right value for their dollar going forward.

Sir, this Administration is certainly moving in the right direction. We will not be pulled aside, or distracted by the utterances of the Barbados Labour Party. I eagerly look forward to what the Honourable Member for St. Peter would have to say if he participates in this debate. I note that he has been, over time, seeking to give lectures and talks from all places, except in this Honourable Chamber. I look forward to hearing what he has to say, particularly as one reflects that he had 14 years of stewardship to get it right, and we now are seeking to correct a lot of the wrongs.

As a matter of fact, I had to quip to someone on the weekend that what I have seen since joining office for the last two years, this Democratic Labour Party's first term in office to be considered for 10 years, because we have a lot of mess to clean up. They are people who believe that we should not reflect time and time again on what we inherited, but Barbadians have to appreciate the magnitude of the dysfunctional system we inherited and why we have to ensure that we remain focus in moving this country forward.

Sir, the other issue that I wish to touch on quickly is within the overall economic situation. The Barbados Labour Party Administration, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East in particular, got up yesterday and said that the Medium Term Strategic Plan of Government does not gel with the Estimates laid in the Chamber this year.

The Medium Term Strategic Plan is not a one-year plan. The Estimates laid in this Chamber today, and we are debating, is merely one year out of that Medium Term Strategic Plan. If the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East will seek to be enlightened by more than the "Nation" Newspaper and the "Advocate", she will realise that these Estimates certainly bear great semblance to what we are seeking to do, in terms of a medium-term strategic plan.

Another thing that I find very wrong, very distasteful, is the way in which Members of the Barbados Labour Party leadership criticise the public officers who prepared these documents. Let me make it abundantly clear that the documents that relate to the Strategic Plan, et cetera, have been prepared by hard-working public officers, most of whom have been educated and trained in Barbados, not by any International Monetary Fund group anywhere.

Every time there is a discussion in this country about economic development and moving forward, the Barbados Labour Party likes to talk about secret deals with the International Monetary Fund, run and throw up red flags and try to scare people. That is wrong. You need to have faith in your own people.

The affairs of this country are in the hands of the individuals who you see sitting on This Side of the Chamber, not in anybody in Washington D.C.

As a matter of fact, the Honourable Member for St. Peter is so deeply rooted in the affairs of the International Monetary Fund, way back to his days as an advisor to the Jamaican Government and all down the line, that he can well speak to that issue, but we will not function that way. The Barbados economy is in the safe hands of the Honourable Member for St. John and his team in the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, I wish, therefore, in closing, to reiterate that this Government is acting responsibly. We are fully aware of the magnitude of the problem that confronts us. We have not sought to hide from Barbadians. We have not sought to run away. We have not sought to give them half truths. We have said to Barbadians, this is the reality. This is what the economy is like. This is what our revenues are projected to be, and therefore, we must have better management along the way.

The demands placed upon us by the Prime Minister is not unreasonable. If your income is \$10 000 a month, or \$10 000 a week, as in the case of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, then you have to exist as though that is your income.

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Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: However, if there is a drop in income to \$8 000, you have to make some adjustments, and what we are doing as a responsible Government is ensuring that we re-prioritise the situation and we ensure, in principle, that this economy stays afloat.

Anybody listening to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and those on That Side, could not connect with the Barbados that we know exists today. Sir, all this doom and gloom, you would believe that there is nothing positive happening in this economy. You would not believe that arrivals from Canada are up. You would not believe that anything good is happening in this country. I do not know where they exist.

I certainly appreciate that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West has added to the number of arrivals coming out of Canada because he comes in every now and again. I appreciate that the Honourable Member for St. Joseph is so busy in his private affairs, that he hardly keeps abreast of what is really happening in this country. Sir, these are the realities we have to face.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados and Barbadians can rest assured that under this Democratic Labour Party Administration, we will keep this economy together. We urge all Barbadians to put their shoulders to the plough, wrap themselves in the flag and let us work together as one large family to move this country forward, and you can rest assured that there will be no reduction in the quality of health care that Barbadians have grown accustomed to under this Democratic Labour Party Administration.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Asides.

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

SUSPENSION

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 1.30 p.m. today.

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

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

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RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. When the Suspension was taken, we were on Order No. 5 and with that we shall continue.

ORDER No. 5 (RESUMED)

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

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I am especially saddened by these Estimates before Parliament today because in them, I see nothing, but a prescription for hardship for Barbadians, especially those at the bottom end of the socio-economic ladder.

Sir, I see in disbelief a cut in the amounts allocated to the Welfare Department, the National Assistance Board and the Poverty Alleviation Bureau and I wonder what will happen to those unemployed single mothers who need to provide for themselves and their children, especially in the area of sending their children to school.

Sir, I see in disbelief a cut in the amounts allocated to the Urban and Rural Development Commissions, and I wonder what will happen to the thousands of people across Barbados whose houses are now in need of repair, who need water-borne toilet facilities and who are waiting and expecting assistance in relation to the purchase of the lot they live on, in their respective tenancies across this island.

Sir, that programme was put on hold for a long time after the Democratic Labour Party got into office in January, 2008. We thought it had recommenced and would proceed, now lo and behold, we see a cut in the amount allocated to that programme.

Sir, I see in disbelief and total wonderment, a cut in the amount allocated to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and I wonder what will happen to the thousands who have to go there for treatment at all levels, and at what cost, and what quality of medical services can they now expect and at what cost, given the magnitude of the cut that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital would get now, pursuant to these Estimates.

Sir, I see in amazement the cut in the amount allocated to the Barbados Drug Service and wonder how and at what cost poor people would now be able to obtain medication when they are sick and ailing.

I see nothing in here that will have anything for a small contractor. Nothing in here will stimulate the construction sector and put anything in the pockets of a small contractor.

Sir, a man approached me two Monday nights ago at a gas station in Warrens and asked me: What exactly is this Government doing? He said that he was a small contractor and his exact words were, "At least under Owen you used to get five cents, but now under this Government they have not one single idea." He said that he was very glad that he had not taken out, like some of his colleague contractors, any loans in relation to a car, or property, because one by one now they are falling like nine pins and their properties and cars are being repossessed.

Can you imagine somebody saying that they are glad that they do not now own a car or a house because they would have been repossessed, because they cannot make five cents now as a small contractor? Sir, I look at these Estimates in that context.

Sir, I see in amazement, a monumental cut to the National Housing Corporation. I want to know if that is the formal abandonment by the Democratic Labour Party of the provision of housing for the small people in this country, because no house built pursuant to a joint venture, or by the private sector alone, would ever, or would hardly ever fall within the financial range of any maid, gardener, or small person in this country. Government still has to play a role in housing this country.

I want to know, now that the vote to the National Housing Corporation has been cut to this extent, if that is Government's formal abandonment of assistance in terms of providing housing to the small people in this country.

Sir, let me also dispel a myth that I heard this morning in here, that the National Housing Corporation decides who gets housing in this country by Government.

Sir, I made a call in June of 2008, to the National Housing Corporation on behalf of two persons from my Constituency who had been ordered by the Court to leave the houses they were living in.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to the then Chairman and after we exchanged the usual pleasantries, he said to me: "Mr. Toppin, I am not going to fool you, you cannot get these two houses". I said: "It is not for me. I do not want any house, these are for two people who have Court ordered evictions. This is a serious matter. He told me: "No, no, no.

The Minister says everything got to pass through him". I said: "Well, okay, even if I could live with that, these are two serious cases".

Sir, he told me: "No, no, I have a list that I have been given by the Minister and your names are not on here and no names from you will ever get on here". That is what I was told by the Chairman of the National Housing Corporation in June of 2008, when I called the National Housing Corporation. He told me that he is not going to fool me, that I cannot get any houses. He said that the Minister will determine who gets the houses and that he has a list from the Minister and that names from me will not get on that list. He is not going to fool me.

Sir, there is no allocation of housing by any National Housing Corporation, the Minister is now making those decisions.

Sir, I see in disbelief in these Estimates that there is nothing here designed to stimulate the productive sectors of this country. Sir, that means that we can expect to see a continued rise in the rate of unemployment, which is already about 3 to 4 percentage points higher than what the Democratic Labour Party found it at, because there is nothing in the Estimates to stimulate the productive sectors of this country.

There is nothing here that would alleviate the cost of living that has Barbadians now reeling after it was made and announced to be priority No. 1, priority No. 2 and priority No. 3.

Sir, these are "nothing" Estimates and they are obviously no more than the precursor of a very serious dose of some very bitter medicine that will come shortly. Sir, we have never ever been in this position before.

Mr. Speaker, I must confess that the Member for St. Michael North West is usually a very fluent speaker, but yesterday was the exception. I have never seen a man babble on and so out of sorts, and so defensive like he was yesterday. I have never seen him like that before. He wanted to take us back to some 1981 issue with something with the International Monetary Fund. Sir, even if there was some sort of connection with the International Monetary Fund in 1981, who in Barbados knew?

Sir, under the Barbados Labour Party, this country weathered any storm that we had to go through without hardly anybody knowing. Nobody felt it, nobody felt anything. There was hardly any disruption at all. The Barbados Labour Party never gave this country an option between a devaluation and a wage cut, that was put to it in 1991. We were a proactive Government. If the Barbados Labour Party Administration was in office today, Barbados could not be in the position it is in today. Never.

Mr. Speaker, in the midst of all this, what did the Democratic Labour Party see fit to do? The first thing they did was a little nominal tinkering with Ministries.

House A60B Sequence 19

1.30 p.m.

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Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I must confess, never before have I ever seen a situation as you do now have.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House by saying to this Honourable House that in 1991, no wages were cut and that nobody was affected.

Sir, in 1991, workers at the Ministry of Transport and Works, who were working five days a week, were cut to three days, and also workers at the Barbados Water Authority.

Mr. Speaker, everybody knows about the hardship that people went through in 1991. Therefore, for the Honourable Member to give the impression that nobody knew, is clear that the Honourable Member would not have been associated with the Barbados Labour Party at the time and, therefore, was not aware of the facts.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, what does the Democratic Labour Party do to deal with this serious problem confronting this country? The Democratic Labour Party decided to have, for the first time, what I would call in the context of a Cabinet-tinkering, a floating Minister, a Minister who has now been a Minister of State in three different Ministries. I call him no less than a floating Minister.

Sir, I have never seen a situation where in the case of the Ministry of Health, a Minister has been appointed as Minister of State to a Parliamentary Secretary. Sir, I have never seen that before, but we have seen that as a Prime Minister's response to serious hardship facing this country.

Sir, outside the context of a reshuffle, we see - and I must add my voice to this - a Party for the handing over of keys. I thought it was 33 keys, now I am hearing it is only 17 and 8 - a raw, vulgar politicisation of what should have been a decent occasion.

Mr. Speaker, what made it so bad that the Democratic Labour Party so wanted a photo opportunity? Sir, I would like you to go and look back at that video. Sir, the first man who went up for his keys shook the Prime Minister's hand and turned around to walk away. If you watch the video you, would see that the Prime Minister held his hands and pulled him back and turned him around and said: "The camera is there, stand up and get in this picture with me with these keys in your hands."

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, watch the video again, then.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not want to curtail the right of Honourable Members to speak in a debate but this is about the fifth time we are hearing this argument and the Standing Orders speak to tedious repetition and irrelevance of other Honourable Members speeches. That is Standing Order No. 40(1). I am suggesting to you that you ought to move on.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I will stand by my right to speak in this debate. If other Honourable Members before made the point, that has nothing to do with my speech. If I am on a point, you could stop me?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: No, I did not beg to come here. No, man, I sorry, no man, you making sport or what?

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

Honourable Members, when the Chair makes rulings in this Honourable House, my understanding is that those rulings must be abided by. If you have a difficulty with that, you may feel free to bring a substantive Motion and let us deal with the matter. I will not tolerate it from Honourable Members of Either Side. I give all Honourable Members your due respect, you will all give the Chair its due respect. Honourable Members, please be guided.

Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, no wonder in this country people are now angry and frustrated. People are losing hope and are about to take matters into their own hands. Sir, no wonder.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I can talk from personal interactions with constituents. Sir, people are losing hope in this country. People are getting angry and some are on the brink of taking things into their own hands. Sir, I can tell you, I do not wait until the day before to go to Constituency Council meetings, or to go canvassing to hear what people are saying. Canvassing is a way of life for me.

I can tell you, a few Saturdays ago, I was in my Constituency and came across an individual living in my Constituency, though not yet registered in the Constituency. This individual told me that he came out of prison a year ago and since then has been trying to get a job. He said that everywhere he turns, he is being told that they are telling him they have acknowledged receipt of his application, that they would keep him on file and the likes. He said that he cannot find a job.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please keep your asides down, particularly when they are getting very offensive and so on. Please keep your asides down.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, he told me that if it continues like that, he would have no choice, but to go back and commit more crime, to which he was prepared to do. I told him not to do that and asked him if he had any connections with a priest. He told me he is not a Church man. I told him to call me any time he gets such thoughts, so I can try to arrange a meeting.

Mr. Speaker, I asked him who was his representative, because he was not registered in my Constituency, and he told me he came from the Pine. I said: "Have you gone to the Member of Parliament for the Pine?" He told me that he is tired going to the Member of Parliament for the Pine, that it is just a dead-end street. Mr. Speaker, I am making the point that in this country people are on the edge and that this Government thinks that is a big joke.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West urged us to read neo-classics and all of that wank, but I am not going to read any neo-classics. I am reading people. Sir, I am reading people like the girl from Eden Lodge who told me last Saturday that she is working for five days a week and that on Friday evenings she carries home \$100, because she was asked to take a wage cut, or go off completely, and she offered to take the wage cut. I am not reading any neo-classics. I am reading people and what they are feeling in this country.

Mr. Speaker, things in this country now are unacceptably bad and hard. We have a Government that is totally non-proactive.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons Barbados has now found itself in this position is that our tourism industry and tourism sector, our major foreign exchange earner which is supposed to prop up this economy, has now gone haywire and is causing everybody to feel pain.

Mr. Speaker, for those who do not seem to know, the economy is not any nebulous far-removed concept. The economy is what determines the quality of life that we enjoy. When the economy was as it was before 2008, which was heavenly, people in Barbados were enjoying a high standard of living and a good quality of life. Sir, now that it is in shambles, people in Barbados are feeling the pain, which is being reflected in a declining standard of living. It is in this state primarily because of the condition of our tourism sector. That is not the only cause, but it is one of the main causes.

Mr. Speaker, we used to be able to hear the tongue of good report, whenever we speak on tourism matters before January 2008, we always heard the tongues of good report. Sir, records were being set and broken and the industry was at its zenith in 2008. Sir, what a difference a year makes. In fact, what a difference two years make under a Democratic Labour Party regime in relation to tourism.

Sir, the first thing you have to do to understand where we are in tourism in this country, is to disregard everything that the Minister of Tourism and the Honourable Prime Minister tell you about tourism. That is the first thing you have to do, to understand where we are in relation to tourism in this country.

Mr. Speaker, for them, the performance of the tourism industry is something you mention en passant, you gloss over it and you hear it is here as it is everywhere else, that all over is the same.

1.50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN: We heard from the Prime Minister, in his opening comments, that most countries in the Region recorded double-digit declines in the year 2009, which is not correct. Sir, it is very incorrect because only 12 countries of 28 countries had double-digit declines in 2009. Sir, that is the first thing that is incorrect. We also hear that you are to pay no attention to figures when it comes to tourism but, Sir, facts are facts.

Mr. Speaker, the figures have to be revealed and contextualised, because the fact is that last year, Barbados saw a decline in tourist arrivals of 8.7 per cent, which was also a 1.2 per cent on 2008.

Mr. Speaker, you know that already, but what you do not know is that the performance of Barbados' tourism last year was a 4.6 per cent decline on the arrivals in Barbados in the year 2000. Sir, last year was a 4.6 per cent decline on the year 2000, so in 2010, or 2009 we were operating at 1999 levels.

We had lost a decade of development in our tourism in the space of two years under the Democratic Labour Party. Yes, there was a slight increase for the figures of January of 2010, compared to January of 2009 but, Sir, that was still 1.4 per cent below the figures for 2008, so there is nothing at all for the Government to speak about, or to brag about in relation to Barbados' tourism performance.

Mr. Speaker, there are several reasons for this. The first minor reason is the fact that there is a recession in some of our major markets, especially the United States and the United Kingdom. Sir, proof of that statement comes from the Minister himself, because the last quarter of last year saw a slight increase out of the United States market and the Minister came in here a few weeks ago and thumped himself on the chest for a fairly nominal increase, but an increase nonetheless, out of the United States market for the last quarter of last year and his words were "in spite of a recession in that market."

Mr. Speaker, I have been saying all along that the recession was, but a small cause for the declines in our market, but that proper planning and initiatives could have helped us to ride it out a lot better than we were, in fact riding it out.

Sir, finally came the admission from the Minister himself that was, in fact, true and, thereby indicting himself as a serious non-performer as a Minister.

Mr. Speaker, there are other reasons and these are the main reasons. These are directly attributable to the incompetence of the Minister, a total lack of policy initiatives and planning on the part of the Government. Sir, the first of these reasons, directly attributable of the Minister has to do with the constant confusion that the Minister continues to generate in the tourism sector that simply serves to destabilise the sector and to stunt its growth. The Minister continues to generate confusion. Mr. Speaker, how can a sector seriously move forward when a Minister and his own Permanent Secretary do not even communicate with each other? They are arguably the two most important policy makers in relation to tourism, but they do not even speak to each other.

Sir, there is sheer tension to the point where the Permanent Secretary has actually requested a transfer out of the Ministry of Tourism to go into another Ministry. How can we have two policymakers so divided? It is sheer confusion. Sir, this has been happening since last year

which means that from last year until now there has been no serious attempt at policy formulation in the Ministry of Tourism because of that impasse. The Minister will not move forward until he gets an apology, which he is not getting. It is as simple as that, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, the greatest confusion generated by the Minister of Tourism...

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I really loathe to interrupt the Honourable Member but, the truth is, I am in daily communication with my Permanent Secretary. I do not know where that story is coming from. I really am not sure which Minister he is referring to, but I am in daily communication with my Permanent Secretary. As a matter of fact, I just came back from the office and I have a note from my Permanent Secretary which says "Minister, documents as requested, Andrew Cox, March 15, 2010". Sir, I am in daily communication. This puts a lie to the foolishness from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, the typical way that people who do not speak to each other communicate is by writing. Sir, people who do not speak to each other communicate in writing. Sir, the greatest confusion generated by the Minister of Tourism has to do with his relation in relation to the Barbados Tourism Authority. Sir, the Barbados Tourism Authority is Barbados' major tourism agency and it is now at a standstill for a number of reasons.

First, as is the case with the Minister and the Permanent Secretary, so too is the case between the Minister and the Chairman. There is no communication whatsoever. There is lack of cohesion and there is total lack of co-operation between the Minister and the Chairman. There is no cohesion whatsoever in Barbados' marketing strategy. The Minister did not want the present Chairman and he is not working with him. Full stop. It is as simple and as straightforward as that, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to get into who is right and who is wrong between the two of them, but I can just say that instead of the Minister deciding to go to the Barbados Tourism Authority to assist in the formulation of a marketing strategy, the Minister went to the Barbados Tourism Authority with a list of who had to go from the Barbados Tourism Authority.

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

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Thank you. Sir, a lot of people had to go from the Barbados Tourism Authority since the appointment of this Minister two years ago, especially people charged with the management of the Barbados Tourism Authority. Sir, some left because contracts were not renewed and some were sent on purely political grounds.

Sir, there has been a total upheaval at Barbados' major marketing agency by this 8.5 magnitude Minister of Tourism that we have. Sir, he is an 8.5 magnitude Minister of Tourism and there has been a total upheaval at the Barbados Tourism Authority since this Minister was appointed.

Mr. Speaker, how could you expect morale to be anything but low - no pun intended - when people at the Barbados Tourism Authority are simply wondering on a daily basis who will be next. Sir, there is grave confusion and uncertainty and to add to that confusion, the Minister has decided to rush ahead, for reasons unknown, to make two appointments overseas of two Vice Presidents. One Vice President for Europe and one Vice President for South America but, amazingly, the Vice President for South America is based in Miami.

Could you understand that you are trying to develop a market and you want a Vice President for that market? You do not put him in the market, but you put him based in Miami? I wonder if he even speaks any of the languages in South America.

Sir, the Minister of Tourism puts a Vice President, South America and bases him in Miami. Sir, all of this is being done ahead of the findings of a study that was commissioned by the Barbados Tourism Authority to deal with the restructuring of the Barbados Tourism Authority. How could you possibly know who should be fired and who should be hired, et cetera, when you have commissioned a study to deal with the restructuring of an agency and you are awaiting the findings of that study?

Mr. Speaker, the Minister seems to like studies because this is the third study at the Barbados Tourism Authority that touches on the issue of restructuring, but the Minister goes ahead to act ahead of the findings of that study.

Sir, to compound it all, a Chief Executive Officer was appointed at the Barbados Tourism Authority last year for whom tourism marketing and management seem to be a foreign language.

Sir, I really want the Minister to explain to us what are the qualifications of this CEO? Because these are serious times.

H/A60B/2.00 p.m. Sequence 21

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Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Our tourism is seriously under performing. I cannot go into details now, but we are seriously under performing and lagging way behind our neighbours in the Region. This is no time to be dealing on the basis of nepotism.

I want the Honourable Minister to clarify if that appointment was really based on qualification, expertise and experience, or if it was simply of an appointment based on nepotism. I understand that same thing is about to happen at the Airport now. The same thing is to happen at the Grantley Adams International Airport. Yet again, an appointment is to be made at the Grantley Adams International Airport for the position of Chief Executive Officer to someone, not on the basis of any qualifications, or expertise, but on the basis of connections, nepotism of sorts.

I am very concerned that we are lagging behind, and the 8.5 magnitude Minister of Tourism is making blunder after blunder in this country, and it is going to reach the stage where we do not want to stand in the way of developing a major sector in this country, but we have to start to accept the fact that if we had not spent a single cent in tourism for the last two years, our tourism would be no worse than it is today.

Sir, Barbados' tourism has sustained itself on its own momentum. That is all that has been happening.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please wind up.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, it has been sustaining itself on its own momentum, and all the money going into tourism is going into a bottomless pit. It would reach a stage where we on This Side obviously want to continue to work with the Government in relation to that sector, but we are going to have to look seriously at making some mature decision if we are going to continue supporting a policy where money is just being taken and thrown into a bottomless pit, with no positive results.

I have not delved into the issue because of time, in relation to tourism receipts and the massive decline, but I will deal with those, hopefully.

I understand that the Honourable Minister of Tourism is to be called, and I look forward to him giving us some more information on that occasion.

I am obliged.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, I rise to contribute to this debate. First of all I want to say that when you listen to the contributions, somehow it seems as if Barbados began from January 2008, and everything we are seeing, the makings of them started in 2008.

It is unfortunate that the approach taken by the Opposition, is to try to convince Barbadians that what is happening now in this country is not the result of events that started long before this Democratic Labour Party Government came into power. It is also unfortunate that we heard a speech from the Leader of the Opposition, yesterday, that sought to excuse herself subconsciously from responsibility for our current position. When we heard the phrase, it was not me, it was a subconscious phrase. It was an attempt to say to Barbadians that subconsciously there are trying to separate themselves from what is currently happening. They are trying somehow by their best efforts to try to convince Barbadians that everything happening today is as a result of what transpired after January, 2008.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central were ordered expunged from the records by Mr. SPEAKER.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: My apologies, Sir.

Sir, I will say it is an attempt to mislead the public of Barbados, because if we are honest, we have to recognise that what is happening today has its beginnings prior to January 2008. I believe we need to recognise that.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: That is true. Other people said it.

Sir, the other point I wish to make when it comes to that, I just want to refer to an article, and I will make this a document of the House. In the Finance and Development Magazine, there is an article called "Surviving the Third Wave", written by Yang Sun Kang where he says:

"After the financial and economic crises that we have just experienced, a third wave is engulfing the labour market leaving millions without work and changing the course of their lives."

I also want to read another section which says:

"The pace and magnitude of the increase in unemployment in the OECD area is unprecedented in the post-war period, and we need to go back to the economic downturn of the 1970s, and early 1980s, to find something similar."

This respected economist says Farness Carpello, of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

"The OECD calculates that unemployment will continue to rise until the end of next year..."

which is 2010. They are referring to in this article.

"If the forecast is correct, the number of jobless within its 30 Member States will be over 30 million, higher than the beginning of the downturn, the worst hike since the end of World War II."

Sir, these are the facts.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Barbados is to be different. We are somewhere apart from the world.

In addition it says:

"Output will eventually recover, but the risk is, the rise in unemployment will prove enduring even if jobs are created, eventually the slump has etched lasting scars on the lives of millions of new graduates coming out into the work force."

Sir, this is not something that we can ignore. Not only that, the enormity of the task that faces this Democratic Labour Party Administration is something that was not faced before, because the same opportunities that were available to the previous Administration to fix the problem is not now available to the Democratic Labour Party Administration. Let us make that clear.

Sir, not only that, I want to say that to suggest that this Democratic Labour Party Administration is not attempting to deal with the problem, is another unfair accusation. It was not this Democratic Labour Party Administration that enunciated the philosophy that land should go to its highest economic value. It was not us. But that one statement caused a situation in this country where we saw land priced out of the reach of the ordinary Barbadian. What we see is a cycle of events that have brought us here. I really wish that the Opposition will take responsibility for those cycles of events.

Sir, we hear the attempt being made to convince Barbadians that it was not me, it is somebody else. Not only that, to suggest that the Prime Minister of the day does not recognise that in order to take Barbados forward at this time, we have to rely on our productive sector, and that is clear. He recognises it, but at the same time, the point needs to be made that we also have to pay attention to our human capital.

I do not believe any of us can argue that when we look at the events that are happening in our society, we cannot deny that there is some erosion of our human capital today. Sir, we did not reach that point yesterday.

HA60B 2.10 p.m. Sequence 22

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Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 23, 2.10 p.m.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, we did not get to that point yesterday. School children were not behaving appropriately, just from since 2008. Sir, it is a fact that when we look at events at UWI, Cave Hill, certain questions were not being asked even prior to 2008. We did not just get there, but we seem to want to suggest that we got there after 2008.

Sir, I want to say that certainly, if we are fair in our judgment, we have to admit that this Administration is doing the best with the limited resources that it has available.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, prior to 2008, it was true that we saw this country engage in large capital projects, but one of the things that we need to understand is that even then, it was beginning to be said that the multiplier effect of those same projects was not having the kind of impact that it needed to make in our society.

Sir, when I heard Honourable Members on the Other Side saying that there is a problem with unemployment, the problem was there before. Sir, we do not have the opportunity to utilise State funds in the manner in which they did, in order to hide unemployment figures. We cannot do that, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, we do not have the opportunity to create projects where really and truly, all we are doing is that we are putting people to work and there was no work for them. We do not have that.

Sir, I want to say this. We heard a lot of talk about agriculture, even from the Honourable Member for St. George North. When I heard it, I was amazed at what I was hearing, because here it is, we are hearing about agriculture from Members of a Party, who also presided over a struggling agriculture sector. I really think that at this point in time to come and tell me that they are awash with ideas how to bring it back, I think is coming, a little too late.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, of course, it is being hypocritical, because when we look at some of the things that are happening in the agriculture sector today, I think that we need to stand up and take notice that things are happening.

Sir, not only that, I believe that one of the things we must recognise for all the productive sectors, is that the same approaches that we tried 10 to 12 years ago, cannot work today. One of the things I emphasize again is that this Government is paying attention to the human capital.

Sir, one of the things that was done recently is what we call an "agripreneurial" project. It involved trying to get the young people back into agriculture. There was a situation where you have 20 young persons who have been identified and they are working with those young people in order to establish viable agricultural entities.

Sir, for those of us who visited our Agricultural Exhibition that was held recently in the Park, one of the points I think comes to mind is the fact that a lot of the persons who were prize winners on that occasion were young people.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: In a sense, this demonstrates the success that the Government is having, in terms of attracting young people back to the sector. I also believe that this project, which was started under the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMC), is something that I believe can pay great dividends for agriculture, Sir, and that is not the only thing, which is being done.

Sir, there is a situation where in terms of the production of commodities, we are seeing the normal trends. In other words, we cannot criticise the Government in terms of its efforts as far as agriculture is concerned, because when you are looking at agricultural output, especially within non-sugar agriculture, we are seeing that we are making gains.

Sir, one of the points I wish to make is that again, the attitude of farmers today did not start yesterday. The

challenge that this Government has, is to convince farmers that they have now finally found a Government which is prepared to treat their concerns within agriculture, seriously.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, that is the challenge, because when you look at the record of previous Governments, it has not been shown to them in any effective way. Sir, when you look at the resources that were actually spent in other sectors and still going, we have to say - and a lot of the farmers are saying - that the agricultural sector needs a fair share of Government's resources. Mr. Speaker, that is something I would want to say that we need to address, in terms of our Estimates, as we move forward in future years.

Certainly, if the agricultural sector is to play the kind of role, in terms of providing employment for young people, we have to put greater emphasis on it and you know, Sir, one of the unfortunate things is that we sometimes belittle the ordinary contributions of Barbadians in terms of the things that they do. It is okay for the Honourable Members on the Other Side to make light of the fact that we have ordinary people in this country, who invest in keeping livestock, things as simple as black belly sheep, cows, cattle and pigs.

Sir, to the Honourable Member on the Other Side, who makes his millions, it does not mean anything, but to the ordinary person who actually relies on that, as a source to supplement his income. It matters. Sir, the reason for that is that there are people in this country, who do not appreciate it, but I want to go on.

Sir, one of the things that we need to understand, is that in many cases, there are small black people who actually engage in the rearing of sheep and you have a situation in many cases where they use that money to supplement their income. Many of these people do not work for more than \$200 a week, and one of the things that this country has been fortunate with, is that they do not have a situation, where people do not have alternative sources in order to make themselves, at least, a little bit more comfortable and less reliant on Government's resources.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the things that we have had in the agricultural sector, where many times people supplement their incomes by doing these things for themselves, and these are the kinds of things which Governments need to encourage and, of course, cassava.

It is okay for Honourable Members on the Other Side to joke about these things because, unfortunately, they do not appreciate the importance of these things. It also shows too, the kind of regard in which they helped

agriculture when they were there. People there need to recognise that this is the case. Sir, as Barbadians we are being led by persons now, who at least say that agriculture matters.

Sir, I would just go to the points I was making on supplementing incomes.

Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 23, 2.20 p.m.

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Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, it does not only apply to sheep, but even in cattle. Sir, the person who won the award for the prize bull at the last Agricultural Exhibition was a young man. Mr. Speaker, that young man brags about the fact that he is able to make a living out of doing this kind of thing. Sir, not only that, he has pride in terms of selecting the animals. This shows you that there is a certain level of expertise in terms of the way in which he does it.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to emphasise is that these small contributions are what is going to make a contribution to at least ensuring that during these difficult times, people find ways to supplement their incomes in order to ensure that they can feed themselves and their families. Mr. Speaker, we should not take these initiatives that people are doing on their own for granted.

Sir, it is okay for us as representatives of the people to make people feel that we can solve everything for them. If we look again at the approach that is being taken, we are giving the impression that the Democratic Labour Party is the only cog in the wheel that would help Barbados out of this particular period and into a period where Barbados again can be successful.

Mr. Speaker, earlier, when I was listening to the Member for St. Michael North, he made light of the work in terms of the contribution of the Minister of Tourism. Sir, there are other destinations in the Caribbean that are doing much worse than Barbados, but we have a situation where persons are trying to make it appear as if things are so bad.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: You cannot get away with it, things are not that bad.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of tourism, this Government has an opportunity to try to use the support that it has given to the tourism sector to cause it to offer greater support to the productive sector, because we talk about the fact that the productive sector needs to make a greater contribution.

Sir, I believe that we need to create greater linkages between our tourism sector and our productive sectors. Sir,

it is not unreasonable if tied to the support that we give to our tourism sector is some kind of condition where we encourage the tourism sector to buy more of their inputs from the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. I think that is something we need to do.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people who are involved in activities in the homes to help themselves and to support their families. One of the things we see developing from the agricultural sector is the development of cottage industries where we have small holders who might do things like seasonings, or confectionery, based on our local agricultural products.

Sir, we need to encourage the hotels to utilise these products which are produced by small people in our households. Sir, we can also work with those small people and try to improve the ways in which they are trying to produce those products. Sir, they have the techniques, but in many cases, they just need to tap the right resources in order to make sure that they are producing the product to the right quality.

Sir, we spend money giving a lot of tax holidays, or whatever, to foreign interests to come to Barbados to do things for us when these are the same things we can do for ourselves. We do not need to go to any capital in London, or New York, when we have the same expertise right here.

Sir, the problem is that we have people who do not want to embrace local Barbadian ingenuity. We feel that everything must come from outside, it cannot happen any other way. That is why we would lie prostrate and let our land be sold to whosoever comes.

Mr. Speaker, I need to re-emphasise the point that we need to work with those local people who are doing things. Sir, one of the things you have to give the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMC) credit for the development of cassava flour, a healthy and extremely nutritious food, something that Barbadians are prepared to pay money for.

Sir, another thing that you have to give them credit for is the fact that since improving the process by which it is made, we are seeing now other private people who are actually making that same cassava flour. Sir, before we had to import it and now we can actually do it for ourselves. Sir, I know that there are some who feel that we cannot do things.

Sir, it does not stop at the area of cassava. The breadfruit is another one that offers opportunities. Sir, all I am saying is that we need to find a way to tap into these efforts that local people are making.

Sir, we have to recognise that the ability for Barbadians to be employed in the Civil Service is no longer. Sir, one of the things you hear from the Other Side a lot when it comes to employment is that Government can solve all of the employment problems that people have, but Government cannot do that.

Sir, one of the things you have to do is to look at new areas for people to get into. We have been stuck in a time warp for so long because the only thing we had was selling land and building golf courses.

Sir, there is not one creative thing in the last 14 years, or before, that we caused Barbados to do creatively and even supported. We have been talking a lot about the cassava flour for a long time, not now, but we are doing it now.

Mr. Speaker, the point needs to be made that the responsibility for the development of Barbadians falls upon the Government, but also on other people.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, we understand that Government cannot do as much because of the situation that we now face. Sir, one of the things I want to emphasise, which I want to plead to the Prime Minister not to do, is to ensure that the productive sectors in this country get their due, because at the end of it, they would be the ones who would pull this country out of the situation that we find ourselves in.

House A60B Sequence 24

2.30 p.m.

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Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, let us ensure also that the kind of approaches that we took that encouraged us to feel that individual small people in this country, who wanted to make an active contribution in terms of developing themselves, who have creative ideas in terms of doing things and to help their families, that we also support their efforts. That I believe is one of the things that would help us to survive this particular period.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Barbadians have to be careful when they listen to the Opposition. Sir, I am very concerned that you have not heard one single person to date from the Opposition Benches who has come up with anything creative to offer Barbadians as a solution. I anticipate we would hear more, but I think in this day the challenge will be that we have to recognise the times in

which we are, we have to recognise that the same old approaches will not work.

This Government is actively searching for ways to ensure that Barbadians are able still to enjoy the kind of benefits the society can offer and should offer to its citizens. We must also ensure that those persons who are least able to look after themselves are still in a position to look after themselves at the end of the day, with the help of Government. There are those persons who can afford to look after themselves, but there are others in this country who need the help of this Administration, that is why we had to go the route of having free bus fares for school children. Sir, that is very simple to understand. There are poor families out there who understand that, but not everyone of us can afford to live in gated communities and to send our children to the best schools. Some of us live among real people and we understand the pains real people go through.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, when I was growing up in the Pine, I remember one afternoon just about 1:30, I saw a movie at the Plaza called "Will Penny." The theme of the picture was that although "Will Penny" was a peaceful man, he could still fight.

Mr. Speaker, I am not an economist, I am a social practitioner. I am also a student of life and a keen observer. I am a product of the Pine, having been raised in Church Village, St. Matthias, Gall Hill, Christ Church, and also Halls Road, where I am currently living.

Mr. Speaker, this is my preamble into the Estimates, I will get to the Estimates.

Sir, I want the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown to know his father and my uncle were all raised in Church Village. We came from very humble backgrounds, from very poor families. Sir, I want the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown to know that if the one thing we have in common is our own upbringing and that whenever I have the chance to defend a product of a poor working-class family in this Honourable Chamber, I will do so.

Sir, I will not sit by and hear all kinds of remarks being suggested about the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, as there are other Honourable Members in this Honourable Chamber who came up from humble poor backgrounds, like me. I will not allow that because the same things that would be said of him, would obviously be said of me and even worse.

Mr. Speaker, I always said to this Honourable Chamber that I am quite happy where I came from and who I am. I do not want to be no one else but me, because I recognise my roots.

Mr. Speaker, these Estimates that were laid in this Honourable Chamber yesterday by the Prime Minister of Barbados were set against a backdrop of a very difficult prevailing global economic climate. Sir, all of us here know that this economic climate that is prevailing planet Earth has impacted very negatively on Small Island Developing States like Barbados. Sir, Barbados is still rated, despite all the talk, as the number one developing country in the world. We still maintain that status.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that the very harsh economic global recession everyone knows has impacted negatively on some Barbadian households. It has also impacted negatively on households across the Region. It is not a unique feature to Barbados only. We hear on radio programmes every morning how the various Leaders in the Caribbean are reporting negative growth. It is not only a Barbadian thing.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the prevailing circumstances, we therefore, have to ask ourselves some very pertinent questions that will bring some sanity to this debate and certainly more than anything else, truth. Sir, there must be a link between social engineering and economic engineering.

Sir, against that background, I want to pose a number of questions to this Honourable Chamber. Sir, these are simple questions I want to put before this Honourable Chamber. Sir, I am going to put these questions before this Honourable Chamber today and Honourable Members could respond if they want to. Sir, question number:

1. Was the current international recession brought on by this present Government?

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, my second question is:

2. Has the Government of Barbados inherited this economic situation?

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, obviously yes. Sir, question number 3:

3. Are poor Barbadians entitled to social protection and social entitlement?

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, my next question:

4. Should a Government of Barbados give free bus rides to poor children in this country?

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I thought I was the only one to whom questions should be put in this Honourable House, but from your behaviour, apparently I am not the only person to whom questions should be addressed. Please keep it down.

Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, my fifth question:

5. Should the Government of Barbados be congratulated for housing initiatives so far?

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Everybody has gone silent. Sir, this is an independent view, despite what many people might think.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, my next question is: (6) Should the Government of Barbados give free camps to poor Barbadian children and their parents?

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, while we are on that, I would want to say that I woke up this morning feeling miserable and hungry and that I came straight to this Honourable Chamber. Sir, I was downstairs listening to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas as it relates to the national camps programme in Barbados.

2.40 p.m.

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Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, I am the National Coordinator of the Camp Programme and some very serious statements were made on this Floor as it relates to the Camp programme, and I want to use the next few minutes to put those statements in their right perspective.

Mr. Speaker, I want the Chair to acknowledge that the \$6 million was not spent on summer camps only. Sir, \$6 million was allocated for the entire Camp Programme. Sir, the CAMP Programme is not a summer camp programme only. There is a programme at Easter and there

is also a programme at Christmas in the form of a national "give-back" programme.

Mr. Speaker, I am not afraid to speak on these issues, because there is nothing to hide.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member said that the camp was for four weeks, but the camps were actually for six weeks, which...

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: I heard four weeks and, Sir, I am saying there were for six weeks. If we do the mathematics, there are...

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it was also said that a caterer was paid \$100 000. Sir, I am going to set the record straight but, if that was true, what is wrong with a poor black man in this country gaining \$100 000? What is wrong with that, Sir, although it is not true and I will put the facts to this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, there were 71 camps and each camp had a minimum of 100 students per camp. A meal per student was \$12, so \$12 for 100 campers a day is \$1 200 and, Sir, \$1 200 multiplied by five days a week is \$6 000 and, Sir, a six-week period is \$36 000. If that caterer has three camps and 300 children to cater for, is that not \$108 000? Mr. Speaker, not one person received it, but more than one caterer received it and, Sir, all of them were of my pigmentation.

Mr. Speaker, it was also said in this Honourable Chamber that we named the camp after politicians. Sir, how far from the truth that is. Mr. Speaker, the camps were constructed in zones. The island was zoned and divided into four zones. We had a meeting to determine how we were going to orchestrate the camp programme and we determined we would look for four serious community practitioners and name these camps after them.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no one in Barbados that could challenge the right of us naming one of the zones, as it relates to the camps after Mr. Keith Simmons. Sir, after all, he was the pioneer of the Summer Camps Programmes in Barbados through the Trents Summer Camp.

Sir, there is nobody that could challenge us when we named Gordon Walters, who was the Chief Community Development Officer, and who also orchestrated community camps. There is no one who could challenge Mr. Ralph Walker, who was also part of the orchestration at the community level.

Mr. Speaker, more so, we tried to find a gender balance and we named those camps after Dame Olga Lope-Seale. Sir, I did not know that Dame Olga Lope-Seale was a politician, because she might vote for a political Party, or might not vote at all. I did not know that Keith Simmons himself, who was a former politician, that we would not want to recognise his work as a community practitioner, or Mr. Ralph Walker.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to put those things in perspective, because if you leave them alone, people might misconstrue the wrong idea. Sir, nobody would not compliment the Department of Family, Youth and Sports for organising the best summer sports programme at the National Stadium, when 61 buses from the Transport Board, where the parents themselves paid the bus fare and brought all those children to the National Stadium with not an additional cent, because it was part of the Camp Programme.

Mr. Speaker, we have to thank companies like BICO Limited and the Barbados Olympic Association for making generous donations. Sir, nobody wanted to believe this was possible. Sir, the Camp Programme would go on and already we have more than 11 000 enquiries based on the principles of the past experiences of the last Summer Camp Programme and, Sir, it will continue to grow. You cannot criticise politicians for getting involved in the camp, because that is their community responsibility. Sir, every politician/social practitioner should have a camp in their respective community.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to say something. When the Prime Minister came into this Honourable Chamber in 2008 and laid Budgetary Proposals in this Honourable Chamber, I backed the social programmes, because I firmly believed that there were pro-poor and that they were poor-oriented. I backed them then and I am still backing them, and I will continue to do so because it is in the interest of poor people.

Sir, only a mad man would oppose every thing in this country, particularly in these prevailing economic trying times against poor people. You have to be really mad, or have another motive.

Mr. Speaker, community technology. I would love the day to come when I can see that every Barbadian family has a computer and the Internet services. The dream is that every single Barbadian should be computer literate, making Barbados the most computer literate nation on planet Earth. Sir, this is the dream that would further propel poor people. Sir, absolutely no child in this country should be uncertified, but in Barbados we talk about certification only in the context of a secondary school education, or a tertiary school education. We have to wake up, according to the youth, and smell the coffee.

Sir, we cannot plan strategy for young people, do not interact with them and do not find out how they are thinking. We cannot bring to bear on the youth of this country our own programme without a consultation with them. Sir, it is a serious thing.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people in my age group that are lost. When you hear them talk you would believe that they are the most sanctified, holier-than-thou human beings from planet Earth.

Sir, one Honourable Member this morning was talking about Mavado and Kartel. I think by now the 275 000 across Barbados know that Hamilton Fitzgerald Lashley, III from the Pine, that they refer to as the Rastaman, has some connection with it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, you know what got me? When I hear the lewd lyrics of the contentious lines in the music of the two artistes, you would think that is a new phenomenon.

H/A60B/2:50 Sequence 26

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, we are fast becoming a nation of hypocrites. Let me put my story. I do not know much about the Dub music. I do not know much about it. The best Dub music is written by “Red Plastic Bag”, “Ragga, Ragga, Ragga”. Sir, if there is one thing I know is, the same persons are condemning the same Mavado and Kartel Show, and I am going to give the principal reason behind it because it is not an ordinary show, bearing in mind that these two artists performed in Barbados on three previous occasions, consistently. There was no objection then. There was none. The same Commissioner of Police allowed them into Barbados, if he has the final say.

Sir, what is even more pressing in my mind, when Crop Over comes, in terms of behaviour, when the Church is crying out for support with regard to the lewd behaviour, you see old men like me and old girls down Spring Garden, and they are “pooching back”. Sir, that is off the record. I am sorry. I will find a different terminology within the cultural context of Barbados.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, all that I am concerned about at this time is in respect of the relevance to the point you are making. That is what is going through my mind. Continue Honourable Member.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, let me point out the relevance. Every cent voted in these Estimates, where there is a section marked “Youth Affairs”, and when we vote for money to expend on the youth of Barbados, the taxpayers

of Barbados must get value for their money. All I am saying, the morality aspect, which is the crucial aspect, must be taken into consideration. Our youths' future and behaviour are best determined in these Estimates.

Sir, the Estimates were not prepared overnight by guess. These were calculated and allocated to a certain aspect of youth development and cultural development. They are all in this book. All I am saying is, we have to stop the double standard and the hypocrisy, because on BET television, you can see the same two artistes, no stress. At 10 o'clock you can see it on BET Channel 802, where you can watch the best grooves that you can ever think about, if there is such a thing as best grooves. Sir, nobody has called for censorship yet. Cinemax, the youth calls it "Blues Max" now, or the "Blue Max". That is what they call it.

Sir, there is a very serious and dangerous development in Barbados. You have in Barbados the Gaza and Gully. If you watch some of the mud splashes on the ZRs and mini vans, it is Gully and Gaza, Gully and Gaza that was motivated, or came out of these same two artistes. Now we are bringing them to Barbados to sit and dialogue with this nation's youth, and the Commissioner of Police wants to deny entry.

Sir, watch the West Indies Cricket Board of Control. They just engaged Mr. Vegas, one of the worst performers. The lyrics are exceptionally crude and explicit. They say that there is a redemption feature for everybody in life. The West Indies Cricket Board is now using him to promote the Twenty 20 Tournament. He cannot use the same lyrical content, but he is the feature artist promoting the Twenty 20 Tournament in the Caribbean. You cannot argue with them, Vegas and another artiste.

I am saying that there is always a redemption feature. He must stand the scrutiny, or he cannot, Sir, Jamaica just told the two artistes, two nights ago, during a Peace Concert in Jamaica.

In addition to that, West Side Story promotes the "Bloods and the Crips". The "Bloods and the Crips" are in Barbados' schools too.

Sir, all I am saying is, in our Estimates the Prime Minister began by stating clearly, he set it out very clear and nice, that these Estimates are prepared against a background of social engineering involving Team Barbados, all of us onboard. I do not expect everybody to agree with me. I do not expect that. What I am going to bring to this Honourable Chamber is realism and truth, to let us know that we have a serious problem.

I want to congratulate the Honourable Minister, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West. Do you know

why I want to congratulate him? I deal in a real world. I do not deal in a mock world or Cinderella world or fairy tale world. I deal in a real world. Do you know why? When I hit the road, I am coming back to it in a minute, because I cannot allow the Honourable Member for St. Michael North to escape the "Rastaman". He cannot escape my radar.

Sir, when I go outside of Parliament, or the Bus Stand, I hear small people saying, one thing about that Minister there, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, you can go into his office as a small man and you can get a loan. If you do not get the money they will set you up with good advice to improve your business.

Sir, do you see that issue of small business? If you doubt me, go outside of Parliament, they are right there reaching out to the small man, which is critical. This is how these Estimates are designed to reach the small man.

Sir, when you have a good product, Honourable Members should feel good enough to get up and keep a lot of noise. I am going to speak so that the poor people of Barbados can understand me. I am not going to intellectualise this debate. I am going to talk to the grass-roots element in this country. I am not going to intellectualise it.

I am saying that when you have a good product and Estimates that come before this Honourable Chamber are "poor, poor", let him get up and keep a lot of noise. According to the youth on the "Block", the bottom line.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North is a trained Lawyer. He is also a Queen's Counsel.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: I thought I had the geographical Constituency wrong.

Sir, the Honourable Member said that a young man from the Pine came to him and he was in a very turbulent mood, aggressive. That is the sub-text. He did not actually say those words. That he wanted to do something that was unlawful. That is what it came down to. To be honest with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, he showed considerable restraint.

I want to say that I was one Honourable Member from St. Michael South East that went to him. Many members from St. Michael North come to me too. I want him to know that, and I give them very decisive and practical advice. All of us know that from the time of practical reality, people from different constituencies come to all of us, so why this thing about a singular person from the Pine came to him?

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

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Thank you, very much.

Sir, I want to take those five minutes to laud some youth organisations in this country. I laud the efforts of the Barbados Youth Development Council, who is the primary youth umbrella and has been doing fantastic work in this country. I am saying that against a backdrop that they too are planning projects for young people, particularly commercial projects, entrepreneurial projects, et cetera.

HA60B 3.00 a.m. Sequence 27

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Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 28, 3.00 p.m.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: I must say, Sir, that as it relates to the Estimates, I would like to see an increase in their subvention to the Barbados Youth Development Council, which is another youth organisation doing fantastic work. The emerging global leaders of Barbados are wonderful young people, but we now have to empower them further. We have to build their institutions, Sir, and strengthen the capacity of these organisations to carry out their mandate.

Sir, I say that because, never in the history of this country have we had such powerful young people of diverse views. As older people, we have to guide them. We cannot talk down to them, or try to channel their energies differently. We really have to act in an advisory capacity to make sure they go the right way.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Youth Action programme consists of a group of returning nationals from the International Prison System that are coming back to Barbados, working wonderfully well in the secondary schools of Barbados, getting tremendous positive reports from the Principals and Guidance Counsellors in their schools - St. Michael, Princess Margaret and Lester Vaughan.

Sir, the point is that these men go into the schools and lecture/talk to these people. You should see the attention of the children in the classrooms. Absolute attention and motivation.

Sir, right now the Barbados Youth Action Programme, has a bonafide membership of close to 3 000 children, in three months, which is about 1 000 students per month.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South did a wonderful thing at the Hilton Hotel on "Crime and Prevention", which saw various organisations from throughout Barbados come, lending to the national cause. We need more of this, but we need to grapple with the problem we have at the community level.

I suppose that later in this debate, we have to touch on another area. Where are the voices on child abuse in Barbados? Sir, child abuse in Barbados is dread. It is getting out of hand. We really have to put a serious programme in place to deal with it.

The Estimates cannot only be reflected from financial terms because, clearly when the Prime Minister was constructing these Estimates, he did so against a background of the social framework in this "Honourable" country. Mr. Speaker, just as I take my seat, let me say this.

Mr. Speaker, they have made a call for all Barbadians to come on board "Team Barbados". It is critical, Sir, that all of us come on board at this time, the Opposition, the Independent Member, I suppose we are talking about time, all Barbados, Sir, should be on board.

I am not asking anyone to like me. Sometimes even your girlfriend at home does not like you at times. No big thing.

Mr. Speaker, all I am saying is that I want to support the Estimates. When we get into the Heads, we will have a lot more discussion, as it would pertain to the actual Heads themselves.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I would have loved to hear the Honourable Minister of Housing in this debate, but it is fairly obvious that because of the emptiness of the Estimates, especially as it relates to housing, that he has opted, not either to speak, or to speak after me.

Mr. Speaker, that being said, I would like to say that when you listen to the Honourable Members on That Side, it would appear as though they are not responding to the document that has been presented by the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. Most of them with the exception of the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central, dealt with the speech, the brilliant reply to that presentation, by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Obviously, it would appear to me as though they have really been forced into submission by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It is fairly obvious that those Honourable Members over there on the Front Bench, are somewhat stifled as to what they can say. I have four friends over there, three of whom are on the Back Bench and I cannot understand the reshuffle, because I do not know if it has something to do with the fact that it is very well known that three of them are very closely connected to me.

I really feel very bad when I see the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, my good friend from St. Philip and the Chairman of Committees, not being on the Front Bench. It tells us something about this document, because I served as a Member of Cabinet and recall when I was in Cabinet and we came to the Estimates, you had to make a presentation, not only with your Permanent Secretary - I hope the Minister of Tourism would make some peace with his Permanent Secretary - but we had to do our own preparation.

Mr. Speaker, after making our preparation for the Estimates, we then obviously might feel somewhat disappointed that certain items would be cut, when we go to Finance. It is fairly obvious that this preparation has not been done by Honourable Members on the Front Bench, so a lot of them are obviously smarting and it is fairly obvious too, they are not pleased with what the Minister of Finance has done.

Sir, you cannot understand why the Minister of Finance would want to say that he is interested in the well-being of the citizens of this country, and then goes on to talk about the philosophical divide between the Honourable Members of That Side and the Honourable Members of This Side, had something to do with the free fares on the school buses, yet the Minister of Transport and Works has come in here with his face set up, because he has not got what he wanted.

You are providing free bus fares to children, you are talking about a philosophical divide, yet, you are cutting the votes from last year. Sir, if you are really interested in the well-being of citizens, well then you have to start with housing.

This is why I am saying that I am somewhat disappointed that we have not heard from the Minister of Housing. His honeymoon is now over. He is the least performing Minister on That Side.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Sir, they have been trying over the length and breadth of this country, with all the propaganda to make you believe that the Minister of Housing is some poster boy, who is doing a wonderful job, so they have to prop him up on television.

Sir, I was Minister of Housing.

Aside.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Now, Al Barrack said that you were his lover. I do not believe him either, so you cannot get everything you want.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: In my Constituency alone, there were more houses built up to this point than has been built by the Minister of Housing throughout the entire island.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Are you finished? Do you have something to tell me? I do not believe it.

Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 28, 3.10 p.m.

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Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you still addressing the Chair. Please do not engage in the cross-talk. Please address the Chair.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I was the Minister of Housing and Lands and in my own Constituency. I am amazed, I smile, I do not get angry when I see the Minister of Housing and Lands on television. You are calling inviting people to a function to hand over a document stating that you have now given them a house that they were not able to get in our time, and are talking about the amount of housing solutions that you have built, but you have not referred to your Manifesto.

I said already that the reason this Government will be a one-term Government, is that you have to distinguish it from the other governments that succeeded previous governments in the past, because on every occasion that a Government has changed, the people wanted change. In this particular instance they wanted change, but they did not

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expect people to make promises that they could not fulfil. Again, that is the difference between us and them.

As a Minister - I wonder whether they do it - every year the then Prime Minister required us to present the programmes with respect to those Estimates, and then

when it came to the Budget, what we wanted to see in the Budget. Each of us prepared our own proposals for the Manifesto.

Sir, it is fairly obvious that this has not been done and this is the reason why Honourable Members on That Side want to shut down the debate. They tried to shut down the debate this morning to avoid the former Prime Minister from speaking. The former Prime Minister is here now. I would hope...

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: I want to hear the Minister of Housing and Lands.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On This Side, we do not expose dirty linen in public.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you referring to

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me?

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: I withdraw those comments. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members on That Side are not aware of the days when the Democratic Labour Party Members were not speaking to each other. They were two. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy used to literally back the Honourable Member for St. John, so now I guess that you would like to make everybody believe that there are problems over here, but politics is not a Sunday School.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: I want to deal with housing and the programme that the Democratic Labour Party said that they would have implemented. If they are going all over the country and propagandising something that never took place, we would have to repeat over and over again what they said they would do and what they have not done. If I get the opportunity, I am going to come back to housing.

Mr. Speaker, there are some issues I want to deal with. I know that these debates are structured in such a way that we do not come to certain issues. There are

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some mind-boggling issues pertaining to my Constituency. I did not get the opportunity last year to mention them and I was hoping that I would be able to get

them rectified this year. The Minister of Transport and Works speaks very loudly, that is all he does.

The first one relates to the Ministry of Transport and Works. There are three junctions that are of some concern to us in St. Andrew and one in St. James. The people have been more, or less bombarding me as to what this Government intends to do about them. Recently, we had two deaths at the Lancaster/Orange Hill junction.

I had written a number of letters to the Ministry, and so far nothing has been done. It so happened that when we had the most recent death, the Minister of Transport and Works was very quickly on the scene and gave us the assurance that a roundabout would be started as soon as possible at the Lancaster/Orange Hill junction. We have not seen anything being done. I would hate to think that it is rhetoric, because that is a road that I use on a daily basis as well. The people in the Orange Hill area

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are very peeved that nothing has been done so far.

Similarly, the Honourable Member for St. James North has already trumpeted the problems of the Westmoreland/Waterhall junction on the Ronald Mapp Highway, which also forms part of my Constituency. There are serious problems being created in that area. I would love to go with the Minister of Transport and Works during some peak period. I have to be careful in view of certain accusations that he has been making, but I would be willing...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute, please.

Mr. SPEAKER vacated the Chair and the Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER assumed the Chair.

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

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as one who resided in St. Andrew, you would be fully aware of those roads of which I speak, so I am speaking on your behalf as well.

The other area is the widening of the roads leading up

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to Orange Hill. I must say that this was a hold-over for some time and work has been started. Since the present Government took over, they had promised to complete the widening of the roads.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House to give the impression that he fought for the Lancaster Roundabout. He was the Minister at the time when the roundabout was discontinued by the then Prime Minister. The Honourable Member must tell the truth.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Andrew, please continue.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: I would let that pass. That road was conceptualised after 1998. I was Minister of Transport and Works up until December 1998, I certainly was not Minister at the time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the situation is getting very

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serious. There is increasing traffic in that particular area and it is important that Government give immediate attention to it.

The other area relates to that road leading from Plum Tree to Hillaby. There is great need and urgency for that road to be widened. Certainly, when I was Minister of Transport and Works, there were some proposals to widen the junction. A number of school children use that highway. With the golf courses and other activity now in the immediate area, it is important that we do something about it.

There are a number of teachers who have called me and have complained to me with respect to that particular road. They have indicated that they want to hear me speak about it. I do not know what else I could do in order to impress on the Minister of Transport and Works to treat it as a matter of urgency.

The other one relates to the problems posed by the golf courses and the work which is being done in the Waterhall/Apes Hill area.

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House A60B Sequence 29

3.40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have always had my reservations about that particular development, albeit when that development took place we

did not expect the present developers to behave in the manner in which they have since then. I must say I have already made certain comments in this Honourable House with respect to the way how that development has proceeded.

We as a Government sometimes make certain decisions with respect to developers, but we do not always expect a developer to be unreasonable, to be too greedy. Therefore, it is very important for the future that we set out certain conditions with the support of the neighbouring community.

It is a pity that we did not have, before that development started, some sort of community council interaction with both the Town Planning Department and the developers. What the developers are doing right now in that area is something that is unacceptable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should have said first that even before that development was done, provision should have been made for the widening of that road, at least in three lanes. That road should have been straightened. Notwithstanding the fact that the development itself is a good one, it is the other things that should have been done, which are creating some problems.

I certainly would not like to see a golf course, a polo field, a dairy farm and a horse stable existing in one location at the same time. What has happened is that the developers have moved a number of the animals from the area where no one lives. Sir, now they are developing the polo field and the other areas for the golf course, they are placing the farm next to the area where people reside.

Sir, this is creating a lot of problems. I have been getting calls on a daily basis asking me what are we doing. We are not now in Government and I would urge the relevant Minister at least, to see if he could make an approach to the developer. Presently, there are two district organisations that are willing to meet with the Ministry and the developer, to make sure that those problems are ironed out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another thing they have been doing is that we have a number of ficus trees that grow very tall, right close to the road. We believe that any development that is done in the future with respect to that type of activity should at least be set off from the road by about 40 feet. I just thought I should mention those things, because these are problems that people face in the area. These are genuine complaints that have been made to me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go back to the question of housing. The Democratic Labour Party in their Manifesto spoke of 500 lots of land in five months, at \$5 a square foot for first-time homeowners. They have been

trumpeting their achievements and from my recollection, only 85 houses have been built in two years. They also speak of housing solutions. If they are talking about housing solutions, they cannot claim credit for the solutions that they found when they came to Government. They cannot claim credit twice.

Sir, we are waiting to see the programme of the Democratic Labour Party coming to fruition. We want to hear the Democratic Labour Party, when they come to Estimates like these, rolling off the promises that they made in their Manifesto and to what they have done.

Sir, they said that they would provide 2 500 house spots for sale to low and middle income wage earners in the first term of a Democratic Labour Party Government. We are into the third year and they should be moving to provide 7 500 house lots and we have not seen them. Sir, they said they would provide 2 500 housing solutions per year and I would want the Honourable Member to define what is a housing solution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also had a situation in the Hillaby/White Hill area, an area that was affected by land slippage. We did a survey in the area and everyone who wanted to move was relocated. Those persons who could not have been relocated in the first phase, land was made available for them to be relocated in the second phase.

Sir, that land is there, all the utilities are in and yet nothing has been done with respect to relocating those persons. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am hoping that at least we could see some movement with respect to the relocation of those residents in the Hillaby/White Hill area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few remarks, I am obliged to you.

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

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to participate in this debate which I believe...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please wait one moment, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, would my time be restored?

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER vacated the Chair. Mr. SPEAKER assumed the Chair.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your time will be restored. Please continue.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I was thanking the Presiding Officer for the opportunity to participate in this debate which I believe could come and will come to be remembered as one of the most important debates in the history of this Parliament, given the situation that faces the country.

Mr. Speaker, in contributing to this debate, I will ask leave of this Honourable House to contribute from the perspective of the person who, in 35 years of professional experience as an economist and in public affairs, has seen economic crises first-hand and has participated in activities to deal with crises.

I speak from the perspective of a person who was there as a public official in 1981, when this country got into economic difficulties and had to seek the support of the International Monetary Fund. I speak from the perspective of the person who was a Shadow person on the Opposition Benches in 1991, when a crisis was experienced.

Sir, I especially want to begin by speaking from the perspective of a person who was in Jamaica in 1974, when the same kind of paradigm that is being offered to this Parliament and this country was offered with disastrous consequences.

Mr. Speaker, the notion that we deal, not with the economy, but that we deal with social engineering, can have a superficial, a popular, but a disastrous appeal.

I was sitting with my other colleagues in the planning agency in Jamaica in 1974-1975, when a Jamaican Prime Minister was carried away with this concept as well, dealing with social engineering rather than building a sound economy. He was speaking at the end of a Budget debate like this and he announced that as of this moment and hereinafter, there will be free education in Jamaica at the primary level, at the secondary level, at the tertiary level.

3.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there was no provision for it in the Estimates and that the endeavour for social engineering collided with the economic reality that the society and the economy, could not afford it, and the social engineering endeavour was lost within a few years, and the economy went to bits thereafter.

Mr. Speaker, I say that because the major presentation in this debate from the side of the Government

came from the Minister of Finance, and it was premised on the notion that we have to deal with social engineering, that Barbados is not just an economy, we have to deal with social engineering and that the major issue of which he is concerned is social engineering.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to this Parliament that the economic crisis that faces this country is not only real, but it is the most imposing that we have ever faced, and that it is set within the context of other circumstances, such that we have to have a laser-like focus at this time, and for the immediate future on building a strong, stable economy that can weather any storm.

Sir, I want to say that Barbados is no stranger to social engineering and that is why we enjoy the status of the leading developing country in the world, but that we must build a strong society, resting on a sound economy, and that we are not dealing with now in these Estimates, from the side of the Government, is that strong economy.

Mr. Speaker, I would, therefore, want to begin by giving a perspective on the nature of the economic crisis, as I see it. First of all, the state of public finances - it is not just about the deficit, Mr. Speaker. I equate it to a household's circumstances. If you have a problem that arises merely because you and your wife are spending too much, then you can deal with that because it is entirely under your discretion but when you have a problem that has its origin more in the fact that your earning capacity has seriously diminished, then you have a different kind of financial problem.

The problems of 1981, were in large measure because we were overspending, but if you analyse the Estimates of Expenditure this year, the real problem is that the earning capacity of the Government has virtually collapsed, that the striking statistic is not the size of the expenditure, but the revenue has dropped by \$400 million as regards to expectation and is less \$200 million than last year.

Sir, if your practice declines, your financial problems are different from if your family is spending too much.

Secondly, a number of things that should happen because of developments are not happening. Sir, in an economy the size of Barbados, if our import bill falls by \$1 billion in a year, and it fell by \$1 million in 2009, a \$1 billion fall in the value of import should be enough to bring about a desirable improvement in your reserve position.

The fact that you still had to borrow for balance of payments support despite the fall of reserves to the extent of \$1 billion must suggest to you that there is a very deep

structural problem in the earning capacity, not just of the Government, but of the economy at large.

Third, and I wish the Prime Minister had paid some attention to this, our reserves are also falling in January and February. Sir, that is the period in the year when the reserves should be rising. It means that we are in for a dismal period this year, when we should be earning foreign exchange, we are losing foreign exchange.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, there is a crisis in the private sector of Barbados reflected not just in the fact that revenue of some sectors is down by 50 per cent but that the private sector has had to draw down \$170 million in its deposit in the banking system over the last two years just to keep things going.

Sir, our economy is a set of enterprises and if those enterprises, are not viable and have to keep drawing down their reserves to keep themselves going, then the fundamental issue of growth expansion of enterprises and the creation of new ones cannot be realised.

Mr. Speaker, I ask myself what really is the big shock that is facing Barbados and how should we be responding to it?

Mr. Speaker, an economy is just another system. Sir, things flow in, and things flow out, and if nothing changes, it will continue as is. What has been the big change in Barbados in the course of the last two years? The big factor affecting our economy has been the change in net foreign capital inflows.

Sir, in 2007, this economy attracted \$1.5 billion in capital inflow and its effects were felt all across the economy, not just in our reserves, but in every place of business in Bridgetown, Speightstown, and everywhere in the country.

Mr. Speaker, if you have an economy the size of Barbados, and it loses inflow of \$1.5 billion drops, then to \$400 million, and then drops to \$30 million, the effect is virtually catastrophic.

Sir, we have to begin to understand both the policy and the strategy implications of an economy as small as Barbados having to deal with the shock of that nature.

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

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House.

I think as a trained economist, he should know better to compare the economic circumstances that exist in 2007,

and to seek to say that in relation to the loss of net foreign inflows, is the same situation now that has occurred, is to really misuse the economic learning he knows and to mislead the House. The Honourable Member should know better.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make the point that you have an \$8 billion economy. It attracted \$1.5 billion at some stage and within two years that \$1.5 billion goes to \$30 million. The effects are going to be serious and I want to focus a bit on that because that is one of the issues that this country has to face without ambivalence. Mr. Speaker, could you protect me?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, as a result of trade liberalisation by the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, Barbados was facing such a surge in our imports that our import bill was almost 50 per cent greater than our foreign exchange earning capacity.

We made a conscious decision, then as a Government, that our foreign exchange capacity in the traditional foreign exchange sectors could not suffice to pay our bills and that we had to do two things. Raise the ratio of foreign exchange to GDP and to do so, raise the ratio of foreign capital to GDP.

Sir, we set out on a strategy which was the subject of all kinds of controversy that we had to find ways of bringing foreign capital into this country, to effectively build a new economic system to be able to allow us to pay our bills. I gave a speech to this effect in St. James, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, it was working and raising the ratio of foreign capital to GDP was the first step. We had to bring in the foreign exchange to new capacity to earn new foreign exchange. It was happening if only to the extent that by 2007, the foreign capital inflows were \$1.5 billion and we were on our way. Sir, now a number of policy changes have been made that are sending mixed signals to people.

Mr. Speaker, there is a notion that you have to go back to exchange controls. I say to this House that every major activity that has taken place in this country since the 1960s, has virtually depended upon the removal of exchange control, not their existence.

H/A60B/3.40 p.m. Sequence 31

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Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The international business sector in Barbados exists precisely because we have said

we removed exchange controls. The notion that you want to reintroduce exchange controls in a country where the portfolio investments are as speculative but real property is a mistake.

Secondly, I have been very clear in my perspective. If we are going to build a new modern economy, we must have a flexible perspective on how we use our land. I want to say this, because I have already paid the price for it. I am going to again. You cannot build a high quality export service economy using an agrarian land use model only. The other sectors of our economy that are vital to our prosperity need as much access to land as the traditional sectors of our economy. We have to be realistic about this.

Sir, people speak in terms of what we are going to do with Barbados. False issues are being focussed about if we want a stimulus, or not a stimulus. What we want is a recovery, first of all, and a recovery means you break the fall and you start turning things around. You can start turning things around if you start back the things that were stopped. The most important policy that this Government should be engaged in, not the Central Bank.

The Central Bank has no instrument at its disposal to help you. All that is happening now is, they are going to the Central Bank Governor's house, and they are juggling the same balls in the air every week. You need to get the projects that have stopped started back.

Sir, to dramatise the matter for you, if you could just get the Four Seasons started again, that is 700 jobs and \$1 billion in foreign inflows. If you can get all the others started again, you must break the fall, otherwise the spiral would continue downward. Sir, I really want to say that.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party may not want to hear this, because they have spent so much time criticising all of these projects that were intended to build a modern economy, that it might be a little embarrassment now to them, but I will urge them as they embraced Paradise and all the other projects, at their Cabinet they can have the person who leads them in Pray to go to the Book of Luke, Chapter 20 Verse 17: "the stone which the builder rejected, the same has become the head of their corner.

Sir, you will find that the Four Seasons and others, if reactivated, will carry you back to the development strategy and the path that will stop the fall and help you to bring back growth in this country.

Sir, we have also to discuss these Estimates in the context of the real circumstances that are facing this country. The circumstances are there. In the past a lot of activity in Barbados was generated by the use of protection. Those techniques are no longer available to us. The use of non-tariff barriers are no longer available to us. We have

already entered a phase in Barbados where the other things that we used to create activity and enterprise in this country are no longer becoming available to us.

We built an economy based upon tax breaks in Double Taxation Treaties. That is going with the change into Canadian. We built an economy based upon trade preferences. That is going as it even takes effect this year. We built an economy based upon the use and other fiscal incentives. That area is going. I say to this Parliament this debate is crucial, if only because if ever this country was on a fault line between two eras, it is now.

What will we build our economy on in the future? Sir, it cannot be protectionist measures. It cannot be tax breaks and tax treaties. It cannot be incentives that are World Trade Organisation compatible. It cannot be trade preferences. It has to be two things, our skills and our institutions.

Sir, in this debate, I will make one contribution only. One positive contribution as well, skills.

Mr. Speaker, I have already said that I am prepared to contribute to a higher education levy to make sure that this country that now has to build a new international business sector, not on tax breaks, but on skills, can tell the world that we are different from everybody else, because we either have the skills necessary to create the enterprise, and if we do not have the skills we have the institutions that can create them. Sir, I am prepared to support that.

Sir, having said that, my great disappointment in these Estimates is that for the first time in the history of Barbados governance, an official policy of the Government, will be to cut expenditure. I believe that the Government has to cut expenditure. I am not going to get into false argument. Expenditure has to be cut, but expenditure has not and should not be cut merely as an arithmetic exercise. These Estimates should have come with a presentation saying that these are the new policies and the numbers that you now see reflect the policies to which the numbers are intended to give into effect.

Sir, I used two sectors only. The Leader of the Opposition went through many, but two, education and health. The University of the West Indies got \$120 million up to a year ago. It means that it needs \$120 million to run.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I do not get any pay from the University. That is beside the point. That is why you got fired, because you got ignorant.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let the Honourable Member speak.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, the University of the West Indies needs \$120 million to operate. We bring to the House a budget of \$75 million, with a deficit of \$1.5 billion, I do not see much possibility of increasing it by way of a Supplementary.

What are the new conditions that people will have to accept to have a university that was funded to the extent of \$120 million, now being a university funded to the extent of \$75 million, because of changes that are implied.

Sir, what ought to have been done, and what I want to buy into, because I want to support adjustments to the expenditure, but these are the policy adjustments, these are fair and these are the numbers that lie behind them.

Similarly, this is why I suspect the hospital had to be moved.

We did a study that showed that it would take \$194 million to both run the hospital and do the kind of maintenance that is associated with an old building. The hospital needs perhaps \$200 million and it has been given \$145 million. There is hardly any possibility of a Supplementary, so there is an implied set of policy adjustments and changes there, which we are being asked to accept by implication rather than by direct way of presentation.

This debate is important, because we are about to change the operations of some of the most fundamental institutions in our country, but we cannot do it as an arithmetic exercise, where we are being simply told that will get \$75 million and that one will get \$145 million, without there being a full explanation as to what are the policy adjustments that are being made.

Sir, I believe that the whole Honourable House has to agree that we as responsible people, have to preside over adjusting expenditure. Let us have a Special Committee of the House so that at some stage we can sit down and discuss what are the policy implications, because this is going to affect the whole society. We should not be dealing with this just as an arithmetic exercise, whether you accept \$145 million, or \$70 million, but we also are given an explanation as to what are the conditions that lie behind it.

Sir, I want to speak about this as it concerns the University. I was one of the first students at the University of the West Indies, at Cave Hill Campus, in 1968. It meant something to my family. Like many Honourable Members in here I was the first person from my family who was a graduate from the University.

In 1968, the buses from Speightstown used to stop operating early and there was no bookstore. Some nights I had to stay in the University's Library to do assignments and you will miss the last bus, you come down the hill, turn your eyes right and you walk to St. Peter, but you are grateful that you were given the opportunity to be the first person in your family to be given that estate from the bondage of poverty, 1968/69.

HA60B 3.50 p.m. Sequence 32

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Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 33, 3.50 p.m.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, there are still Barbadian families in the year 2010, in my Constituency, and in the Constituencies of many people in this House, where a household does not know what it is to have a graduate in it. If we are going to change, in my judgment, the fundamental policy, that has released a Barbadian such as myself from the bondage of poverty, then let us sit down and discuss all of the implications of what we are doing up-front, rather than do it by way of implication.

I am prepared to agree that there should be a special tax available to let us pay for higher education and why. Mr. Speaker, because, as I just said earlier, we will have to build an economy, not on tax breaks, not on trade preferences, not on things on tax treaties as we did in the past, but on the quality of our skills. I cannot see a substantive economy in the future unless we can now build out the kinds of skills that are necessary for a modern Barbados.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, we can deal with that too, but at this stage, we cannot feel that we are involved in serious economising, if we are cutting the artery leading to the heart that beats, which keeps Barbados going.

I am pleading, Mr. Speaker, that whatever else we do, let us find a way of making sure that Barbados' competition for the future can be built upon the quality of its people, through the quality of our higher education and I want to urge that, Mr. Speaker, with all seriousness.

I was saying that these Estimates would be more meaningful, if we were not told only what are the cuts, but what are the policy changes implied in the cuts. Sir, we have to get to this exercise, if we are going to have, for the first time in our history, cuts in our expenditures, as we must have and I am conceding that as the basis of our major policy.

Mr. Speaker, the question that arises in this debate is: What is the status of this Medium Term Fiscal Strategy? Sir, I ask this in all seriousness. The Government sent this document to the Social Partners with numbers in it that were intended to be taken seriously. We now know, Sir, that the numbers, at least for 2010, do not coincide with what is in the Estimates. I also feel, Mr. Speaker, that behind them is an issue that has to be addressed.

Barbados cannot at present, borrow from the World Bank, apart from the HIV/AIDS Project, because we had been graduated from the World Bank. We have not yet been readmitted to borrowing from the World Bank and certainly not on this scale. The last loan we had from the World Bank, we had to allow a lapse, because the "conditionalities" were too rough. That was under the Erskine Sandiford's Administration.

Sir, there is hardly any possibility of Barbados being able to borrow in this quantity from the World Bank, unless the IMF targets are being met, hardly any possibility. Mr. Speaker, if you are going to put these documents, and if you are going to put out the Estimates, let us know what is behind them.

Sir, the possibility of borrowing \$510 million from the IDB, again, Sir, in 1991 when the Erskine Sandiford's Administration had to face this problem, the IDB gave us, what they called: "A Quick Disbursing Balance of Payment Support Loan". We had to meet 41 conditions to access it and the first disbursement took place in 2000. It was intended to be a Quick Disbursing Balance of Payment Support Loan.

The IDB has its ways. Mr. Speaker, to put \$500 million down in your Medium Term Strategy is wishful thinking, and I will tell the House what I have told the Prime Minister, that is, I would rather us go to the market and borrow the money, and spend the money using our procurement.

I have said that if Barbados needs \$1.3 billion, let us go to the market and borrow the money - because we are going to the market anyhow - and use our own procurement, rather than tie up this country's development in all of the "conditionalities" that the World Bank and IDB are going to impose upon us.

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

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I thank you, Sir.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I am glad that this House has not gotten itself tied up in the issue about the debt.

In 1994, there was a Sinking Fund of only \$10 million for the repayment of the debt. As the Minister of Finance, I required that the Sinking Fund had to be built, such that we had to be able to pay any debt when it fell due. The bill went to more than \$400 million and you can pay the debt in June when it falls due.

Mr. Speaker, but more to the point. The Estimates suggest that what the Government now is doing, is what it should have thought of doing from the very start, which is that every month bonds are rolled over. Roll over the bonds and if you do that, then the debt issue becomes no issue, especially as the Central Bank has said that the projected cost of servicing the Government's external debt, appears to be well within the country's capacity, based on projected inflows of goods and services over the course of the year. I am glad that this House has not become tired, or tired itself in dealing with debt.

Sir, the point I want to make to this House is that it is quite all right to talk in terms of social engineering and, yes, the message is social engineering, but when you are faced with an economic problem of the nature that Barbados faces, Sir, you have to deal with it in a serious way, a *laissez-like* way.

Mr. Speaker, the economic problems that Barbados faces are the most imposing in the history of this country. Nothing I say should come in our way of dealing with what I have just described, the decline in our earning capacity at the level of the Government, or the crisis of viability in the private sector, the decline in our foreign exchange earning capacity, the inability of our economic system even to accommodate a good change, such as a fall in imports, the inability of our present system to cope without an inflow of foreign capital.

Mr. Speaker, these are the fundamentals, but more to the point, Sir, to start doing the planning now to deal with the fact that the circumstances under which we have developed in the past, will not be there for us in the future. These are the matters, Sir, that require the attention of this Parliament and this is what makes this debate so important.

I felt, and I really do feel so, that when the Minister of Finance, therefore, sets a premise that it is about social engineering, and it is about bus fares, Sir, that was an abdication of responsibility, that he has set a frame to summon this country to its own economic self-defence and that is not being done, that the people of the country are not being told that this is the crisis and it is not a crisis that you can play with. It is a crisis that requires a focus, a serious determination to deal with it on an ongoing basis, but he was consistent, Mr. Speaker.

The Honourable Member for St. John is a bus fares man. In 1994, when unemployment was at 24 per cent, his

solution was bus fares and lunch money. Now, Mr. Speaker, you have a major problem. Again, his answer is bus fares, so that he is at least consistent.

Mr. Speaker, the problem that faces the country requires of us, more than a belief that merely extending \$6 million of bus fare subsidies can solve the economic problem in an economy that is an \$8 billion economy.

Mr. Speaker, I close as the Honourable Member for St. John closed. He said that he wanted to cite Roosevelt, that we have nothing to fear, but fear itself. Sir, I want to amend that slightly, we have nothing to fear, but the two Ministers of Finance, who are with us.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Asides.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I have some measure of regard for the Honourable Member who has just spoken, but I believe, Sir, that this is one occasion when I may have to take that back.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: The reason, Sir, is that what the Honourable Member is asking to happen is not being put in a context of the global economic reality and the economic reality that exists at this point in time.

Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 33, 4.00 p.m.

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Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is very well aware that in order to get to the points where he speaks to the new growth pathways, that there are a number of things that must happen in an economy that is in a recessionary period.

Sir, I would want to direct the Honourable Member's attention to this Administration's Medium Term Developmental Plan, which outlines, on a sectoral basis, the way we plan to carry the economy forward once we have the economy on a growth path.

In that developmental plan, from a sectoral basis, we spoke to activities of Invest Barbados, we spoke about looking at the development of a new bio-technology industry in this country as a new sector, we spoke of how we were going to expand and develop the alternative energy sector in the country, we spoke of where we were going to take the tourism sector, as evident by the new

flights which have just started from Brazil to Barbados, and how we were going to tackle non-traditional areas in tourism and so on. Sir, that is a matter I would get to in more detail a little bit later.

Sir, I disagree with the Honourable Member for St. Peter and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East who argued that there is no connection between the Medium Term Fiscal Strategy and the Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, let me explain the error that is being made, it is very simple. When we looked at the medium-term fiscal strategy, it is not based on absolute numbers with respect to revenue and expenditure. We utilised the international financial institutions basis, where we would use a percentage of GDP to set the Estimates from which you would work backward to establish the various sectoral inputs.

As a result of that, we utilised the revised GDP numbers, which were previously understated - that the Honourable Members on the Other Side had agreed to have CARTAC do a study to show that the GDP was understated by between 15 and 21 per cent - and the revised GDP numbers are actually used in the document, wherefore, giving us a little bit of leg room. That leg room is reflected, if one utilises the figure on page 4 of the Estimates document. It becomes clearly obvious, because when we look at the Revised Estimates for 2009-2010, and the Approved Estimates, what we have to do, given that the international and financial institutions do not utilise amortisation in the determination of their deficits, was to utilise a different GDP measure than they would have anticipated. Sir, I know that the Honourable Member for St. Peter is very well aware of what I am saying.

Sir, the evidence of the linkage between the Medium Term Fiscal Strategy and the Estimates come from this. I said earlier that, because amortisation does not enter the calculation of the deficit on the international financial institutions basis, that the amortisation figure that is present in the 2009-2010 Estimates is expected to have been \$460 million. This, when you compare it to the figure in the Medium Term Fiscal Strategy for 2009-2010, is the same figure in the Estimates, which is the difference that we see of \$460 million, no difference. Sir, the two of them are in sync from those perspectives.

Mr. Speaker, if there are any challengers on the Other Side, let them get up and prove to me that what I am saying is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, what the Honourable Members on the Other Side have forgotten is that the Medium Term Fiscal Strategy was a document that was created in December 2009, whereas the Estimates, based on the Estimates cycle,

were completed by February 2010. Mr. Speaker, what you, therefore, had is three months of economic change.

Mr. Speaker, let me explain what has happened that has had a fundamental impact. Within that three months, we have had a worsening of our revenue position in Barbados, but that is nothing new. Both the Honourable Member for St. John and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West spoke to that, and that is not a problem.

Mr. Speaker, that has given us an opportunity in the document, because for 2009-2010 - I like to use my facts again at page 4 - you would see, let us use education as an example, that we have approved \$532 million to be spent on education, but because of the worsening revenue position of the Government, the Government had to revise its 2009-2010 expenditure downward from \$532 million to \$526 million. The worsening of that situation resulted back that when we got to the 2010-2011 Estimates, we had two choices. We could either, because of the worsening revenue position, opt to recognise that we had to contain the expenditure, or to keep it steady.

Sir, we opted for the best option and for 2010-2011 our expenditure on education is the same even though there were decreases in revenue that the Government had to face. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to start off this discussion by putting that situation in perspective.

Mr. Speaker, let me get on to a couple other things. The Honourable Member for St. Peter has a very short memory. The Honourable Member for St. Peter, as the former Minister of Finance who would have been advising the then Minister who was a Deputy Prime Minister of Barbados, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East...

Mr. Speaker, based on the same International Monetary Fund documents that they were speaking to saying that we were having an International Monetary Fund followed programme, the same International Monetary Fund has been warning that Administration for years about hiding debt. I have the 2007 document in my hand.

I also have another document here from the International Monetary Fund for 2008. I also have the 2004 document. Mr. Speaker, in all of those documents, the International Monetary Fund had been warning that Administration about off budget financing, which was an attempt to hoodwink Barbadians and to hide the true debt in Barbados.

What is sad about this, Mr. Speaker, is that when the International Monetary Fund asked the former Administration to include the off-budget financing, the deficit turned out to be 11 per cent of GDP, higher than

what it is today. Mr. Speaker, it is a sad state of affairs. You have a situation where for years the International Monetary Fund has been warning about hiding debt.

I have the Article IV Consultation for 2006-2007. Sir, because of the debt that was being hidden by the former Administration, which they listed as 5.4 per cent of GDP - added that into the real GDP - when they were trying to hoodwink Barbadians that everything was good, the deficit was 11 per cent in this country, which is worse now than the worst crisis that we had to face in Barbados. What rubbish they telling me.

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4.10 p.m.

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Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that it is the same international financial institution accounting standard that we have to follow today. That is the difference.

Mr. Speaker, what is sad is that with all the smokes and mirrors that were being used to hide the real position of the deficit in the debt, it has brought the country to such a vulnerable state, where any time the country has to face the external scenarios that we now have to face, we end up in the sort of crisis with which the Prime Minister and the Honourable Member for St. John would have to deal.

Mr. Speaker, I go further because I heard the Honourable Members on the Other Side speak to the matter of CLICO. Sir, I would want to find out who was the Minister of Finance, who was responsible for insurance regulation in Barbados when, before 2007, we were having a set of problems with respect to insurance companies in this country. Where did it start? It did not start with the Honourable Member for St. John. Who was the Minister with responsibility for Finance, who fell asleep on the job with respect to insurance regulations? Sir, he had too much sea eggs from Martin's Bay.

Mr. Speaker, what is sad about this, when you have serious exposure of the banking industry in Barbados - and I am talking from the point of view of cross-border risks and an exposure to other market forces - when you have evidence of foreign currency mismatching, it was the Honourable Member for St. Peter who advocated liberalisation in Barbados. What would have happened to all the deposits of Barbadians in CLICO, had we minded the Honourable Member and had capital account liberalisation? Sir, had we done that, all now we could not have stopped money moving from Barbados to Trinidad and Tobago, to the world.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw. Mr. Speaker, I will restate the point in the interest of what I have to say to Barbadians.

Mr. SPEAKER: As you restate your point, you must remember that you are on your feet addressing this august Chamber. There will be asides, but you need to try and put that behind you and make your contribution.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I will hear no more asides.

Sir, the point I was making is that it was the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter who had responsibility for CARICOM. Was it the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter? Yes or no?.

When the contagious effect of the international financial crisis begun to affect Trinidad and Tobago, it then came to affect Barbados. It was only then that the Honourable Member for St. John had to look for a regional regulatory response and all the regional framework to deal with matters with which the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter should have dealt with during the 14 years he had responsibility for CARICOM. Let him refute that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when the Honourable Member comes in here with his high and mighty attitude, as though he has washed his hands clean, as though he has presided over an institutional insurance system that was well-regulated, I have no choice, but to bring the facts to Barbadians. What I also want to say is that if the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter had listened...

Sir, I remember warning the Honourable Member that any time he wanted to engage in financial liberalisation, that there are certain macro frameworks that must be in place. Sir, what is important, when you speak to financial liberalisation, you have to make sure that you have the correct cover with respect to your net international reserves.

Sir, on top of having the right cover for net international reserves, you have to have a correct macro framework, that is, you have to have good economic growth. Sir, the inflation rate has to be low, the external current account deficit has to be in check and in addition, the fiscal deficit has to be well-contained. Those were not conditions under which Barbados could have been liberalised. Sir, these are the facts that can be supported by any of the literature out there and so, I stand on that position, and I will not back away from it.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to another matter because the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter - Sir, the Honourable Member has now got a little bit of gumption and life. His shelf life has now been renewed. Sir, before he is finished, I will take off his label.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter who has been misleading the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, who comes here to argue that this is the first time in the history of Barbados that we have ever ran a current account deficit, and that the first time we are running a current account deficit is the worst in the world. Sir, let me give you the facts. In 2006-2007 financial year, go get the document...

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I want to give the Honourable Member a chance to breathe and to catch himself. Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, I indicated yesterday that this is the first time that there has been a fiscal current deficit for three years running, and not for a single year.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I go to the facts, when I have to bring the facts to prove that they are not being honest. The facts are that in 2006-2007 financial year, the current revenue was \$2 billion, \$157 million. The current expenditure was \$2 billion, \$400 million, and that does not include capital expenditure. In 2007-2008, the current revenue was \$2 billion, \$443 million, while the current expenditure was \$2 billion, \$684 million, and the list goes on. That does not include capital expenditure or current expenditure.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. The Honourable Member reads from a piece of paper. I read from the Central Bank's Economic Statistics of February 2010, for 2006. Sir, you can choose in this Honourable House whether you are going to believe the Central Bank

of Barbados statistics published this month, or the piece of paper the Honourable Member is flying around.

Sir, for 2006, the Central Bank said that in relation to the current situation, revenue \$2 billion, \$156 billion; current expenditure \$2 billion, \$96 million, a current surplus of \$60 million. Sir, I make this a document of this Honourable House. I do not know where the Honourable Member got that flimsy piece of paper that he is waving around but this...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. Let us have some order.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue, Honourable Member.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I will continue. I now go on to the Estimates 2007-2008, which will have actuals for 2006-2007. Therefore, this is what it said...

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member persists in misleading this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: In what way, Honourable Member?

4.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Hon. Miss. M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, the report delivered by the Governor of the Central Bank on January 12, this year, to the country, which I make a document of the House, again.

Mr. SPEAKER: If it is already a document of the House, you do not need to make it a document of the House again. Is it already a document of the House?

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, out of an abundance of caution, Mr. Speaker, on page 24 of that Report.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I stand by what the Estimates says, and I would ask the Honourable Member to look at the Estimates of 2007/2008. The Honourable Member for St. Peter projected then that a current expenditure from up to March 2007 was \$2.157 billion and the projected total current expenditure was \$2.4 billion.

Sir, I stand by what I say. Let the Honourable Member bring the fact. The Honourable Member stands by her facts and, Sir, I stand by my facts.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you finished? Your time has not expired. You have five more minutes.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: No, Sir. Mr. Speaker, I like the Honourable Member for St. Peter because he makes the whole debate very lively.

Sir, let me get now to two elements. What is important in this debate is that the Honourable Member for St. Peter - Mr. Speaker, how much more time do I have? I want to build on something.

Mr. SPEAKER: Your time expires at 4.30 p.m.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, what is important is this. I am saying that the Honourable Member for St. Peter attempted to suggest how we should go into a strategy to develop the economy. What the Honourable Member has to understand is that you first have to introduce a stabilisation programme and then you have the country through a recovery phase, in order to get to an expansion phase.

Sir, we are now saying to the Honourable Member for St. Peter that because of the measures we are putting in place, our stimulus programme of \$200 million and our job stabilisation programme, that we have begun to see a reduction in the unemployment rate from 11 per cent down to about 9.2 per cent and it is also a fact that we are confident that the economy, therefore, has stabilised.

Mr. Speaker, we are saying that in order to correct the macro imbalances in the economy, therefore, we would create a medium-term fiscal strategy that would move the economy from a position of a deficit to a position where we have a primary surplus.

Sir, when we have that economy moving from a deficit position, we can then move the primary fiscal surplus that we would have for each year to start to build the economy out in the various sectors, as would have been explained in the Medium Term Development Strategy. Sir, it does not take a genius to understand that, Mr. Speaker. Sir, that is what this debate is about.

Mr. Speaker, that is the reason why I said to the Honourable Members on the Other Side that what they need to do was to take the Medium Term Fiscal Strategy and read it in conjunction with the Medium Term Developmental Strategy and then they must go back and put in place all of the stabilisation measures that the Government would have put in place, as well as the stimulus measures to understand the entire package. You cannot take one piece out here and there. Sir, that is the mistake people are making.

I stand, therefore, firmly behind the hard work of the staff of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Central Bank of Barbados, and the Ministry of Finance on those two documents, and I support them fully.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to Barbadians that they should not be misled by Honourable Members on the Other Side, who have failed them because it is them who have brought this economy to almost the precipice of collapse in Barbados. If you ever make the mistake of putting the country back into their hands again, "crapaud" gone smoke all we pipe.

Sir, it is critical that Barbadians understand clearly that we have put in place a strategy to achieve our goals. Sir, I can say to you and I want to tell Barbadians that I have confidence in this Administration. You did not wake up one morning and vote for us. You voted out an incompetent Administration because of where they had carried the country. Now you have us here, under difficult times, and it is time you should have confidence in who you have elected to get the job done. We will get that job done and, therefore, I stand by that.

Mr. Speaker, I do not mind the resurrected individual Lazarus. I do not mind Lazarus because Lazarus has not regenerated a new brain. It is all the same old economics. It is voodoo economics that failed. It is old time economic jargon and theory. I do not understand it. I stand by the good work of the Central Bank of Barbados, the good work of the staff of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the good work of the Ministry of Finance, ably led by the Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member St. Philip North.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this debate and first I want to congratulate the Honourable Prime Minister for his focussed presentation. We can say that this economy is in safe hands under the capable leadership of the Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. Speaker, before I go any further, with the compliments of the Minister of Health, I want to thank the staff members at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, particularly those staff members in Ward C10 for the good job they have done for my dad for over four weeks, so I must compliment the work of the staff at Ward C10.

Further, Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas attacked my family. She said that my nephews and nieces received houses from the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, my two nephews are students of Political Science at the University of the West Indies and are Law-abiding citizens. They have worked extremely hard and I know they will continue to be Law-abiding citizens, because none of them have been charged under the Offences Against the Person Act, namely kidnapping, endangering life, or safety, attempted murder, or anything whatsoever. Sir, when you touch people that are dear to me, that is when I have to deal with certain matters.

Mr. Speaker, it is a lie, what was said by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

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Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Indeed, the Honourable Member also made accusations that not a single house in St. Thomas was painted. Indeed, the facts revealed that two houses in St. Thomas were painted. Further to that, an accusation was also made that one caterer was paid \$100 000, again misleading the House. The evidence is, no single caterer was paid \$100 000 in relation to the camps.

The Honourable Member also said that there were problems with mortgages at Marchfield. I can say to this Honourable House today that 21 mortgages were approved for the houses at Marchfield.

Sir, I would like to go through all of these things that were said and I believe that one would have to defend themselves. Sir, when someone gets up in an attempt to mislead the Honourable House, again, the Honourable Member said that a house was given to a non-national. That person is a citizen of Barbados living in Barbados for over 30 years, and they deserve it too.

Sir, this is in contrast with what I received at the Ministry of Housing and Lands. The fact is, I received a letter from the Honourable Member for St. Thomas in relation to a house spot for somebody called "Muwa Puwa". Further in the context of the letter, it stated that the person had no family ties in Barbados, and they were asking for a house spot from the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, I do not like to go down this road, but you know when you touch my nephews and nieces, I have to deal with them.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew spoke to the fact that we are propagandising and we are not building any houses. This is what he said. The fact is, houses have been built at Marchfield, Constant, Work Hall, Four Hill, St. Peter, and Greens, St. George. If that is propaganda, I do not understand what he is saying.

The Honourable Member for St. Andrew also spoke to the fact that he moved all the persons from White Hill, St. Andrew. That is not true. There are still some people in White Hill, St. Andrew, whom the former Minister of Housing did not move, and we are now saddled with moving them from White Hill, St. Andrew.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Andrew.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I said that when I was Minister of Housing, all of those persons who wanted to move. There were a number of persons who were a little skeptical of going to White Hill Terrace, in a new area. It is only after the community was developed that those persons then decided that they wanted to go. All of those persons, 100 per cent of those persons who wanted to leave White Hill, were relocated.

The Honourable Member should be telling the Honourable House exactly why the lots in Phase 2 are lying idle and the other persons in White Hill who want to be removed, have not been removed.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, members from White Hill came to the National Housing Corporation and said that they wanted to move, and they asked through their Representative and Minister of Housing at the time, and they got a blind eye from their Representation and Minister of Housing, so I do not understand what he is saying.

Sir, in relation to the fact that the Honourable Member for St. Peter also mentioned earlier in the week

that he needs an inquiry into the National Housing Corporation. They also spoke to the fact that the Ceremony at Marchfield cost enough to build three houses with it. Again, another false accusation.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said it cost three houses to put on the Ceremony. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West said, last night, it cost \$15 000 and the Honourable Member for St. George North said last night the Government is doing well.

The Ceremony at Marchfield cost \$15 000. These accusations that we spent all of this money. What is wrong with celebrating, given keys to prison officers, police officers, maids and gas station workers.

Sir, when the road in Bentley was opened, they had a fete and Sandy Lane catered, in the Constituency of St. Philip West. Sir, if they are talking about feting, there was an Awards Ceremony at the Gymnasium, and the Manager said to me that they had to pay one caterer \$100 000 for an Awards Ceremony. It is true that the Manager at the Gymnasium is a good friend of the Honourable Member for St. Peter and family of mine, but that is what he said, \$100 000 was paid to one caterer for an Awards Ceremony at the Gymnasium.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter spoke to an inquiry. I would join the Honourable Member for St. Peter in asking for an inquiry in relation to certain matters. The matter in relation to Kensington Lodge Apartments, with the removal of asbestos roofs. I will ask for an inquiry into that. I will also ask for an inquiry into the contract to Al Barrack.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, I do not mind the Honourable Member for St. Andrew. I do not mind you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. Honourable Members, please. Just a minute Honourable Member. Let us have some order, please. The same way you were given a chance to speak, let the Honourable Member speak. Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, in relation to the matter involving Al Barrack, it is a fact that the award of the contract given to Al Barrack was questioned by the experts. In fact they said that he was not suited to construct the building. Then it was approved by the Minister. The experts said that contract should not have been awarded to Al Barrack. This is what they said. The Chairman was the Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, there is a point of order on the Floor. Just a minute, please.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph had absolutely nothing to do with the award of the contract.

Mr. SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph had absolutely nothing to do with the award of the contract. The contract was awarded by Cabinet.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please. Honourable Member I am not sure in what capacity, but there was point of order.

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Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am not sure why you are standing. There was a point of order. The other Honourable Member had his say.

Honourable Member, are you giving way to the Honourable Member for St. Peter?

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, on a point of elucidation. In my very first statement to this Parliament in all seriousness, I said that I take the blame for everything.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I am being very serious about it that I accept responsibility for everything that happened between 1993 and 2007, so that I am not going to disengage from that now, but it is important that the Government goes on with the business of governing the country and accept the responsibility, but I accept the blame already.

This House should be dealing with what is before the country. I have accepted the blame. Do not go back to it. Blame me.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Asides.

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Peter is misleading the House in two respects. You cannot take the blame as a Member of the Opposition for the actions of a Government. You have to accept blame when you are in Government. There is no such thing as a Cabinet agenda which generates itself. A Minister has to bring something to Cabinet. The only person who could have brought the National Housing Award of a Contract to Cabinet is the Minister and I am saying the Honourable Member for St. Andrew brought it and recommended the contract to Mr. Al Barrack.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Point No. 2. If the Honourable Member for St. Peter is accepting responsibility, then he should pay the \$67 million that the Government has to look for, or put up his property to assist in paying the bill.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well. Okay, Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, we have now revealed a confession. I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew should also get up and confess, because what is happening is that \$63 million is around the neck of the National Housing Corporation, Sir, and what could have been done with the \$63 million.

Do you know how many houses could have been built and how many lots could have been acquired to assist low-income workers in this country?

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

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. This Government has spoken about putting up a building at Warrens. When the Barbados Labour Party decided to put up the building at Warrens, the National Housing Corporation was used as the Government agency that would supervise the building. It was not built out of any funds of the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, when this Government decides to put up a building they would have to find a Government agency as well. If they allow the National Housing Corporation to be that agency, it does not mean that any funds from the National Housing Corporation have been utilised in the building. Sir, there were no funds from the National

Housing Corporation and you are repeating that all the time and it is misleading.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member said in an aside that he would recommend Al Barrack again. I cannot understand him recommending a situation like what existed before on the backs of taxpayers of this country.

I do not understand, Mr. Speaker, what the Honourable Member for St. Andrew is saying. Further, that we should also have an inquiry into the Hardwood Housing Factory to find out how many deposits were taken and how many houses were built by Hardwood Housing Factory. Sir, all these questions must be asked because the Honourable Member for St. Peter threw down the goblet and asked these questions.

Mr. Speaker, again, the fact is that the National Housing Corporation and this Government have built houses by small contractors at Marchfield, St. Philip, French Village, St. Peter and Constant, St. George.

Sir, at Tweedside Road, St. Michael, we are constructing 20 units in relation to small contractors. It is believed further in relation to the fact that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew said that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, yours truly, is not performing. Sir, that is what he said.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, he should look at the Primary Homes Programme, which was set up and established in September 2004, to build, at least, 1 300 houses for low income earners in this country. Again, the facts will reveal that when Barbadians went to the National Housing Corporation, it was explained to low-income workers that they can get the cheapest house and they can get the cheapest land.

Again, Mr. Speaker, when we examined what happened to the Primary Homes Programme, it failed tremendously. Mr. Speaker, 303 houses were supposed to be constructed, as part of the Primary Homes Programmes and as of March 2008, only 67 houses were built under the Primary Homes Programme, a programme that was the champion by the then Administration to assist low-income earners.

Mr. Speaker, again, that has been a failure, in terms of helping and assisting low-income workers, in relation to the Joint Venture Programme, which was touted by the Barbados Labour Party Administration. Sir, 1 300 were supposed to be built. It started in 2002. By March 31, 2008,

less than 115 houses were built, in relation to the Joint Venture Programme.

Again, we set out the history of the performance of the Barbados Labour Party in relation to the Primary Homes Programme and in relation to their housing programme. They have no moral authority to speak on housing in Barbados, that is why when this Government is pushing its programme, they will get up and criticise it, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew will remain, but Al Barrack will be etched on top of his head for the rest of his life.

Mr. Speaker, indeed, the Honourable Member for St. George North spoke of this Government selling off land to a private developer. Again, Mr. Speaker, if he reads the Auditor General's Report, it was stated in that Report that land was sold to private developers which could have been used to provide affordable housing, Sir, again for that low-income worker. This is failure there again.

Mr. Speaker, I want to report to this Chamber that we have acquired land at Branchbury in St. Joseph, Cherry Grove in St. John, Vineyard in St. Philip, Henley and Pool in St. John, Woodbourne in St. Philip, Guinea and Clifden Hill in St. Philip, which will form part of the \$5 per square foot lot programme.

Mr. Speaker, we have also looked at areas in Forty Acres in St. Thomas, Applewhaites in St. George, Roach Village in St. George, Blackmans in St. Joseph, Easy Hall and Coconut Hall in St. Lucy. Sir, all of these lands we would certainly put in the hands of first-time landowners, and this is being pooh-poohed by the Honourable Member for St. Andrew.

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Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, again, when we examine the housing programme, we intend to conclude a loan that we are negotiating to construct houses at Parish Land in St. Philip and Vauxhall in Christ Church. We have recently acquired land in Vauxhall and we hope to start...

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of order.

The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member is giving this House the impression that more than 500 lots were created in five

months. I think the Honourable Member should let us know how many lots, in accordance with their Manifesto, were created in the first five months.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is no point of order.

Honourable Member, let us continue please. Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew had his time. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew has already confessed and so, I believe that he has no moral authority to ask any Minister of Housing and Lands any questions about housing in Barbados.

Further, Mr. Speaker, when we look at their Joint Venture Programme...

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: The reason why the Joint Venture Programme failed is that housing developments were given to developers with no track records and no due diligence was carried out.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the developments at Lower Burney - Sir, it is a fact that a dance group was given permission to build houses at Lower Burney. It was questioned by the officials in the Ministry of Housing and Lands. Sir, the officials said that they had a problem with the land at Lower Burney because it was a dump site.

Sir, the National Housing Corporation was instructed by the then Minister that the owners should buy it at their own risk and they should pay \$6 per square foot for the land at Lower Burney. That is what the Barbados Labour Party Administration was doing in relation to housing. That is the attitude that prevailed throughout that 14-year period in reference to poor people.

Mr. Speaker, Buckley Meadows was a highly-touted joint venture programme. This Administration had to go in and rectify the problems at Bulkeley Meadows because of the lack of financing and the fact that no checks and balances were done by the Minister of Housing and Lands at the time, and mismanagement by the National Housing Corporation. This Government then had to call in the developers and look for money to correct the problems at Bulkeley Meadows, because the Minister at the time was ignorant to it.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: You gave him \$30 000 and posters last Election.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please direct your comments to the Chair and address the Chair. You have five more minutes in which to make your points.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: They gave him \$30 000 to put up posters and he brought the posters to me and said that he was not dealing with them, so I do not know what he is talking about.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, in relation to this matter, I am respectfully stating that based on their record on housing, they have no authority to speak on housing.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate on behalf of the people of Barbados like myself who do not understand economic jargon, but who understand that if you earn more than you spend that there is a savings, but if you spend more than you earn, then you have to borrow.

Sir, there is nothing new about Barbados borrowing. We have always borrowed to sustain our development. In fact, I believe that there is probably only one time in our recent history that I could remember that we had a surplus, and that was probably the year after the VAT was implemented.

Sir, there is nothing new about us borrowing to sustain our development. What we should be really concentrating on and what I would like to spend some time on is what are we doing with the sectors that enable us to pay our way going forward. That is what I would like to concentrate on for the couple of minutes that are allocated to me.

Sir, when I listen to the Opposition, I try very hard to hear constructive comments in terms of what the Government is doing wrong, what they would have done differently and what different direction we should have taken to ensure that we are not where we are today.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say, and I have tried very hard - I will come to you my friend from St. Peter. Let me just say George, my friend from St. Andrew, that the Honourable Member for St. Peter does not like me to have any other friend other than him, so he has told me that I cannot be your friend and his friend, so if I say my friend

from St. Peter, you would have to forgive me. I would make a few comments.

Sir, I want to stay on track. Sir, the Opposition would have you believe that if they were in Government, there would have been no crisis. They would have you believe that if they were in Government, there would have been no decline in tourism. They would have you believe that if they were in Government, there would have been no decline in foreign direct investment. They would have you believe that if they were in Government, there would have been no slow down in construction. They would have you believe that if they were in Government, there would have been no increase in oil prices.

Sir, Barbados would have done what Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Canada, Japan, and Europe did not do, because the great magician would have been at the head of our economy.

Sir, the only way that a Barbados Labour Party Administration could have done any better than we have done in light of the comments that they have made is if they had called "Scottie" from Star Trek and said to beam us up to a different galaxy, because in the real world in which we operate, there is no doubt that there was trouble.

Sir, we exist in the real world. In the real world there were problems in North America. We exist on tourism. In the real world, there are problems in the United Kingdom. In an economy like ours that depend of tourism as we do, in an economy like ours that depend on foreign direct investment like we do, and in an economy like ours that depend on international financial services like we do, there is no doubt that if there is a slow down in the economic circumstances of North America, particularly in Canada and the United Kingdom, that it would have a significant impact upon Barbados. Sir, that is not economic. That is plain old commonsense.

Sir, this is why we are where we are today. We are not here because of our own making. I know that there is some disagreement between us and the Other Side in terms of the couple of things that we could have done differently, and I would try to spend some time on that. The reality is that in my opinion, regardless of what the Other Side might think, this Government must take some credit for the fact that Barbados is not in a worst position than we are today because of the measures that we took.

House A60B Sequence 39

5.00 p.m.

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Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, let me look at unemployment figures. Sir, if you listen to the Barbados Labour Party, if you listen to their Sunday afternoon mouthings, to their Tuesday mouthings, we are supposed to have unemployment in the region of 15 per cent, or 20 per cent. We were told that these would have been the darkest days of our history.

Sir, let me refer to the unemployment statistics from my notes. Sir, in 2000, unemployment was 9.4 per cent; in 2001, unemployment was 9.9 per cent; in 2002, it was 10.3 per cent; in 2003, it was 11 per cent.

Sir, note that in 2004, unemployment was 9.6 per cent; in 2005, it was 9.1 per cent; in 2006, it was 8.7 per cent; in 2007, it was 7.4 per cent; in 2008, it was 8.1 per cent; in 2009, it was 10.1 per cent. Sir, the average unemployment rate over the last decade is 9.3 per cent.

Sir, in the greatest financial crisis that we have had in 100 years, this Government can today boast of an unemployment rate of approximately 9.4 per cent, just slightly above the average over the last decade.

Mr. Speaker, as Trevor Eastmond would say, the Government should take a clap for that. Sir, no doubt that it is because we were able to sit down with the private sector and ask them to hold strain in terms of not laying off ordinary Barbadians.

Sir, no doubt we set the example by saying that we will not lay off any employees unless it is absolutely necessary, no doubt because we look and face the unprecedented challenges and the way that has gained confidence to both private sector and public sector, that we are where we are today in terms of the unemployment figures.

Mr. Speaker, let me paint this picture another way so that we all can understand. I like to compare Barbados to the Bahamas. I compare Barbados to the Bahamas in terms of its infrastructure, how it depends of tourism and financial services. Sir, the Bahamas has an advantage geographically. It is just a few minutes outside of Miami and, therefore, an easy hop and skip. In terms of financial services, it does have a better infrastructure than we have in Barbados.

Sir, unemployment in the Bahamas in 2008, was 12 per cent and in 2009, I believe it was just over 12 per cent. In Jamaica, unemployment in 2008 was 9.9 per cent and in 2009, rose to 11 per cent. Places like Bermuda which had full employment, which begged people to come to their shores and be employed, last year complained about unemployment at a rate of 5 per cent, which was unprecedented in Bermuda.

The Cayman Islands had the same problem. In fact, I believe they had problems meeting their wages. Sir, the point is that we operate in a real world and when you compare what Barbados has done with our neighbours in the Caribbean, and when you compare what Barbados has done with many countries in the world, for example, unemployment in the United States of America was 10 per cent, you would see that as a country we can boast that we have weathered the storm.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Government must take some kudos for that, particularly if the Opposition is correct. If they say that we have done everything incorrectly and still was able to maintain unemployment at the rate in the way we have done, then I say that we should continue doing things incorrectly and not follow their advice.

Mr. Speaker, on the question of foreign direct investment, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East would have you believe that the policies of this Administration are the cause of the slow-down in investment. Sir, that is ignoring the fact that we operate in a real world.

Sir, foreign direct investment comes as a result of what is happening in the other economies. Foreign direct investment flows into Barbados if things about which I spoke are doing well in North America, Canada, or the United Kingdom.

Mr. Speaker, people are not going to send money into Barbados if they are unemployed. People are not going to risk a large project in Barbados if they are unsure as to what is happening in their own backyard. Sir, that is what is happening and so, it is unfair and unreasonable of anyone to suggest, for example, that we are the reason Four Seasons collapsed in the way it has. Sir, the collapse of Four Seasons had nothing to do with any of our policies.

Mr. Speaker, I would want us to be honest when we are having these discussions and so, we all recognise that there has been a slow-down in foreign direct investments, but I say it has nothing to do with the policies of this Government.

Mr. Speaker, there is a fund in Dubai which I believe collapsed and they had \$80 billion at stake and were it not that their Gulf neighbour interceded, Dubai, as we know it, would have been in problems today. Sir, we do not operate in a vacuum. We operate in the real world and we recognise where we are.

Sir, there are two things I learned from the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter this afternoon, and I will begin with the critical one first, critical in terms of the fact

that I am not sure this is the message that he directed to us, but certainly it was the message I received this afternoon.

Sir, the message I received is that one of the failures of the Barbados economy is because we were too reliant on foreign direct investment, and the fact that we did not diversify as a result of that, when the foreign direct investment dried up, it led to the consequences that we are suffering. That is what I heard this afternoon. I am not sure if that were the message that was intended, but that certainly is the conclusion I reached by listening to the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter. Sir, may be the Honourable Member could talk to me off camera, but I am sure that is the message I received.

Asides.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to look at our productive areas, the area of tourism. I want to look at tourism because the Honourable Member for St. Michael North would have you believe that he is the only authority on tourism in this Honourable Chamber, but I know that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter would agree with me that is far from the truth.

Sir, what is happening in tourism regionally? Let me look at our regional neighbours. Sir, I will just use a few: Antigua was down last year by 12.7 per cent, the Bahamas was down by 11.4 per cent, Barbados, as you know, was down by 8.7 per cent. Sir, these figures are taken from the Caribbean Tourism Organisation.

Sir, the Cayman Islands was down 10.2 per cent, Dominica was down 12.1 per cent. I will not touch Montserrat. St. Vincent and the Grenadines was down 12.1 per cent.

Sir, there are a few countries that we could look at that were up. Cuba was up 3.5 per cent, Jamaica was up 3.6 per cent. Sir, if there is one thing, maybe we can learn from these figures is that Barbados, as a country, when we look at our position, when we look at our neighbours, we would see that we did not suffer alone.

The other thing we can learn from these figures is that we can look at Jamaica in particular, because I think I know why Cuba has done how it has, but we could look in particular to Jamaica and try to determine why is it that arrivals, in particular from the United States of America, were up significantly in Jamaica. In fact, we can also see why they had a greater percentage in terms of arrivals from Canada, which was, in fact, our market which was up significantly in 2009.

5.10 p.m.

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Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Sir, the two points I am making here is that we suffer like everyone else. We know what is happening in Europe, which is one of our stronger markets. The Minister will tell you that we are trying to hold...

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

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that Barbados was performing like its neighbours.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Sir, all we asking of the Barbados Tourism Authority is to recognise its responsibility, because we cannot survive without the success of tourism, which I believe I am hearing from the Minister, in terms of ensuring that we diversify our product range. We are already looking at new markets and I want to ask us to continue to explore new markets.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we have had new interest in terms of new airlift into this country. Sir, speaking about new airlift, one of the things that I have learnt over the last three years since I have become more political, in my view, is that nothing happens in this country unless there is something behind it.

I have read a few days ago that Barbados was lucky that arrivals were up out of Canada. I believe that statement came from the Head of the Barbados Hotel Tourism Association.

Mr. Speaker, if that statement that I read is true, it is a bit unfortunate, because it has nothing to do with luck. It has to do with the fact that the Minister and the Barbados Tourism Authority took a decision that we had to look at where there was the most potential. We know that WestJet came in from Canada, that our tourism spend into Canada was greater and that is as a result of that. If the Honourable Member wants to get up and say something foolish again, the Honourable Member is welcomed to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the only other comment I would like to say is that given the fact...

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

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I hate to do this, but the record must be corrected. The whole issue of going to the Canadian market was well sorted out long before January 2008, and the only thing that was left was for the flight to commence when the Government took office. The Democratic Labour Party had nothing to do with the formulation of WestJet.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member does not come to the House often enough otherwise he would remember that we injected an additional \$20 million into marketing, because we wanted to ensure that our name was out there.

Sir, in 2008, I remember saying to the Minister of Tourism not to jump up and say that any success in tourism was his because it was too early.

Sir, in 2009, after a year, and after seeing his initiatives, there is no reason why the Minister of Tourism should not acknowledge the fact that because of his efforts and the efforts of the Barbados Tourism Authority, under his guidance, that there was success in the Canadian market. If the Honourable Member for St. Michael North wants to deny the Minister of Tourism that fact, he is free to do so.

Mr. Speaker, it is my opinion, that the success of Canada is as a result of the hard work of the Barbados Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism.

Mr. Speaker, the only other comment I would make on tourism, following a comment made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North is with respect to the President of the Barbados Tourism Authority, who I have interacted with from time to time, and whose skills I have found to be outstanding. Sir, I believe in the President of the Barbados Tourism Authority, that we have a good acquisition, and I believe tourism in Barbados is set to continue to grow.

Sir, the forecast for this year is, that given the economic uncertainty, we may not grow, but certainly, the forecast for 2011, is that in terms of arrivals, we should definitely see an upsurge in arrivals in Barbados in 2011. Sir, there is absolutely no doubt about that.

Mr. Speaker, the other productive sector I want to spend a few minutes on is the international business sector. Sir, there is no doubt that there has been a decline in the international business sector since 2007. I will not spend lots of time on IBC numbers et cetera, because I do not believe the gauge of the success of a sector is whether, or not there has been an increase in incorporation. The best gauge of whether, or not, there has been an improvement in the sector is its contribution to the revenue of the Government. Sir, in that regard there has been a decline in 2007, 2008 and 2009.

Mr. Speaker, again I go back to the fact that we do not operate in a vacuum. There has been decline because there has been a decline in economic activity in the world.

Mr. Speaker, what we need to do, and no doubt, the Minister is ensuring that this happens, is that we need to

position ourselves that when there is a recovery that Barbados would be first choice of jurisdiction when people want to do international transactions.

Sir, in this regard, I know that new Treaties were executed with Luxemburg and Mexico and we welcome it. At the same time though, sadly, there have been protocols to the China Treaty and to the Dutch Treaty, which I am advised have made them less attractive to international investors who are routing their investment through Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, as we heard yesterday, there is possible threat to our premier position as a source of inward investment into Canada, because Canada has promised to execute further tax information exchange Agreements with other jurisdictions, but responsibility, however, of the Government and of the private sector in Barbados, is to ensure that we are No. 1, and that we are not removed from that position by increasing our efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, we have to look at all areas where we now have issues in terms of our efficiency that prevents our clients from having no doubt that we are the No. 1 source for business when they want to do international transformation and any obstacles that are there, we need to remove. Mr. Speaker, an example of that is that we need without doubt to go online with the registry. You have heard me say this on more than one occasion.

Mr. Speaker, in the Medium Term Development Strategy for Barbados, I note that the plan is to have an increase of new entities by 2014, by almost 50 per cent. Sir, what I want to say with respect to this plan is that, in fact, it is not so much new entities that I want to see registered, we need new products and we need them urgently.

The plan is silent with respect to new products and I have asked on more than one occasion, and I am asking again this afternoon, for the Minister to ensure that we have new products with haste. Sir, that is what we need. We need to diversify our product range and we need to ensure that when the recovery starts, that there be no doubt where one has to go, if one wants to have international transactions that one would want to come to Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am optimistic that we would continue to grow as a domicile of international business. However, I would urge the Minister to put his hands to the plough and ensure that with haste, we have product diversification.

Sir, I would also take this opportunity to say that we need to look at our different partners where, for example, I believe the Mutual Fund Act is being looked at by the Securities Exchange Commission. We should not have a situation where the regulator is looking at developing a product because the regulator does not have the same

vision in terms of wanting new business to come in as say, someone like myself a practitioner, or other practitioners.

H/A60B/5.20 p.m. Sequence 41

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Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Sir, as I said, I am optimistic and I believe there is no reason when you turn the corner in 2011, we should not be positioned as a country to make use of these opportunities.

Sir, in the area of agriculture, I still live in a Constituency where agriculture is important. I just want to spend a few minutes on agriculture.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you just have a few minutes, actually five minutes.

Mr. A. D. BRAWAITHE: I will take the five minutes, Sir.

Sir, a couple days ago, a couple of Brathwaite boys, and I do not need to boast that they were the Brathwaites who won the fishing tournament. I believe they landed the largest catch of dolphins recently. They are Everton and Donville Brathwaite, all good individuals, not because they are Brathwaites, but of course they are from my Constituency.

One of the points that young Brathwaite made when I heard him on the radio that there was still a future in fishing, but he found and was asking the lending agencies not to treat all fisherfolk alike. He was asking the lending agencies that when fisherfolk asked for support, not to automatically close their minds because the previous fisherfolk used the money for something else, or did not pay back the loans properly. I just thought I would make that point.

In congratulating these gentlemen, I just want to make that point in case it was missed. The lending agencies should make sure that when fisherfolk come to them, in particular young fishermen who want to make fishing a career to feed their families, to give them all the support they can.

Sir, one of the things that I believe we have to echo as a Government, in terms of agriculture, we have lots of incentives in place to encourage people who want to be involved in agriculture. I believe that I am right. In 2009, there were more debates with regard to incentives for agriculture than at any time previously in our history, which means that the agriculturalists are not only getting involved, but are making use of the incentives offered by Government.

Sir, I just want to recognise the role of the BADMC in terms of encouraging the diversification of our agricultural base. It is important that we ensure this happens. This afternoon, tongue in cheek, the Honourable Member from the Other Side was saying to my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, something about cassava and breadfruit. The reality is, we are doing different things with these products. The reality is, this is not something we should treat in a “namby pamby” fashion. Sir, in fact, cassava has tremendous growth potential for us as a country. We are doing different things with breadfruit. I think we should recognise the importance of agriculture.

Sir, the final point on agriculture before you remind me that I have 60 seconds left. I would want the authorities to ensure we give as much support as possible to agriculturalists in this country. For example, in Kirtons No. 3, I have Mr. Eversley, who I believe is the second largest producer of pigs in Barbados. There is a bit of an issue in terms of the smell which emanates from his plant. What we must do as a Government, and what the authorities need to be doing, is to approach someone like him to see how best he can convert his waste to energy, and to use that energy, not only for himself, but for the residents down wind of him who are now suffering as a result of having a pig farm near to them.

I think there is tremendous potential in agriculture, and I want to close, not only by thanking you, but encouraging the Ministry of Agriculture, in the face of any criticism, to continue giving support to the small farmers in Barbados.

I thank you, Sir.

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

SUSPENSION

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 5.45 p.m. this afternoon.

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

The question that the Sitting be now suspended until 5.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

HA60B 5.30 p.m. Sequence 42

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Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 43, 5.45 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Honourable Chamber is resumed.

When the Suspension was taken, we were on Item No. 5, and to that we shall continue.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael East.

His Hon. K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, I rise at this stage to lend my support to these Estimates and I want to begin at where the Honourable Member for St. Philip South stopped on the question of agriculture.

Sir, I think that even in these hard and trying economic times, we can say that the agricultural sector has increased and has grown somewhat. If you look at sugar production, it increased by 14.8 per cent in relation to year 2008 to 2009. If you look at cotton production, there was a decline and the reason for this is because the lint in stock was moving slowly, so a decision was taken by the farmers that they would not increase their production, so that they will have excess length on storage.

Further, Sir, in addition to that, we know that the incentives in respect of cotton harvesting are very poor and that has always been the trend within the cotton industry as far back as I could remember when I entered the agriculture sector in 1977. Sir, persons would always shy away because they see it as a hard and tedious task in respect of the picking of cotton. They always would shy away from the harvesting of cotton, because they think that they have to work so hard to achieve so little. We, Sir, can boast of providing some of the best lint from our sea island cotton in Barbados.

Sir, I move slowly to the livestock industry. During the year 2009, our increase in outputs was by 2.3 per cent over the estimated record for the comparative period for 2008. It means that if you look at agriculture, we need to work harder to get this industry back to where it was years ago.

Sir, I do not want to place any blame game, but I can recall in the 1970s, that the Graeme Hall Agricultural Station was used as a research station within the Ministry of Agriculture for various varieties of root crops and vegetables. Sir, next door to that was the cane breeding variety testing. This means that various experiments were carried out at Graeme Hall to test the varieties that were most suitable for Barbados.

Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 43, 5.50 p.m.

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His Honour K. St.C. BEST: I am sad to say that very little attention in the last 14 years had been paid to the production of different varieties in respect of what is happening at Graeme Hall. I am urging on the new Minister, having recognised the problem, to get back to the basic and ensure that we get the Graeme Hall Research Agricultural Station back on its all-fours for a specific purpose. That is, research.

Sir, around the 1970s, we embarked on the production of various varieties of onions and at that time, the only disease that the onions suffered from was wind blast. Sir, it is about time, after all of these years, that Barbados becomes self-sufficient in onions production.

Sir, Barbados could only become self-sufficient in the production of onions if serious education takes place among the farming community with the Ministry of Agriculture taking the lead.

Agriculture would have lost its way within the last 14 years, but you would recognise that only after two years, we can see an increase in production in the various sectors of agriculture even though the hard economic times exist.

Sir, there is a need to retrain the Extension Officers to keep them up to date with the new technologies that exist in agriculture. We understand clearly that we have a scarcity of land and so we have to use the new technologies, greenhouses and all those sorts of things, where the land space is limited for our crop production.

Mr. Speaker, I hear all sorts of innuendoes being levelled at the production of cassava. Sir, cassava can provide many, many by-products. There is a young farmer from the Constituency of St. Michael North East who gave up a lucrative career in fashion designing to enter agriculture and is now almost specialising in cassava flour. Sir, there is scope and avenue for that sort of thing. Sir, the by-products of cassava can also be used to feed the animals.

Sir, I would really want to see that with the limited land space, we can get seriously involved in the production of cassava. I recall that in 1979 various experiments were carried out in relation to cassava and there were some varieties which were producing as much as 40 and 50 pounds of cassava per hole. Sir, if we really need to cut down on our food import bill, we need to be innovative in respect of the various crops that we have in Barbados.

Sir, one will remember the late Carmeta Fraser who started the whole question of instant yam and breadfruit chips in a galvanise structure just off in Wildey. We have to get back to those areas that make a society to help build Barbados.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James North spoke about they provided “land for the landless”, but when you look at the areas that were designated and designed as “land for the landless”, some in St. Andrew and some in the East West Boulevard, you have to ask the question, if the soil is fertile enough for agriculture and whether the availability of water was adequate.

We must get away from this whole issue of giving persons five and six acres of land, when we know for sure that if they receive at least one, or two acres, it is more manageable.

Sir, if you look at the Springhall Land Lease Project where you have a lot of land, there is one farmer who is unable for some reason, or another, to have all of the areas of land into cultivation. Sir, I believe that we should look at having more farmers with less acres. I believe that we should look seriously at that area.

Sir, I would move to the whole question of public transport that is causing grave concern and a national debate. In the year 1995, the former Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, raised the taxes of all the private sector vehicles. His rationale and reasoning was that because of their behaviour, he would have to increase the Police Force and pay special constables to police the van stand. I believe that if the Government of the day had taken all that was happening then...

Just to increase the taxes as a form of penalty was not the appropriate action. They should have gone to the root of the problem and look for ways and measures of controlling the bad behaviour. Putting penalties on the owners, or operators, was not the answer. We can see today the end results of that. That created a situation where persons were only looking at the profit margin. Sir, if you decrease my profit margin, I will do other things, and the indiscipline driving continues to increase.

Sir, you would have seen yesterday that owners and operators would have pulled their vans off the road all because it was mooted that the school children would be taken off the PSV vehicles. I have said over and over again that we as a society, and not an economy, must look seriously at what is happening. We have identified the problem and we need to have the solutions. If the solutions mean that we have to legislate to bring it under control, that has to happen.

Mr. Speaker, you heard the debate about Movado and Vybzs Kartel and the lyrics that are coming. I am saying, and I will say it again, that legislation needs to be passed in this country to remove all musical equipment, radio and otherwise, from PSV vehicles. The Transport Board buses carry no such devices and they transport persons day in and day out.

House A60B Sequence 44

6.00 p.m.

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His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that bad behaviour is not to be found on the Transport Board buses, but if you create the atmosphere for bad behaviour, you have to pay the consequences. Sir, we have to look at this seriously.

Sir, I can say that it is not only the school children who behave unruly on PSVs, it is not only the school children who damage PSVs, or Transport Board buses. There are adolescents and adults who damage the PSVs vehicles, as well as the Transport Board buses, therefore, the principal problem is the society at large and we need to grapple that now.

Sir, I am confident that within the next few months and before this financial year is concluded, that my Government will do the things necessary to bring Barbados back on track as far as bad behaviour is concerned. Sir, I support the stance taken by the Commissioner of Police.

Sir, if you drive around Barbados daily, you would see these numbers of paintings and graffiti on walls, talking about “Gaza” and “Gully Hill”. Therefore, I find it extremely difficult and strange how some person who cannot solve a problem in their own home could come someplace else and try to solve it. Sir, it is always said that you must solve your problem at home. It is only then that you can solve a problem elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, it is not the Commissioner of Police who allowed them to come to Barbados before. We have opened our arms to our CARICOM brothers, but if the problem is creating another problem in our country, we have the right to say a bold no and to stand by our position. There will be criticisms, but at the end of the day, people would recognise that the decision was a worthwhile decision.

Mr. Speaker, I remember, quite clearly, Edwin Yearwood was a young upcoming entertainer and that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East saw him as a role model. The Honourable Member closed her schools and allowed the school children to go to the Garfield Sobers Complex to see Edwin as a role model. He has grown to be an international performer and as a result, I can say some positive things have come out of that, because other persons do emulate him. He also has a beautiful song called “Peace”. Mr. Speaker, why can the organisers not do likewise?

As adults, we need to walk the length and breadth of this Barbados, to ensure that our young people are taken into our fold, to be guided. We have to let them know that what they are doing is not right for the benefit of this society.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that they need to sit down for at least five minutes to reflect on the way they want their lives to go. Therefore, having reflected for that period, they can then tell themselves that they want to make some sort of contribution to their nation, to the society in which they live. Sir, that is the only way they could stop doing the negative things they are doing and start doing positive things.

Mr. Speaker, I am one who believes that there should be a total ban on cellulars in schools. Sir, if there was a total ban of cellulars in school, we would not have the problem of school children recording things on their phones, which eventually end up on Facebook. There should also be certain devices set up at the entrance of the schools to ensure that those devices that are banned do not enter the school compound.

We must not send mixed messages to our young people. We should not. We should call a spade a spade, whether we speak of it in various languages. We need to stop sending mixed messages to our youth in society. We need seriously to look at this problem because every day, every year we could come to these Honourable Chambers and decide that we are going to use the Estimates to make Barbados a better society, but if we do not do the things that are right to make the society right, then the money that we are coming here to spend would be spent in vain.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move briefly to our water problems. This problem stems in part from persons not accepting their role in society. Sir, we have too much indiscriminate dumping in Barbados. As a result, it is causing our water to be contaminated. If persons were proactive and not reactive, this Government, or any other Government would not now be looking for money to spend in a Reverse Osmosis plant at the Belle, because of the nitrate levels in the water supply.

I will say it here and I will say over and over again, there needs to be consultation between the Ministry of Agriculture, which is responsible for the importation of fertilisers into this country and the Ministry of Water, Drainage and Water Resources, so that all players can sit down and put their heads together how to solve this question.

Mr. Speaker, some of the real problems do not relate to the individual who lives close to the pumping station. Sir, though some of them may create problems, some of the

issues relate to the run-off of the various kinds of fertilisers.

Unless there is cooperation between the various Ministries, we would continue to come to these Honourable Chambers to increase Estimates. We would come for Supplementaries, but we need to teach Barbadians that they must learn to look after their own affairs and that by looking after their own affairs and acting responsibly, the country as a whole will benefit.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados does not belong to the 30 Honourable Members here. It belongs to all of us and we all must play our part for the development of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I see within the Estimates we talk about the gully ecosystem management, but I know, based on the indiscriminate dumping, that it would cost us so much money to have those gullies cleaned.

6.10 p.m.

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His Honour K. St. C. BEST: Sir, if we get these gullies cleaned and maintained properly, it would have the spin-off into tourism, because persons would come to the island and go hiking in our gullies.

Sir, we as Lawmakers and as citizens of Barbados, need to seriously play our part and do not believe that any Parliamentary Representative, or any person in the House of Assembly can work magic. Sir, everyone must play their part for the development of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, this eco-tourism and hiking could have a spin-off and not too far from the gully you could have some person in the district, at the end of the tour, having a small structure set up to provide organic foods, so that you are really into nature.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying this Government is on the right path. I am saying that all of us in here understand the pressure and the strain that is happening in the world, economically, and that we should put all our heads together to pull Barbados up and not try to destroy Barbados by making disparaging remarks about Barbados, because news travel so fast these days. Sir, people say, you cannot “un-talk”, and that if you say something wrong, you can say sorry a thousand times but sorry cannot bring back the spoken word.

Mr. Speaker, to say that Barbados is in a dark hole is not fair to Barbados and this society. Sir, we should act responsible as citizens.

Mr. Speaker, with those brief remarks, I thank you.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to join my colleagues on This Side in our contribution to this debate on the Estimates for the year 2010/2011.

Sir, this is an annual exercise engaged in by Parliament and perhaps in 100 years or so, some anthropologist, or researcher would be able to look back on this as historical data and try to discern from the variations in these Estimates, from one year to the next, whether or not there was a systematic programme that was evident in the way in which Government budgetted its resources. Mr. Speaker, that is an individual who would have the benefit of historical analysis and hindsight.

Mr. Speaker, on this occasion, we look at the Estimates, not from an academic exercise, but from the standpoint of individuals who are in constant contact with the people who we represent on a daily basis. Therefore, we will not have the benefit of a bird's eye view of what these Estimates represent and where they stand in relation to Estimates before and Estimates after, but we will have the best view of all and that is, as individuals who are living in these times and who have to explain to our constituents what these Estimates mean for them.

Mr. Speaker, it is well-known that these Estimates exercise, though it deals with billions of dollars, is an exercise that is mimic in every Barbadian household almost every day of the year.

Sir, every Barbadian household has in its mind what its expenditure is going to be on a weekly basis, on a yearly basis and on a monthly basis. It also has information in relation to what its revenue is. Sir, that revenue would largely consist of salaries and so on, but the point is that the average Barbadian household, whether a single parent, a mother and father, whether it is a couple or not, they all engage in the same exercise in budgetting that this Chamber is exercising itself in now.

Mr. Speaker, I invite Honourable Members on the Side of the Government, people who are listening and people who are, perhaps, watching us on television, to view the Estimates, not as a very complex document. It is one of those things that is easy to get lost in. I think that if we viewed it in the sense that every Barbadian has to budget and has to try to find a balance between what they spend and what they earn, then I think we will have a better appreciation for the peril that faces our nation today.

Mr. Speaker, earlier speakers from This Side have pointed out that this country enjoyed five straight years of surplus in its budget while, on the other hand, the last three

years represent years of significant fiscal current account deficit. What we have is Estimates which indicates total expenditure of \$3.879 billion and revenues of \$2.457 billion. Sir, that is a bold figure when you look at what you are going to spend and when you look at what you are going to expect as revenue, you see that one far outstrips the other.

Mr. Speaker, what is perhaps equally important is how you get these two ends to meet. How do you manage to fill this gap between revenue from the various sources you have outlined and the expenditure that you plan on making in this financial year.

Mr. Speaker, we have serious concerns about the ability of the Government to get these two ends to meet. We have serious concerns about the fact that in the Estimates there is a category under Domestic Financing, which accounts for nearly \$500 million, but is described only by a single word "Other". The other categories of financing that are listed before it, are specific like Debentures, Government Savings Bonds and Treasury Bills, but we have this amorphous blog representing \$0.5 billion, but is described only as "Other".

Mr. Speaker, I start on this point because people have an expectation of what a budgetting prospect yields. In their homes, they know if it will allow them to buy a new TV, a new fridge, or send a child to lessons, but in the context of the Government though, what Estimates should tell us is, what is the focus of the Government going to be for the year ahead, and they should also be able to tell us what are the results that we can expect.

Mr. Speaker, if that is a reasonable output of an Estimates debate, then it stands to reason that our confidence in the conclusions that are drawn must be impacted by the initial presumptions that are made. Sir, we have no confidence in the Government's ability to bridge this gap. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it stands to reason that we would have little confidence in what these Estimates actually mean for the people of Barbados. Sir, because it is an annual exercise, we will expect to see consistency.

Mr. Speaker, I have looked at these Estimates, I have looked at last year's Estimates and the Estimates of the year before.

H/A60B/6.20 p.m. Sequence 46

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Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, this set of Estimates, the third brought to Parliament by this Administration have been consistent in some regard. It is consistent as it is marked with an absence of anything for small business. It is consistent in the absence of any serious

provision for International Business. It is, in my view, outstandingly consistent for once again, treating the Scotland District as if we are on an island off by ourselves, forming no part of the land mass of Barbados.

Sir, it is consistent in demonstrating that while the Prime Minister talks about social capital, the amount of resources that are being applied to the social sectors are diminished. It seems to be that what the Prime Minister has done is to engage in a sort of economic sleight-of-hand. Administration after Administration after Independence, has said the economy is critical, because it is through a vibrant economy, we are able to improve those things that Barbadians need.

It seems to me that for the first time we have a Prime Minister who stands in this Chamber and announces that the economy is only one small part of this whole thing called Barbados. Perhaps, and this is how I interpret him to be saying it, we really ought to focus more on the social side of things and do not get bogged down about the economy, the economy what? They have said that our discussions on the economy are “techno-babble”. I called it an economic sleight-of-hand because it seems to me...

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

Hon. F. J. STUART: On a point of order. I hate to interrupt the Honourable Member for St. Joseph. He is misleading the House. The Prime Minister did not say what the Honourable Member is attributing to him. The Prime Minister said that Barbados is not an economy only, it is also a society. That is what he said. He did not say that the economy is not important. He said that Barbados is not an economy only.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is the interpretation which the Honourable Member is putting on it.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Therefore, the Prime Minister wants the nation to focus on what they consider to be their social programmes.

Sir, it stands to reason if you are going to say that there are social programmes you want the people of Barbados to look at, then we need to know what those social programmes are, how they are being financed and what is the effect they are going to have on the Barbados landscape.

Sir, the only social programmes that this Government is talking about, are what is oddly called “free bus fares”. It should really be “free bus rides”, but it is now called “free bus fares”, Summer Camps, Easter Camps, Summer Camps and Constituency Councils”. If the Other Side wants to say to us there are other social programmes

that are new and innovative that Barbadians had not experienced before, I look forward to hearing that.

Sir, I would find that hard to believe when I take into account the fact that the Welfare Vote has been slashed by about \$3.1 million. I would find it hard to believe that they are looking at new social entitlements when the National Assistance Board’s has been cut by \$1.2 million, when the Youth Mainstreaming Vote has been slashed by one-third, when the Community Technology Programme that has been touted by the sole Independent Member of his Honourable Chamber has been slashed by half, and bus fares slashed by \$5 million.

The Prime Minister begins by positing that we should look at the social programming and not trouble ourselves too much about the economic side of things, as if those things will give us comfort.

I invite the Honourable Members on That Side to consider the torture that is felt by Barbadians when they are unemployed, when there are women who cannot get welfare assistance for their differently abled children. I want the Honourable Members on That Side to reflect on their ability to carry out any of those social programmes in circumstances when all across the Estimates there are significant slashes.

I want to remind the Honourable Members on That Side, in case they forgot, I wonder how the Minister of Health feels about a \$16 million slash in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital? The truth is, the Minister of Health does not have to feel anyway about that, because he no longer has responsibility for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I wonder how the Minister feels about a slash in the National Drug Service budget by \$10 million. I wonder how the Minister of Education feels about a \$40 million slash in the University of the West Indies’ Budget.

I want the Minister to tell us how he feels about a \$6 million cut in the University of the West Indies tuition. Perhaps, the Honourable Attorney-General can tell us, or perhaps the Honourable Attorney-General can tell the Police Office, who he pleaded with for patience just a week, or two ago, how they should feel about a \$5 million slash in their allocation, and the Prison, a \$3.3 million slash.

Sir, what do all of these things mean? If it is the Government’s intention to come back to this Honourable Chamber towards the end of the financial year and seek Supplementaries, then it means that they have underestimated their expenditure for the year. Sir, that would trigger, and the economists tell me, and I am not an economist, that is well-known. The economists tell me it will trigger a further \$200 million in expenditure, which will not be matched by the revenue side.

Sir, in circumstances, where this Government is saying, well, we should focus on the social side, but just in case you really worry, we do have a few things for the economy. After all, we have just appointed the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown as the new Minister for Entrepreneurs.

Sir, I wonder how the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown feels about the Special Technical Assistance Fund, which helps small businesses all across this island, having been slashed by \$2 million, and that is on the Ministry's side, because the Barbados Industrial Development Corporation (BIDC), I think the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown must be aching. The BIDC has had theirs slashed by \$1 million as well, but they have a new Minister.

Having a new Minister - Sir, if they call it fat, it must be that they have now discovered the fat, but the fact suggests to us that just a few weeks ago, this Honourable Chamber was asked to increase in a Supplementary an allocation in the Ministry of Economic Development by \$750 000, and the Explanatory Note read, that it was for incorporation costs. Sir, the Explanatory Notes in the Estimates, which made provision for \$252 000 said that was for incorporation costs.

Asides.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member is well aware and the Leader of the Opposition, to his right, is also well aware, that the money allocated was for the Micro Enterprise Development Fund, which does not provide incorporation costs. This is the second time that I am explaining to the Honourable Members on That Side.

Sir, if it happens to be that it is said in the Notes, the Honourable Member and Leader of the Opposition should have explained to the Honourable Member for St. Joseph that it is just a simple error in the document. I do not understand the repetition of a matter that has certainly been clarified in the past.

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Mr. SPEAKER: Very well. Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that my Permanent Secretary sat me down and explained to me when I went into Government was that you could not spend on any matter in anyway other than set out in the Explanatory Note, unless the Explanatory Note ended in general terms.

For example, in the Police Vote, you will see the Explanatory Note that will say, this thing, the next thing and the third thing, and other supplies.

Mr. Speaker, the Explanatory Note for Head 314 of sub programme 0461 says this: "Provides for a grant to the small businesses seeking approved status, under the provision of the Small Business Development Act 23 of 1999, to help offset the cost of incorporation".

Mr. Speaker, the Financial Rules say that you cannot spend it for any other purpose.

Sir, the Honourable Member who has responsibility for this portfolio last year, Head 65 had the same Note. It provided for a grant to the small businesses seeking approved status, under the provision of the Small Business Development Act 23 of 1999, to help offset the cost of incorporation. It has not been changed. The Note in the Supplementary is for the same thing.

Sir, if the Minister intends to say to this Parliament that notwithstanding the clear terms of the Explanatory Note, his Permanent Secretary with him as Minister spending otherwise...

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member again needs to be advised that the Small Business Unit is a unit under the BIDC. The BIDC, Mr. Speaker, is a Statutory Corporation. The Small Business Unit functions under the BIDC. I will say no more, Sir.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I worry, Sir, because the Minister of Economic Development clearly has not seen these Estimates because the provision that is being made is not being made under BIDC, it is being made directly under the Ministry of Economic and Social Planning, so the BIDC cannot spend this money.

Mr. Speaker, the only body who can spend this money is the Ministry Unit, not the BIDC. If it was for the BIDC, it would not be found in this particular programme. Sir, this harps to something that I will get to in a minute.

Mr. Speaker, this very amount that the Minister responsible came to Parliament four, or five weeks ago and

added \$750 000 to, has now been slashed in half, and somebody could ask about fat. It has now been slashed in half, but in the last few weeks, we can add \$750 000 to it, Sir.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I will have to get up every two seconds if I need to, Sir. The reality of the situation is that if the Honourable Member wants to continue to pick at a straw, let him do this, but he is misleading the House because what he is saying is that the total amount of money that has been allocated for the line item for that \$750 000, I can speak, Sir, as the Minister responsible, that the allocation for 2009/2010 was \$330 000.

We came to Cabinet and agreed that we would have increased by a Supplementary for a \$750 000 vote to go to that, so there might be an error in terms of typographical errors. Therefore, it is a small point that he is trying to make into a bigger point, so I do not understand the point he is trying to make.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask formally that my time be restored.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member can call it a straw, he can call it whatever he wishes, but what is being made clear here is that there is provision in the Estimates for one thing and the Minister is suggesting that it has been spent for something else.

Sir, it is a fact that the revised figure shown in these Estimates on page 242, shows that the revised Estimates for 2009/2010 is \$1 092 500 million. The Estimates for this coming year, Sir, 2010/2011 is only \$500 000. Sir, if that does not mean that this year's figure has been slashed in half, then I wonder what the Honourable Member is doing as the Minister of Economic Development. Perhaps, Sir, that is why the Honourable Member for the City has been added because the Honourable Member for the City is a well-known mathematician and can show him how to get half.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, we are supposed to consider that there is a serious programme in this Government for small business, or entrepreneurs. The Honourable Members have been talking about cassava. Cassava, cassava, cassava, so it is almost as if cassava is now being introduced into Barbados for the first time in our

history, like if people were not growing cassava alongside their house all over Barbados, because cassava is now. Cassava flour now requires all kinds of fancy milling, when my mother was making cassava flour to make pone and all kinds of things and we did not have any mill.

Mr. Speaker, the facts are that there is nothing in this year's Estimates to help the cassava farmers. I challenge any Honourable Member on That Side, Sir, to get up and show us in these Estimates, where...

Asides.

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: That is right, Sir, the amount of money for food crop research has been slashed, but the Honourable Members are talking about cassava. It is just, Sir, a microcosm of what I believe the Other Side is exhibiting.

They are talking, Sir, they want to talk about cassava. They want to talk about all kinds of things, but what should we expect to see in the Estimates? We should expect to see provision in the Estimates which relates to those things.

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

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising though that a Member of Cabinet would get up in this Chamber and assert that this line item was to be used for something else, notwithstanding the Explanatory Note. The Law is what it is. You cannot do that, Sir, but it is perhaps symptomatic of something that started with this Administration, even prior to the Elections, when billboards were put up and down this country illegally, without the planning permission being sought. Now, Sir, we add to that.

The Government determines that it is going to give away National Housing Units and we have already pointed out to the Minister of Housing, and to this whole Chamber, that whatever they might intend, the interpretation of that particular section of the Housing Act does not allow it but never mind that, Sir, they are persisting, and now just two weeks ago, the Prime Minister made a statement that he is appointing a gentleman, formerly Senator Arni Walters, as Executive Chairman of the Barbados Water Authority.

Sir, the Barbados Water Authority Act provides for a Chairman. It provides for a general manager. It provides that the General Manager has the responsibility for the day-to-day running of the Barbados Water Authority. It provides, Sir, that the Chairman of the Board has responsibility for the Board's affairs and reports, Sir, not to Cabinet, but to the Minister. Again, Sir, a regime has been

put in place which seems to be moving away from what is legally required.

Mr. Speaker, in my few minutes left, let me say that these Estimates are stark from the point of view that they have forgotten the Scotland District.

Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Transports and Works - and I am looking forward to doing that Head.

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Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: The amount allocated for the Scotland District has been slashed from \$2 million to \$1 million. That is under the Ministry of Transport and Works.

Under the Ministry of Agriculture, the amount allocated for the Scotland District has also been slashed significantly. We are left to wonder what this Government intends as far as one-seventh of Barbados' land mass is concerned.

I have the opportunity to represent St. Joseph. Other people represent St. Andrew and St. Lucy. Mr. Speaker, when we left Government, we left a Scotland District Authority that, if implemented, would have served to completely transform how the Scotland District functions and is integrated into Barbados. We also left a programme for \$35 million, which would have seen the full rehabilitation of the Scotland District bringing it not just back into use for housing but also into significant use for agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, what this Government shows, and by their laughter we can tell, is total contempt for one-seventh of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we regret that the country has come to this. We are being told that the Democratic Labour Party is putting this country on a firm footing, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Five thousand people have lost their jobs and the cost of living has skyrocketed in this country.

Mr. Speaker, if you ask your constituents, are you better off today than you were the day before the Election, they would answer you with a resounding "No". That is the test. Whatever is in these books means very little if Barbadians do not have dollars in their pockets. Whatever is in these books means very little if the lifestyle of Barbadians have been so disrupted by this economic climate, that their whole being is dislocated.

The Honourable Members on That Side have to explain to their constituents what they are doing. I hope that their constituents are truthful when they put them to cross examination, because this country, as far as we can tell, is in a perilous state and there is nothing in this year's Estimates to show what lifeline is being thrown out to the citizens of this country.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to enter this debate at this late hour. We have had a long day of a collection of speeches, some of which were intended to enlighten us how we should go forward and others that obviously were intended to condemn the Government of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that all of the world recognise that there is a serious economic crisis. If 5 000 Barbadians have lost their jobs, hundreds of thousands have lost their jobs in the United States of America in one month. Mr. Speaker, if Barbadians at the tune of 5 000 have lost their jobs, then what of the persons in great Britain, many of whom have lost their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the point being made is that what we are going through, is not unusual to the world's economic situation. What we are going through is not an anomaly. It is part of a global crisis and Barbados happens to be part of that global population. I believe that our Honourable Prime Minister has done an absolutely wonderful job in seeking to keep this country on course under very difficult circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, when it is all said and done, the Honourable Member who just took his seat is correct that the proof is in the eating and not necessarily the making of the pudding. I suppose that the Honourable Member has great experience with pudding and, therefore, could give us a good explanation how to decipher the proof.

Mr. Speaker, I am always delighted to participate in this exercise. It is an annual ritual of this Honourable Chamber. It is a time when the Government brings before the public its Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue. It is a time when the Government seeks to give advice to the country what course it chooses to take to get us through the next fiscal period.

We are satisfied, as Members of Cabinet, as Members of the Government and as Ministers in Ministries, that we have carefully combed over scores and scores of programmes and reams and reams of documents, and we have come to a position that the best way forward

for Barbados at this time is the course that has been chosen that will be ably led by the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. Speaker, it is an essential part of our parliamentary calendar that allows us to comprehensively review and analyse the current economic situation and to carefully examine the true state of our economic and social realities.

Mr. Speaker, we are not going to get into debate with the Honourable Members on the Other Side as to our views on Barbados as an economy and a society. The co-leader, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, spoke ad nauseam on the fact that it was his position that Barbados was equally a society as it was an economy. As a matter of fact, his view, and I believe that I really represent his view - as he said it then - was that in order to make an economy practical, you would have to have a society that is enabled by the economy to achieve the things that it needs to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, we hold the position that if Barbados is just about economics, then we could shut shop and just count numbers. The far greater burden of this Government is to ensure that the social state of this society is maintained, and to maintain it, we have to engage, not only in economic discussions, but in social discussions.

All over this country today, persons are concerned about the social slide in Barbados and are concerned that if we, as a Government, do not do what is necessary to arrest that slide, that we would find ourselves perhaps having the strongest economy and the poorest society, and it is not our intention for those circumstances to exist at all.

Sir, not only does this moment in the calendar of our Parliament allows us to review and analyse the current economic circumstances, and to carefully examine the true state of the economy and the society, it also allows us to respond to these realities with measures that are fiscally prudent.

If one would recall, when the last Administration came into office in 1994, they promised Barbadians that they would be the most fiscally prudent Government that Barbados has ever seen. We will tell the story of their fiscal imprudence.

House A60B Sequence 49

6.50 p.m.

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Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: We also have to look at the moral soundness of the policies of the Government. Sir,

this whole matter of morality is an important factor when you are contemplating the future of the country. You cannot decide where the country goes until you give full expression to the ability of the country to set a moral compass that gives rise to the kind of order in the society, an order that allows the society to move forward in a way that it ought to move forward. Of course, Mr. Speaker, as a political party, always central to our philosophy is the whole matter of social justice.

Mr. Speaker, how do you achieve that social justice if your only consideration and pre-occupation is exclusively on economic matters? Therefore, in order for us to be able to achieve the level of social justice, where there is freedom and fairness in our society, we have to be able to understand the journeys of our people, not only those who are affluent and privileged, but those persons who are at the very bottom of the ladder, who need to be enabled by the State to achieve their own life's goals and life's dreams.

We believe that the blending of our economic and social circumstances provide for the kind of movement forward that would create a balanced society, that would be able to achieve the things that need to be achieved. Sir, this exercise allows us the opportunity to concentrate on what is best for Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I listened today as this Government has been pelted with all kinds of accusations. Sir, the Prime Minister has been accused of being incompetent. Sir, it reminds me of a story, which I once read in the Bible, of a woman who was brought to Jesus. She was brought there because she was accused of committing a sin. The accusers came and gathered and as the case was adjudicated, the words said that Jesus stooped down to the ground and started to write in the sand. At the end of his inscription, he got up and asked: "Woman, where are your accusers?" She said: "I have none." Jesus then said to her: "Go thy way and sin no more."

Mr. Speaker, there are people in this very place who would wish to condemn this Government on all counts, but we stand very firm on the fundamentals of our beliefs that the benefit of the State has to redound to the benefit of the people, and that in order to understand what are the needs of the people, we have an obligation to plan around the people's needs and that our actions, political, economic and social, should be driven by a clear understanding of what are the people's needs and concerns.

Sir, the problem with the Other Side is that they lost touch with the people. Sir, the fact that the Democratic Labour Party is the Government is not an accident. People did not wake up one day and decided that suddenly they would do away with the Barbados Labour Party and in with the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, no. It was a long haul for

people to reach the stage where they felt that the Government had lost touch with them, and because the Government had lost touch with them, the people of this country, and the great political heritage of this country, dictated that it was time for change.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North continues to suggest that Barbadians are able to be bought. Sir, may be the Honourable Member can be bought, but not Barbadians. Barbadians make their judgment on the basis of who they believe are better to take them forward and the Democratic Labour Party is better for that.

Sir, every time you talk about change, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North... I do not know what the Honourable Member thinks about his constituents.

It is an absolute shame that an Honourable Member who is elected and selected by people, could come here and suggest that people were paid and that people received in order to make political decisions. It is a shameful thing and the Honourable Member ought to be ashamed.

Asides.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I understand the agitation of those who would now sit in the docket, because what is happening is that they now stand condemned, just as the ones who brought in that woman who was accused of committing a sin, while the same accusers were persons whose lives were riddled with sin and they could not stand before the Prince to be judged, where they then had to release the woman.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Sir, I grew up on a farm and I know what happens when nimbles eat frizzle fowls. They get miserable, so I understand that.

Mr. Speaker, the exercise allows us the opportunity to concentrate on what is best for Barbados, while, at the same time, aggressively addressing what is wrong with the system. Mr. Speaker, the truth be told, the Government inherited a Barbados, as our economic minds have told us for the last day and one-half.

Sir, the Government inherited a Barbados that was broken but in order to win an Election, that political party on the Other Side, those Honourable Members chose not to tell the country the truth about the economy. Therefore, what we have to deal with is not only leading this country

forward, but we have to fix the country while we take it forward.

Sir, that is not unusual. Every time the Democratic Labour Party takes over the Government in this country, they have to fix a number of broken systems. Sir, the great economist, who once was the Co-Leader - Sir, they cannot get the leadership position right at all, if it is not Co-Leader, it is Opposition Leader, and as we would have noticed today when the other Leader came in, everybody stood down and the Leader stood up. I do not understand it, but that is their problem.

Mr. Speaker, we have a task to do and I want to say to Barbadians tonight, across this country, that they have vested their confidence in a political institution that has a rich record of success, and that even during the difficult times, we were still able to hand over a country to the Barbados Labour Party, an economy that was on the decline after going through a rigid economic crisis and that they were able to take that economy and suck every single ounce of life out of it.

They took monies, VAT in excess of \$300 million. They had the opportunity to fix the Barbados Water Authority and they did not. They had the opportunity to complete the Harrison's Cave Redevelopment Project and they did not. They had the opportunity to look at the Sanitation Service Authority and put it on a different and more progressive track, they did not. They put the money into Eastry House, a place where when I visited with the former Co-Leader, when I got there, we could not even find a nail, we could not even find anything, yet \$1 million was on Government's books as going into there.

Mr. Speaker, they cannot tell us anything. All they could do is to yell from over the fence, as a chihuahua would, but no Honourable Member on That Side can point a finger at This Side and condemn us, because when they point a finger at us, you must remember to point four fingers at themselves because the absolute wickedness that was done by the Barbados Labour Party to this country, will never be forgiven. It will never be forgiven. The Barbados Labour Party stands condemned forever.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, after the success of the Sandiford stabilisation programme, the next logical steps to rebuild the economy should have been taken. Sir, we have all said that, but what they did was that they took an economy that was stabilised and did nothing with it.

7.00 p.m.

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Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Sir, the former Prime Minister said he was batting like Sobers, but he forgot to roll the wicket and he kept batting and batting until finally Barbadians realised that there were no more runs in the wicket, or in him, and they had to get rid of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I am here as a testimony, and all Honourable Members on This Side. We are here as Honourable Members willing and ready to take this country forward.

Sir, what should have been done? They cannot dispute that when they took over the economy in 1994, that the economy was on the rebound. As a matter of fact, the former Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. Peter is on record as saying such, so what did they do?

Mr. Speaker, if you took a patient who is in a stabilised environment, you cannot leave them there forever. The next step would be, once you have stabilised them, to put a structure of services in place to ensure that they get from where they are physically, or mentally, to the next level. If you put that analogy within the context of the economy, what one would have to say is, that after the economy was stabilised although Erskine Sandiford was pulverised in this country, they criticised his glasses, they criticised his shirt and they criticised everything about Erskine Sandiford while he was still moving the country in a safe position. Sir, that is how the Barbados Labour Party operates.

Mr. Speaker, when the Barbados Labour Party finds itself in a corner, they will attack you. They will attack your character and they will attack your family. Sir, that is the kind of politics we have in this country. They will attack your history. They will attack your very essence as a Barbadian, but perhaps one of the reasons why young people in this society have become so wayward, is that they watched how the Barbados Labour Party operated for the last 14 years, right here in this hallowed Chamber.

Sir, Budget after Budget, innocent Barbadians were dragged through here, but none of them on That Side stopped the parade and, Sir, they applauded it.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the ambition of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. She was not part of that parade, as far as I remembered, but they had a little Caesar who ran through here and dragged the character of Barbadians who could never come here and defend themselves and you want to be an example of young people in this country. You stand condemned for your behaviour and for your actions and this needs to be said, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, no restructuring of the economy, no diversification of the economy by placing emphasis....

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I heard Honourable Members on the Other Side talked about agriculture. I had the privilege of sitting in Another Place where the Leader of Government Business in that place was the Minister of Agriculture and, Mr. Speaker, Sir, every single time we met that poor man would lament over the fact that not a piece of legislation he tried to get through to improve the condition of agriculture in Barbados he got any support for.

Sir, programme after programme, a man that I recognised as having ability and having great ideas, but that the Leader of Government Business in the Other Place, then lamented day after day, once we met. He tried his best to put programmes in place, and to put new initiatives in place, but the Barbados Labour Party Government had no interest in agriculture.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: We heard that and the audacity of Honourable Members on the Other Side - I am not going to include all of them...

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: The Honourable Member for St. Thomas is now practising, because perhaps she is in pursuit of an additional certificate. Sir, the audacity of people that could come here today and criticise the Democratic Labour Party for cutting the agricultural vote by \$150 000 and they could tell us that we are not doing anything for agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, since we became the Government, the Honourable Prime Minister has injected a number of initiatives into the agricultural scheme. We are agreeing that it is not enough. We believe that it should be more and we will continue to work at it but, Mr. Speaker, if the economic circumstances are not according us with the opportunities to be more flexible, then we have to manage the country carefully.

Sir, we are not going to be reckless, we are not going to ignore all of the economic indicators around the globe, and we are going to work carefully. When we need to recalibrate, we will recalibrate. When we need to reprioritise, we will reprioritise but, at the end of the day, we will steer this ship according to our compass. We are not going to let them steer it for us.

You had 14 years to carry this vessel and you squandered your time. This is now our time and we are going to take this ship to safe harbour. Sir, that is our commitment to the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, yes, I believe that there should have been a revitalisation of the tradeable sectors. Sir, if you look at the manufacturing industry in Barbados and see what progress it did not make over the 14-year period, you would not believe that anyone on the Other Side could come here and condemn this Government for not being able to do more about manufacturing.

Sir, it is the height of hypocrisy if that would have been allowed in this place. Sir, now we are trying to manage this country in a time of crisis and they want to get on the Other Side and tell us what we should do.

Mr. Speaker, do you actually believe that any member of the Barbados Labour Party would be interested in giving this Government advice to cause it to succeed? Sir, we would have to be absolutely mad to believe that could be the case, because they are not interested in the success of this Government.

Sir, what they want is to get the Government back and that is what they are working toward. They are now judging us by their own standards and calling us a political machine and saying that all we are interested in is being in Government.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, this morning coming in, I heard a lady on the radio who confessed to be a supporter of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, she said that she believes that every Member of this Parliament should be given a hearing, but that she was absolutely disgusted by the behaviour as we have seen this evening in this place.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: May be it is somebody you had called in. Mr. Speaker, let me just say this for the record. We will do what we have to do to ensure that we take this country where it needs to go. Sir, we are not doing it on our own accord. We are accepting the advice of persons across this country at every single level of society.

Sir, when they say that we are not listening to the people, that the Prime Minister is not sharing with the country, it is the first time in the history of Government where a Prime Minister goes to his people every quarter and gives them an update of where the country is.

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Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why it became necessary for Barbadians to shelf the Barbados Labour Party, was because a Government that had promised the people so much, a Government that had so much that they could have done so much more for the people, left us with a very sloppy financial arrangement. Sir, poor governance, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, and non- performance management.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Sir, I do not mind her. At least I have never slept in a jail. I have never been handcuffed and I have never sought to assault anyone. I go back to my story. I know my time is fast spent, but I am ending where I started.

Sir, the woman was brought before the master by her accusers and then Jesus stooped down to make the inscription in the sand, the accusers were gone. He said to her, neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.

Sir, as long as we have the opportunity to stand in this country, as long as we have the opportunity to be part of the leadership of this country, the one thing that I can say for sure is, we will do right by the people and we will continue to lead our people forward, and they must never ever be able to see the Halls of Government again in our lifetime, because they have had too many bites at the cherry, while some people were busy biting other things.

I thank you, Sir.

SUSPENSION

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Sir, I beg to move that his Honourable House do now stand suspended until Wednesday, March 17, 2010, at 9.30 a.m.

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

The question that the Sitting be now suspended until Wednesday, March 17, 2010, was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

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RESUMPTION

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SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

ARTHUR, Rt. Hon. O. S. (St. Peter)
BEST, His Honour K. St.C. (St. Michael East)
BOYCE, Hon. J. D. E. (Christ Church South)
BRATHWAITE, Mr. A. D. (St. Philip South)
BRAWAITHE, Mr. A. D.
DUGUID, Dr. W. F. (Christ Church West)
EASTMOND, Mr. R. C. (St. James North)
ESTWICK, Dr. the Hon. D. C. (St. Philip West)
FORDE, Miss C. Y. (St. Thomas)
INNISS, Hon. D. O'N. (St. James South)
KELLMAN, His Excellency D. St.E. (St. Lucy)
LASHLEY, Hon. M. A. (St. Philip North)
LASHLEY, Hon. S. A. (Christ Church West Central)
LASHLEY, Mr. H. F. (St. Michael South East)
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)
PAYNE, Mr. G. W. (St. Andrew)
SEALY, Hon. R. L. (St. Michael South Central)
SINCKLER, Hon. C. P. (St. Michael North West)
STUART, Hon. F. J. (St. Michael South)
THOMPSON, Hon. D. J. H. (St. John)
TODD, Hon. P. M. T. (City of Bridgetown)

TOPPIN, Mr. R. St.C. (St. Michael North)

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Opening, Order No. 5. The record opens with the resumption of a sitting already in progress. Order No. 5 is referred to but its title is not given anywhere in the source; the debate is on the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue for 2010-2011. After the afternoon suspension Mr. Speaker refers to it as 'Item No. 5'. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Mr. H. F. Lashley's and Mr. G. W. Payne's speeches. Page markers from the source ('B - 1' and 'G - 1' to 'G - 8') appear as paragraphs, some in the middle of sentences. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Take-slip about 5.45 p.m.. The take-slip 'Estimates - House A60B, Sequence 43, 5.45 p.m.' appears in the text as an ordinary paragraph. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Speaker labels. The source has several slips in speech headings and calls: 'Mr. A. D. BRAWAITHE' (for Mr. A. D. Brathwaite), 'His Hon. K. St.C. BEST', 'Miss M. A. MOTTLEY' (elsewhere 'Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY'), 'The Honourable Member5 for St. Michael North East' and 'Honourale'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Hon. D. O'N. Inniss's speech. Mr. Inniss refers to 'the Honourable Member St. Michael for South Central'. Printed as in the source.

Q7. End of record. The record ends with the suspension of the Sitting until Wednesday, March 17, 2010 at 9.30 a.m.; the Estimates debate continues at the next sitting.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on Tuesday, 16th March, 2010, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair, to continue the debate on Order No. 5, the Estimates for 2010-2011, introduced by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Honourable Member for St. John.

Hon. P. M. T. Todd, Member for the City of Bridgetown, welcomed the Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, with four pilot sites and 10 further sites, and spoke of residents still using pit toilets. Miss C. Y. Forde criticised the Minister of Housing, called him the 'Minister of losses', and withdrew a remark about houses given to his relatives at Mr. Speaker's direction, Hon. M. A. Lashley and His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman rising on points of order. Mr. R. C. Eastmond, quoting draft Estimates, set out excesses of expenditure over revenue of over \$679 million for 2008-2009 and over \$822 million for 2009-2010. Hon. S. A. Lashley, newly in the Cabinet, blamed the former Government's off-Budget spending on the prisons and the ABC Highway and quoted the IMF's 2008 assessment. Hon. D. O'N. Inniss praised the Minister of Tourism's work on airlift and promised a new Ambulance Service headquarters; Mr. Speaker had remarks by the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, struck from the record.

After the suspension, Mr. R. St.C. Toppin, Member for St. Michael North, said the Estimates cut the Welfare Department, the National Assistance Board and the Poverty Alleviation Bureau, and disputed the Prime Minister's claim on tourism, saying only 12 of 28 countries had double-digit declines in 2009; after a heated exchange Mr. Speaker told him to take his seat. Mr. J. D. Paul defended the Government's record in agriculture. Mr. H. F. Lashley, National Coordinator of the Camp Programme, said the \$6 million covered Easter and Christmas programmes as well as summer camps and denied that a caterer had been paid \$100 000. Mr. G. W. Payne, Member for St. Andrew and a former Minister of Housing and Lands, said the Government had been forced into submission by the IMF and spoke on roads in his constituency, withdrawing one remark; the Deputy Speaker took the Chair for part of his speech.

Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur, Member for St. Peter, recalling the crises of 1974 in Jamaica, 1981 and 1991, warned against a paradigm he said had failed before, against reintroducing exchange controls, and against cutting the University of the West Indies, which needed \$120 million but was given \$75 million. Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick replied that stabilisation had to come before recovery and expansion, and quoted current revenue and expenditure figures for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, drawing points of order from Miss Mottley, who cited the Central Bank Governor's report of January 12, and from Mr. Arthur.

Hon. M. A. Lashley, Minister of Housing, defended his record and spoke of the Al Barrack contract and the failure of the Joint Venture Programme, amid points of

order from Mr. Payne. Mr. Arthur said he accepted responsibility for everything that happened between 1993 and 2007, and the Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, replied on a point of order that he should then pay the \$67 million the Government had to find. Mr. A. D. Brathwaite, Member for St. Philip South, defended the unemployment figures and an additional \$20 million for tourism marketing.

After a further suspension until 5.45 p.m., His Honour K. St.C. Best urged that the Graeme Hall

agricultural research station be restored. Mr. D. D. Marshall said the Estimates again had nothing for small or international business and cut the Scotland District allocation from \$2 million to \$1 million, drawing points of order from Hon. F. J. Stuart and Dr. Estwick. Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe spoke last, on the moral soundness of policy and the record of the former Government. On the motion of Hon. C. P. Sinckler the Sitting was suspended until Wednesday, March 17, 2010 at 9.30 a.m.