
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 01, 9.30 a.m.

RESUMPTION

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

When the Suspension was taken yesterday evening, the House was on Order No. 5 and with that we shall continue.

The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity this morning to speak to the Appropriation Bill, 2010.

Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to start by congratulating the Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John for his presentation at the beginning of this Sitting on Monday, and for the focus that he has shown in that presentation and his foresight in preparing the country for economic recovery, after this global crisis.

Further, to congratulate him again for that commitment that has been shown by the Democratic Labour Party over the years, and that he continues to show, and this Party will continue to show to the social programmes.

I believe, I may not be quoting him correctly but he did say that we would not be sacrificing people on the altar of economic development, or words to that effect, again, showing that the emphasis is on people. We are putting people at the centre. It is okay for us to look at the books and look at the numbers but, at the end of the day, we have

to remember our priorities and it is for the Prime Minister to set the priorities for us. He has done so, and not for anybody else to determine for us what the priorities will be at this crucial time in our development.

Mr. Speaker, this debate is indeed the Appropriation Bill. We are looking at the Estimates, but I venture to say that it is not about budget allocation, although we are here to look at the figures, but it is not just about money and where we spend the money but, indeed it is about a vision. The Prime Minister again said it. It is about a vision for a society that is characterised by social justice, by equity, by charity and respect for one another.

The society that we build now is more important than the economic growth rate and the debt to GDP ratio. Those things are important but what is more important is the type of society that we build right now. Our figures, the Estimates have shown that, yes, there has been a reduction in the amount of money that Government wants to spend. Of course, Government has to spend less because there is less available right now. It is how we are going to get out of the situation that we are in and maybe, the Other Side did not get that quite clearly, we cannot spend as much as we had to, Sir.

Again, it is about priorities. If a housewife, a mother who is accustomed getting \$60 gets \$50 to go to the supermarket, because she has less money does not mean that her commitment to feeding her family is any less than it was when she had \$60. It is what she does with that. She will determine the priorities when she goes to the supermarket. She will pay her bills and she will make sure that her family is fed. She may not be able to afford frosted flakes, cream of wheat may have to do, but at the end of the day, the family will be nutritiously fed. It is about priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I see that as what is happening here in this Honourable House. We are taking what we have, what we can afford to spend. We are not letting anybody tell us

that you should be buying frosted flakes. We do what we can and we will focus our priorities and that is what it is about right now.

I want to say to the Other Side that at this time, they need to take their heads out of the books. For one thing, they do not seem to understand what is in the books anyhow. They need to take their heads out of this book and look at the bigger picture. Look at the vision that has been crafted by the Prime Minister, and look at where we want to take this country, look at the bigger picture.

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Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: It is obvious that they do not understand what is going on. They cannot even link or make the connection for one year's Estimates to a four-year medium-term development strategy or even the medium-term fiscal strategy. They expect to see all of it roll out in one year's Estimates. It is obvious that they are not figuring out what is going on.

Sir, I urge them to forget about the books and look at Barbados and the society and to look at the bigger picture and at the vision that has been so clearly crafted by the Prime Minister and take hold of that vision and not let political stubbornness prevent them from seeing what is right for Barbados at this time. Furthermore, they should not let loyalty to their leader, whoever their leader may be at this point in time, prevent them from seeing the bigger picture and what it is we need to do for Barbados.

They need to focus and look to the light at the end of the tunnel because if they do not, they are going to stumble around in the dark as they are doing. They are going to flounder. They are going to lose their way. They are going to trip up and fall as they are doing. They need to focus on the light at the end of the tunnel and let us see our way through.

Mr. Speaker, no clanging cymbals coming from That Side is going to cause us to take our eyes off the light at the end of tunnel, or not to see the vision that has been set before us.

The Prime Minister in his presentation quoted Pope Benedict the XVI, I believe he was quoting from Caritas in Veritate, "An Ethical Analysis of the Global Economic Crisis", which was essentially a moral framework on how we are to move forward as one human family. If I could quote from that, what the Pope said is that:

"The current crisis obliges us to re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment to build on positive experiences and to reject

negative ones. The crisis thus becomes an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future."

I quoted that because that is exactly where we are and that is relevant to our situation right now. We will build on positive experiences and reject negative ones and reject negativity in general.

I want to urge Honourable Members on This Side, particularly those on the Front Bench, to reject the negativity and embrace the opportunity for shaping a new vision for our future. It is time to do new things in a new way. Someone said that if you do the same things the same way and expect a different result, that is foolishness.

We cannot allow distractions to keep us looking back. Yes, we have looked back and we have seen how we have gotten to where we are. We have laid blame at different people and different entities and now we have to look forward. We look around us, we see how our neighbours are fairing and we may pat ourselves on the back because in many respects we are doing better, but it is not time to look around anymore, it is time for us to look forward.

The Scriptures say that we must forget what is behind us and press on towards the mark. Indeed, our Lord says, which of us when we put our hands to the plough and look back is fit for the task. Indeed, we have put our hands to the plough and we must look forward.

We as a Government have been elected by the people. Like Esther in the Bible, when she went to her uncle Mordecai, she did not know what it was that she could do in the situation in which the Jews found themselves at that time and her uncle Mordecai said to her, "who knows that you have come into the Kingdom but for such a time as this".

We thought we knew why the people of Barbados elected the Democratic Labour Party to power in 2008. We thought we understood in our human experiences, but indeed, who knew that we were elected to Government but for such a time as this. The task that lies before Barbados now in its redevelopment and in its rebuilding after the economic crisis could only have fallen to the Democratic Labour Party at this time, and that is why we have been elected.

The Prime Minister also said on Monday that there are opportunities in this situation for us to rebuild. I have heard many comments coming from That Side about the reduction in the figures for this programme and the reduction in the figures for that programme and trying to equate it to a lack of focus and to a lack of commitment to what we have to do, but I daresay otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, our cuts actually reflect a new focus and our understanding of a need to reduce Government expenditure. It reflects our commitment to making Government work better. Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage This Side, especially those on the Front Bench and other Honourable Members of Cabinet, to continue in that commitment to get Barbados out of the recession and indeed to get us out of the recession looking better and smelling better, some would say smelling like a rose, and with Government working more efficiently and more effectively for the people.

There is a mind set, for example, in Government about how Government's money should be spent. For example, at this time there are those who would tell you that we have to buy things now because we have the money and if we do not spend the money now, it is going to go back, so we must spend it now. Go back where, Mr. Speaker? It is not going to Japan, it is our money. It is going back to our Treasury for us to use, so we need to change the way we look at Government's money. The money in the Treasury is for the benefit of all Barbadians and we have to determine how that money is spent. We set the priorities and we would manage how that money is spent and manage the programmes.

Indeed, what is happening to Barbados now is a crucible. It is a crucible for testing and melting metals, subjecting them to high temperatures to see what that metal truly is to determine its character and to see what it is truly made of. Indeed, what we are in now is nothing but a crucible. We have been subjected to heat but it will test our metal to determine what we are made of. Surmounting difficulties is indeed the crucible that forms characters.

Sir, when you look at the figures and compare them to the Estimates of 2009-2010, you will see that there has been a cut in this programme and a cut in that programme. This says that it is not an abandonment of the programme but we are reducing inefficiencies.

I heard the Honourable Member say yesterday that there has been a cut in the Ministry of Health's budget, but all of the Honourable Members on This Side can tell you that there have been cuts in their programme. We spent time recognising that there are inefficiencies in the system and now is the time to cut it.

Mr. Speaker, every housewife who would have for years not bothered to turn off the lights, or to make sure that the washers on the taps were fixed, are now paying attention to those little things that are causing the money to dwindle away. We are tightening up on those areas. We are making sure that things are done more efficiently, that Government is going to work better. We are going to work smarter collaborating to make sure that everyone could

benefit. The pie may be smaller but everybody will get their share.

We know that in Barbados there are mothers who have raised 11 or 12 children. My father told me that he is number 12 of 16. There are families that have had so many children but everybody got their share. It may not have been a big share but everybody got their share and everybody was fed and everybody was able to grow and to develop. It is possible for us as a people to grow and to develop even though the pie is smaller. While we are the Government, we will make sure that there is equity, that everybody gets their piece of the pie. I daresay that if somebody else had control of this situation right now, that there are some who would not get any of the pie, and we would not let that happen.

There are other programmes that have been cut as well. Reference was made to the cuts from the Youth Mainstreaming Programme and Project OASIS. That was done because tonnes of money were thrown into areas where there was no development plan, where there was no policy and where there was no proper programming. We have had to re-prioritise and make sure that at the end of the day wastage is reduced, duplication has been avoided and that Government's money is spent better.

House A60C Sequence 2

9.50 a.m.

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Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Speaker, what is now happening, not only in the public sector but in the private sector as well, is requiring all of us to look at improving productivity. In the public sector we have to transform how things are done through renewed mind set. Scripture comes again that talks about being transformed by the renewing of your mind and that is where we are at now.

Sir, under the vision of our Leader, we are transforming the Public Service through renewed mind sets. Sir, it calls for all Barbadians, not just Government but for all Barbadians. It calls for the private sector, which is looking to improve their productivity. It calls for the Social Partnership. I would daresay that it calls for the Opposition, but we cannot tell them what to do. If they do not want to come on board, they are not going to pull us back, we are forging ahead with what we have to do. If they want to be left behind, that is up to them.

Mr. Speaker, I said that the Social Partnership has to be a very crucial part of what is happening here. The Barbados Labour Party, in their term in office, paid nothing more than lip service to the Social Partnership and

tripartism. Indeed, I understand that by January 2008, the Social Partnership was barely functioning. There was not the energy and enthusiasm coming out of the Social Partnership.

Sir, again, under the leadership of this Administration and the Honourable Member for St. John, we have seen an infusion of life, energy, commitment and a rededication of the Social Partnership to making Barbados work. There is also that concept of Team Barbados, making Barbados work for all of us. It is for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, under the Barbados Labour Party, workers' concerns were sidelined. There was no real effort to address their concerns, to create situations for them to improve their productivity, for them to flourish, even for them to take ownership of what happens in Government. Sir, the time has come that every civil servant needs to take ownership of what happens in Government.

It is not a Barbados Labour Party Government one day and a Democratic Labour Party Government the other day. The Government belongs to the people and all the people, particularly those working in the public sector, need to take ownership of the public sector.

Sir, we are going to ensure that the conditions are set that they will come around to that way of thinking. Mr. Speaker, we are going to create a new culture that will increase productivity and see a better attitude. As I said, it is not just the public sector but in the private sector as well.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party continues to show its commitment to social justice and to protecting the weak and vulnerable. Sir, free education and free health care will continue. They are commitments from which we have not waived. They are the pillars that have caused Barbados to be where it is today. When you look at the Human Development Index and the strides that we have made there, a lot of that is because of free education and our access to free health care.

Mr. Speaker, our social safety nets remain in place. Housing is now high on the agenda because this is important to the development of a people. Sir, housing is important to the development of a person's well-being and to them being able to support and care for their family. We are committed to reducing inefficiencies. Sir, as I said, if you look at the numbers alone, you will notice that the money allocations were cut, but that does not show a true picture. Sir, if we come to office and see that \$100 was spent on a programme last year or the year before, the trend has been to come back this year and ask for either \$100 or \$110.

What we have done is to look at the programme and say that what was delivered for \$100 or in some cases,

what was not even delivered when you asked for that \$100, could have been done for either \$70, \$80 or \$90 and so we are coming back and asking for that. We are not asking for the \$100 because it was on the books last year. We are not asking for \$110, because that was the trend in the Public Service to ask for \$110 or to increase that allowance every year, we have looked and seen what is delivered, what can be delivered and what it would take to get that done effectively.

Therefore, Sir, if it is going to cost \$70 to get that done effectively, that is what we are coming for. Sir, therefore, whoever just looks at the figures and says you got \$100 last year and only want \$70 this year, they are missing the bigger picture. They are missing the priority or the perspective of this Government as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that jobs are a challenge in Barbados at this time. I am sure that every day someone in here meets someone who needs a job, meets someone who needs a better job or meets someone who needs more hours of work. It is a challenge for all of us.

Sir, while Government has stressed maintaining jobs, while Government has done excellently, I want to congratulate the Prime Minister and those who are responsible for ensuring that we have been able to keep that unemployment rate down. Sir, while that has been the focus, we know that there are many who are unemployed. As Government looks to improve the public sector and as the private sector looks to improve what they are doing and becoming more competitive, the challenge will be especially for unskilled workers to find jobs.

Sir, the call has been made and it will be made again, which I would want to emphasize, that for those persons who are not satisfied in their jobs, those persons who have time because they are working shorter hours or not working at all, now is the time to put the emphasis on training. Every day I hear people saying that young people want work and then I am faced with the problem that many of them are not skilled. Sir, what I have been doing, what other Honourable Members have been doing, and I want to encourage you to continue doing that, is getting those young people to access training.

Sir, anybody who says that they want work but that they cannot find work in a particular area, now is the time for them to retool, now is the time for them to improve their training, now is the time for them to get the skills. The emphasis has been put on training and on certification.

We have heard of the National Vocational qualifications and the CDQs, which have implications not just for finding employment here in Barbados, but employment across the Region. Therefore, we need to try to indoctrinate people into the mind set of continuing their

education, their training and to acquire new skills. That will be to their benefit in the long run.

Mr. Speaker, there are now many private sector agencies that are coming on board to train people, not only people within their organisations but also people who have shown an interest. Therefore, we are seeing an increase in training programmes and so I want to encourage people to take advantage of those training programmes. I want to encourage Honourable Members to make sure they know what training programmes are available, so that they do not just promise people a job, when they know that there are going to be challenges, but for Honourable Members to find out about those training programmes, so that they could make sure that these people get into the training.

Sir, this training does not only apply to manual work, let us remember that we are moving towards more and more technology and so more people have to be trained in technology. Mr. Speaker, for example, in terms of cars, there was a time when the training was in autobody work and then automechanics but we are now seeing more autotronic laboratories coming up because that is where the training is now.

There is also training in technology, for example, in medical transcription, where we are seeing a focus on that kind of training.

Sir, I would want Honourable Members and others to encourage their people to take advantage of training programmes that are being offered by the several agencies in Government such as the National Employment Bureau, the Barbados Vocational Training Board, the Youth Mainstreaming Programme, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and the Barbados Community College. Sir, there are so many agencies that are training right now and so people must take advantage of that training.

Government is committed to the retraining fund which will see money taken from the National Insurance Scheme and put into the National Employment Bureau, so that unemployed persons not only go to the National Insurance Scheme to collect their cheques but they will also be directed to the National Employment Bureau, so that they can take advantage of the training programme that is being facilitated by those funds. The legislation is being tidied up, the logistics are being put in place, so that system for retraining can work.

Government remains committed to the social safety net to providing adequate national insurance coverage. Government also remains committed to providing the Welfare-to-Work programme and to legislation including employment rights. I want to call on the unions to see this vision, to share this vision, to understand Government's

commitment to workers, to understand that now is the time to craft a new working environment in this country.

I want unions to understand that now is the time to meet us in Government as partners in the process, not to lock horns but to hold hands and guide each other, as we focus on productivity and work ethics, as opposed to a confrontational approach.

Sir, Government is still on its path to achieving, for example, the Millennium Development Goals. Across the world, we know the global economic crisis threatens to undermine the process that has been made in many areas, in terms of eliminating poverty and raising the standard of living and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Governments across the world, not just our Government, are challenged how to pursue policies and how to expand expenditure on social safety nets and infrastructure that is critical to the human development and growth.

10.00 a.m.

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Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: My concern continues to be with the women and that they do not lose the gains they have achieved in Barbados through education, through maternal health and so on and, Sir, this includes their right to decent work as well. I am always concerned for the single and unemployment dependant woman and their right to decent work.

We find that these women, out of desperation to earn money and provide for their families, may take employment not on their terms or even on terms they can live with, but they have to settle and take employment on someone else's terms, sometimes affecting their livelihood and their very lives. Sir, Government is committed to ensuring decent work.

Mr. Speaker, it cannot be said too often that the free bus fare is essential for families to get children to school even when parents cannot work and when parents do not have enough money. We do not want to get to a situation where two children can go to school this week and next week another two children can go to school.

Sir, free bus rides are important that at a time like this, the money that a housewife gets in her hands, or that a single mother gets in her hands, can go further and she does not have to look at how to send that children to school because the child will get to school.

Mr. Speaker, child care is also important for mothers and extending child care, day care and even night care is important, especially for mothers and for families who need to be able to work and to work flexible times. Sir, I

want to encourage the unions to work with Government because we have to approach a more flexible schedule for work in this country.

Sir, the unions need to come alongside us as well and we need to provide services like day care and so on. Sir, we are committed to ensuring that the conditions of work are guaranteed for workers in this country. Sir, that includes legislation, policies and regulations on wages on hours of work and on conditions of work. Sir, it also includes the anti-discrimination legislation and the Employers' Rights Bill, which will be coming to this House.

Mr. Speaker, my concern is with the young people as well because after education work is most important for them to be on a path of self-actualisation. I want to encourage them, as I did earlier, to continue to be educated, to train themselves and then to find productive work. Mr. Speaker, work, indeed, is central to the well-being of people.

Later this year, Government is committed to hosting the 9th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Meeting here in Barbados to which Women Affairs' Ministers will be coming from across the Commonwealth. We are also inviting Ministers of Finance to come to this meeting as well because the theme of that meeting very importantly is the Global Economic Crisis Recovery and Beyond, looking specifically as women, as agents of transformation and as agents of change as we rebuild our society.

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

Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Speaker, we will ensure that the vulnerable groups, the disabled, the young people and women are not marginalised during this recovery process. I want to again urge that as we train and focus on employment and rebuilding that micro-enterprise and training reflects the need for women and young people and that it does not marginalise them.

Sir, the Government has made a commitment to procuring 40 per cent of services from small businesses and I want to encourage that there is a commitment to ensuring that a certain percentage of that procurement is set aside for young businesses and businesses owned by women as well, those women who need to be able to raise their families.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue the Appropriation Bill, I want to urge the public and those members in here to forget the clanging cymbals, forget the bells, whistles and all the noises that we have heard about numbers being cut.

Sir, obviously, as I have said, they have failed to understand that there is a recession going on and that we

cannot just wallow in pity, that we have to look to rebuild. The vision has been crafted for us and we have to take hold of that vision and move forward.

Mr. Speaker, Government remains committed to the holistic development of this country, of the society, of the community, of the family and of individuals. Sir, I do not need them to get up any more and talk about us going through an economic crisis and all that. I know that we are going through an economic crisis and, Sir, I do not have any economic training whatsoever. Sir, everybody knows we are going through an economic crisis right now.

Mr. Speaker, I know they have to score points this week but, Sir, at what cost? At what cost are they going to stand up and try to pull down the vision that is set before them? Is it just to gain political points? Is it going to be at the cost of the social cohesion that we are trying to maintain, Mr. Speaker? Is it going to be at the cost of panicking families and single, unemployed women, Mr. Speaker, so that they will take risks with their very lives in order to be able to make ends meet? Is it going to be at the cost of undermining the public sector? Is it going to be at the cost of undermining the Social Partnership and the ethics of the Social Partnership and the efforts of the Social Partnership?

Mr. Speaker, I want to urge them and everyone in the hearing of my voice not to be reckless and to take hold of the vision. If you miss the vision as it was pronounced by the Honourable Prime Minister, get a copy of the Hansard Debate and I know that the Press carried it as well. Take hold of the vision because where there is no vision, the people perish. Take hold of that vision, lest you perish and be careful as you perish, who you take down with you for Our Lord says:

"For as much as you do it unto the least of these, you do it unto me."

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged, Honourable Member. The Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Hon. E.G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join this debate of the 2010/2011 Estimates which have been crafted against a background of decreasing revenues and to offer my support to the programme of the Government for 2010/2011.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard that revenue for 2009/2010 is now projected to be \$2.4 billion down from \$2.6 million for 2008/2009 and, Mr. Speaker, therein lies our challenge. How are we going to be able to address the whole issue of declining revenues within the current global financial crisis?

Mr. Speaker, we took a position at the beginning of the crisis that we would seek to maintain employment levels. Sir, maintenance of employment levels throughout Barbados, in all the sectors, is a fundamental policy approach that we took in trying to manage the whole financial crisis as it evolves and, certainly, in terms of developing the expenditure programme for this year, that approach is written right away through the whole expenditure level.

Sir, one would notice that there are no salary cuts. In fact, there is additional appropriation for salaries, wages and so on with the normal incremental increases that had been agreed to previously.

Certainly, our discretionary spending, Mr. Speaker, is an area that we have sought to address, the whole question of transfers and subsidies to a number of the statutory corporations and other Government-owned corporations because they, as well, need to be able to manage their finances because financial circumstances will not allow for the continued increases in subventions. Therefore, it is going to be incumbent on those persons who manage those statutory corporations and the other companies owned by Government to look at ways and means of increasing their efficiency and the proper management of those institutions.

H/A60C/10:10 Sequence 4

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Hon. E.G. HUTSON: Sir, the Opposition made much work of the increase in the current account, turned out figures for 2009/2010, projected at a deficit of \$894 million. Let me say that within that figure of \$894 million, is some \$945 million that covers debt amortisation and interest payments. Interest on loans, amortisation of previous debt, debt accumulated by the previous Government and all the wastage, the GEMS Project, and we can go through the list of instances of wastage by the previous Government.

Only two weeks ago we debated the whole question of water and one of the issues coming out of that particular debate was the whole question of refinancing which the Barbados Water Authority did over the last five years or so, to the extent of some \$25 million. The first instalment on that loan is due in June.

Sir, included in this deficit financing on current account is a substantial amount of money that goes towards servicing that debt. I said that the figures for 2009/2010 will be some \$945 million. In the course of this year, 2010/2011, we are projecting that figure will be \$1.24 billion out of the current account that is being projected of \$1.338 billion. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party is not

without some level of responsibility for the situation that we have in these Estimates going forward on current account.

Sir, I would want, as Minister responsible for International Business, to say a couple of words on that particular sector. Despite the fact the unprecedented global, economic and financial crisis had its origins in the massive regulatory failures in the capitals of the developed world, it has had the unfortunate side effect of galvanising leaders from Europe and North America into a coordinated campaign to put the offshore financial centres of this world out of business, so we have had over the past 12 months or so Senators within the United States challenging the financial centre of this world.

Those challenges have extended into the United Kingdom and European countries. It is not the first time they have sought to do that. They have sought to address the issues in terms of declining revenues in their own countries; challenges within the whole financial banking sector. They have sought to address a lot of those issues by attacking the international financial sectors, particularly those in jurisdictions as small as Barbados.

Therefore, we have had to address those issues. Fortunately for Barbados, our regulatory systems within the international financial sectors have been such that we have been able to argue that we should not be listed among those countries considered to be harmful tax havens. Barbados is one of the only financial centres within the Caribbean area to have been white-listed by OECD countries at their meetings, under a year ago.

Sir, we have at the outset of the last financial period embarked on a programme of addressing our double taxation treaties, having been able to maintain our categorisation as a country that is well regulated and well managed. Our offshore sector is well regulated and well managed. We have sought to increase as part of our short and medium-term financial action plan for the international business sector, to accelerate and negotiate the rate at which we are negotiating our double taxation treaties.

Sir, during the course of the last year, we have been able to negotiate treaties with the Republic of Mexico. In April 2008, that Treaty was signed; the Republic of Ghana, April 22, 2008; Luxembourg, December, 2009. We have initialled DTA with Italy in March, 2009. We have negotiated and initiated a treaty with Spain in May, 2009; Vietnam, November, 2009, and we have only recently completed the first round of negotiations with Panama, a couple of weeks ago. We have also drafted and initialed a treaty with Belgium. We have also had amended Protocols with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and China.

We have been exceptionally active in trying to get our DTAs organised with many of these countries, particularly countries within the OECD. We are seeking to negotiate with the French at this time. Shortly we will be working on that particular DTA.

Sir, also within the short and medium-term planned for the international financial sector, we are in the process of making amendments to some of the existing legislation and bringing legislation for new bits and pieces of legislation.

HA60C 10.20 a.m. Sequence 5

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Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 06, 10.20 a.m.

Hon. E.G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, several of these pieces were addressed by the Prime Minister during his presentation of 2009 in the Budget speech.

Mr. Speaker, the industry has also pointed to the need for a survey of the international business sector and methodologies for capturing accurate statistical data, based in the international sector. Mr. Speaker, we have been at work in doing that, and that is to be included in an EU project under the 2008 Sugar Protocol. Sir, that initiative will also see reality within a few short months.

Mr. Speaker, the whole question of the international business sector, during the course of 2009, BEBA the umbrella organisation and lobby group, so to speak for the International Business Sector, had an International Week, the first of its kind, in October to promote the international business sector within Barbados. Sir, you know when we talk about the international business sector, it is not just the offshore financial services and things of that nature. There are also companies, Mr. Speaker, that operate in Barbados under the different bits and pieces of Legislation within the international business sector.

I am thinking in terms of companies like Gilden and LensTec that earn substantial foreign exchange for Barbados, and make substantial contributions to our Corporate Tax take. Mr. Speaker, many of these operations still need to raise their whole financing by measures on the International Stock Exchanges, so even within the international business sector, one comes right back to the whole question of the financial crisis that exists and the ability, Mr. Speaker, for investors and potential investors to raise funds, to raise capital because the whole question of the crisis was centred upon the instability and the lack of regulations within the whole banking sector.

Mr. Speaker, no doubt, as a result, the whole question of our direct foreign inflows, has been impacted,

so the Honourable Member for St. Peter in his presentation last evening made comment to the effect that the direct foreign inflows had dropped from some \$1.5 billion to a figure less than \$400 million. The Honourable Member for St. Peter tried, of course, to blame the policies of the Democratic Labour Party Government for that decline. As I have said, the decline was solely attributed in that area, to the lack of prospective investors being able to raise their financial resources on the international markets and in their countries of origin.

The whole question has that multiplier and knock-on effect into all the different sectors of economic activity across the globe. The United States and the United Kingdom as you know, Mr. Speaker, are our major trading partners and if there are challenges withing their economies, you are going to have that knock-on effect to Barbados and those other countries which depend on that foreign investment. I believe that all Barbadians are aware of the way that system works.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the whole effort by the Honourable Member for St. Peter to try to blame or to attach responsibility for the slowdown in that particular sector on the policies of this Government is without merit. Mr. Speaker, towards the end of 2008, projects like Four Seasons ran into problems because the expected foreign inflows that would finance that particular project dried up because prospective investors could not source funds from within their own areas. Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is the challenge that we find ourselves.

In the United States, each month, you hear of increasing levels of unemployment. At the height of the crisis, it was in the hundreds of thousands of persons that were losing jobs in the United States each month. That figure is down to tens of thousands at this particular stage and it is expected that this economy will shortly rebound. Obviously, once that happens, we should see some improvement in our financial situation as the economy of Barbados and the other Caribbean islands tend to lag a little behind the US economies.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, those are some of the challenges that we face. I want to go on and indicate that within the international business sector that during the course of the year, we have re-branded. The Ships Registry has met with the Registry and the Registry, Mr. Speaker, has the potential to earn substantial foreign exchange for Barbados. I am looking very closely at that and the review of the Shipping Corporations Act, so that those two activities can make a greater contribution towards our financial sector.

One of the challenges that we also face as a small developing country, Mr. Speaker, and particularly within the Caribbean is that we tend to be all painted with the

same brush. This is one of the challenges that we have within the international business sector.

The Ministry has been working in cooperation with the UWI recently to establish an International Institute of Financial Risks and Regulation, where we can be training the risk managers, the regulators and fund managers who operate in Barbados, in support of the international financial sector.

Mr. Speaker, that Institute will encourage and will be open and available to professionals from within the other Caribbean islands because, as I said, when people speak of Barbados and so on, they will tend to group all the Caribbean islands under that one broad paint brush, therefore, we need to make sure that in addition to Barbados being very well regulated and very well respected, we give the type of technical support and so on, to the other Caribbean islands which are trying to develop their international financial services, Anguilla, Dominica and St. Lucia.

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 06, 10:30:14

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Hon. E. G. HUTSON: We need to be also in a position to lend assistance to our Caribbean brothers in terms of the whole development of their International Financial Services Centres and to ensure that the level of transparency and quality regulations is extended to our Caribbean colleagues. Those are some of the things that we are doing within the international business sector.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on from that to talk a bit about some of the other initiatives within our financial proposals for 2010-2011. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Housing and Lands on the initiatives and the work that he is doing in that particular sector. Each week, as I see constituents within my Constituency, they are all asking when is the programme for St. James Central and St. James North going to start.

Mr. Speaker, I have been assured by the Minister of Housing and Lands that we would be looking very shortly at Lancaster Phases 1 and 2. I believe that we will be looking at about 82 houses in the first instance in that particular area. I am looking forward, like the rest of my constituents, to those houses. Having seen the houses at Marchfield and the quality of the construction, I am as excited as those constituents to have that programme get on the way within St. James Central.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things about that particular presentation at Marchfield was to see the work of the furnishing of one of the displayed units. It is quality work done by local Barbadian furniture manufacturers.

Mr. Speaker, it is important within the whole context of our development and the way we try to solve some of the problems going forward to continue to support the development of local businesses. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West spoke yesterday in terms of this and this Honourable Chamber some weeks or two ago passed an additional \$750 000 in support of the small business sector within the economy. These are grant funds that will assist those smaller companies that are in the productive sectors.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I just want to inform you that you have five minutes in which to conclude.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: We have made that initiative to assist them. Mr. Speaker, it is important going forward that we ensure that we are supporting small businesses in Barbados in terms of giving them that technical support, supporting them in their capital initiatives for expansion. There are a number of products that have been displayed at BMEX each year that, in my own view, can be developed with the appropriate support for the cooperation.

I think in terms of the flying fish paté, which is of an excellent quality and a product that, in my own view, has great export potential in terms of export into the North American and the European markets where things like paté are part of their daily diets.

Mr. Speaker, in Barbados when we talk about flying fish, we want to see the whole flying fish. Unfortunately, we do not get the heads and the bones anymore. When I was a youngster, I was a great lover of the head and the bones in the flying fish. Certainly, when I had to scale some flying fish, I made sure that the head and bones were kept intact.

Mr. Speaker, we are not into eating the flying fish in the form of a paste and so on. It is a taste which we would have to develop among our people within Barbados, but it is certainly something that is already part of the diet of the North Americans and so on, so it is businesses like that, that these funds will support.

While we have certain cuts and so on, we have to make sure that we continue to support those businesses that can generate foreign exchange for Barbados and help to address some of the issues that we are facing in terms of the management of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, the last point I would like to address at this stage is the whole question of the productivity issues within Barbados. This is something that we have been speaking about for years and doing nothing about. The Barbados Labour Party Government did absolutely nothing to increase the productivity of Barbadians generally.

As the speaker before me indicated, we need to ensure that our workers' unions come on board and not just give lip service in terms of the agreements that are negotiated, not just the actual dollar and cents but the other benefits, and make sure that those things are productive.

Mr. Speaker, if our businesses are going to be carrying a lot of excessive costs, it is going to impact on the prices that they can charge to local consumers and to the export prices in terms of they maintaining their whole question of... We need to address the whole question of overtime. Only recently we have had issues with overtime payments to certain categories of workers, overseas payments that boggles the mind.

Mr. Speaker, when you can have people within Barbados that are earning \$10 000 and \$20 000 a month in overtime, there has to be something wrong. This impacts on the whole question of the cost of living because businesses in Barbados will pass that sort of cost through.

As a businessman, and you have to deal with overtime charges within the system, you are going to flow that cost right away through. When we try to address the whole question of the cost of living, which impacts on every Barbadian, including the ones that are earning \$10 000 and \$20 000 a month in overtime...

Mr. Speaker, those same persons have to go to the supermarkets too. Those same persons are complaining about the high cost of living in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, it is the low income people that then pay for that level of inefficiency and that absence of productivity within the whole system. That is the challenge.

Mr. Speaker, that is one of the issues that we have to address going forward as we look at the productivity issues. We cannot sweep it under the bush. The unions would not like me making those sorts of comments but they have also to be reasonable in the way they negotiate their agreements and the way that they encourage the workers to look at the issue of productivity going forward, and how we do it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your time has expired, please wind up.

House A60C Sequence 7

10.40 a.m.

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Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we need to make sure that those deficiency issues are addressed, so that things like overtime will be corrected by your management techniques.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I again offer my support to these Estimates proposals, 2010-2011. I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, before we move on, let me take this opportunity to welcome to the Public Gallery the teachers and some pupils of the Christ Church Girls' School, a primary school located in Water Street, Christ Church. I would not mention the Constituency.

Let me take time out to say a few words in terms of what we are doing here. I know it is not usual but I think it is important for you to understand what is happening. To my left sits the Opposition, ably led by the Honourable Miss M. A. Mottley, Q.C., Leader of the Opposition.

The Honourable Member usually sits at the Head with other Honourable Members beside her. Behind her sits the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, who is an Independent Member. Independent, of course, suggests that he is neither a Honourable Member of the official Opposition nor Government's Side.

To my right sits the Government, ably led by the Honourable Prime Minister. The Honourable Member is not in his seat, he is out on other business for now. Beside him you will find the Honourable Christopher Sinckler, the Honourable Leader of the House. That just speaks to him being the Leader of Government Business in this Honourable House but he does not actually control things in here, I do. Beside him is the Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney-General, the Honourable Freundel Stuart.

I am sure you all know the gentleman beside him, at least you should, the Honourable Ronald Jones, Minister of Education. There is then the Honourable Dr. David Estwick, Minister of Economic Affairs; the Honourable Michael Lashley, Minister of Housing and Lands; the Honourable John Boyce, Minister of Transport and Works; the Honourable George Hutson, Minister of International Business.

Each Honourable Member has 30 minutes, therefore, in this Session you will not hear again from the Minister who has just spoken. There is the Honourable Steven Blackett, Minister of Community Development and Culture; the Honourable Denis Lowe, Minister of Drainage, the Environment and Water Resources; the Honourable Patrick Todd, Minister of State in the Ministry of Economic Affairs. There is Dr. the Honourable Byer-Suckoo, who is Minister of Labour; the Honourable Stephen Lashley, Minister of Family, Sports and Youth Affairs.

Of course, the Honourable Prime Minister has now joined us and has taken his rightful place at the Head of

Government. I believe essentially that says it all. Behind the Front Bench, the Bench on which the Ministers sit is what we call the Back Bench. They are all elected to Parliament and they are just assigned to sit on that Bench since Ministers sit on the Front Bench and they are not Ministers.

We have the Honourable Richard Sealy, who has now joined us, he is Minister of Tourism and the Honourable James Paul, Chairman of Committees. Essentially, when we are finished with this Session, which is the Second Reading, the Bill goes into Committee for a more itemised consideration of the various matters, that is when the Honourable James Paul, Chairman of Committees, will take control and will take us through that segment. There is the Honourable Kenneth Best. He is the Deputy Speaker, so essentially on those very odd occasions when I am unavailable, he takes control, and the Honourable Mr. Adriel Brathwaite.

These Members you see at this Table, the Clerks of Parliament, they are very important gentlemen. They take care of all the paper work, organising things. They are also fountains of knowledge and experience when it comes to what we do here. Therefore, if you see me whispering once or twice during the course of this Sitting, you will know that I am checking out something, just to make sure that we get things right. Of course, you probably cannot see the Marshals of the House. They are Mr. Jones and Mr. Lewis, who will assist us essentially.

I think that is it for the most part. We are considering the Appropriation Bill, which, in a nutshell, is Government's Estimates of the money it intends to spend over the new financial year and essentially how Government is going to get this money. Basically, that is it. I want to welcome you here. I am very happy to see the pupils. I think it is very important that you familiarise yourselves with what goes on here and who knows, within another 20 years, more than likely one of you may be sitting in this Honourable Chamber representing us. The Honourable Member now entering is the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, Miss Cynthia Forde.

Honourable Members, I think that covers it, let us proceed. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, of course, your words of encouragement to the youth of Barbados is extremely welcoming and all of those who shepherd them through the educational journey, which is provided by the people of Barbados, is extremely important.

I too, even though on the Floor we should not be seen to be biased, I know that you will give me licence this

morning also to join you in welcoming them to the Visitors Gallery of this Honourable House.

MRr. SPEAKER: You will get no extra time though.

Hon. R. D. JONES: I know, of course, when you took the opportunity to welcome them, you spoke at some length and I know that you will not take that time away from me. It was your opportunity to speak and I will, therefore, have my full 35 minutes.

I want, at the outset, to compliment the Prime Minister and all of my colleagues who have spoken thus far. The Prime Minister laid out for the country Barbados the Appropriation Bill and the general contents of Estimates are attached to that Appropriation Bill.

During the course of the last two days, we found expression in the words of Honourable Members on This Side, who truly understand the difficulties that this country is undergoing at this time and have sought to put in place solutions which will ensure that this country emerges successfully out of these most difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say though, particularly to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Democratic Labour Party from which this Government comes, the people of Barbados, on January 15, 2008, said quite loudly they would like a new Government and then those elected said we will put the Honourable Member for St. John as the Leader of that Government. Sir, the people resile confidence in the 20 of us and then we resile that confidence in the Honourable Member for St. John to lead this Party, this Government and this country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to him and I want to use words which come from Ephesians Chapter 6, verses 10 to 17.

10.50 a.m.

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Hon. R.D. JONES: I know there are a lot of persons sometimes who do not believe that persons who are called politicians should quote from the Bible. Sir, but all of us, I can speak for myself, spend so many years in the Church wrapped and embraced in the words of the Christian faith, that we too must have the right to quote from the good book.

I do not retreat or surrender to those who believe that I should not have the right to quote from the good book. Therefore, I want to say to the Prime Minister and, by extension, to all the Members of this House, but more particularly from This Side and, Sir, I quote:

“Be strong in the Lord in his mighty power.

Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes for our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.

Therefore, put on the full armour of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything to stand, stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breast plate of righteousness in place and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.”

In addition to all this, “take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil ones.

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.”

Mr. Speaker, I think that those words in these most difficult times should be wrapped around each and every one of us because we face dark times, we face difficult times, we face difficult economic times and we face difficult social times with this country. In truth and in fact, I have heard you speak before, Mr. Prime Minister, about Barbados being not only an economy but that Barbados also being a society.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not want this morning to speak about all the economic theories and all the economic arguments and debate because that will always have its time but I intend this morning to touch a few issues relative to economics, but more spend my time about Barbados being a society because that is so important to all.

I do not want also to be caught up in what I call the political insanity of partisan, political divide, of partisan political harangue of someone postering that they know it all. Sir, even though they had 14 years to prove they knew it all, they never knew it all. Sir, that is why the people of Barbados said that they know they did not know it all, so give someone a chance to lead us. Therefore, take a back seat; take the second position because that is important.

Mr. Speaker, the behaviours I saw manifested over the last two days, maybe outside of a few filtered words by the Honourable Member for St. Peter and the Honourable Member St. James North, because they too now have come to salvation because they are bred within the behaviours of That Side. I am glad that these young people did not come to this Chamber on Monday to see the behaviour of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East who spoke for nearly four hours and when you distilled her speech you

did not find any saving words for the people of Barbados. Yet, those individuals want to profess that they want to lead the people of Barbados in a few years’ time.

Sir, I want to say to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East that when you plant the wind, you will surely reap the whirlwind. Sir, all of those who line up behind her, arms wrapped around her waist in a straight line, they too will fall as the whirlwind blows all of them down. Mr. Speaker, those who truly care about Barbados disengage and disengage now because that will say that you care about this great country.

Mr. Speaker, I wrote two words that the Honourable Member for St. George South used, when she spoke this morning but I will speak now to what she referred to as “political stubbornness”. I must compliment the Honourable Member on the connection of those two words because that is what you see imbedded on the Other Side, the political stubbornness, this dinosaurial attachment that says they know it all, and that they are the only ones who can do it, but when the people of Barbados took them to the test, they found them wanting and said to them by their democratic rights and their democratic pursuits that they did not want them anymore.

Therefore, you must recognise that and to bury your heads in the sand and to cast your lower extremities up into the faces of the people should be cast aside and dismissed because people want to see your face. They do not want to see the parts below your waist because it is an insult to the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, they have become great machinators, if I can use any of the coined words of the Honourable Member for Christ Church South. They are involved in machination and they are involved in planting the fear factor in the mind of Barbadians so you know what they do, they mention the devil, the IMF and they mention the World Bank. That is what they do because the picture that is embedded in the minds of the people relative to these institutions is one of morbid fear.

Sir, we exploit people’s mind and their sensitivities and their sensibilities by saying that the bright young men and women of this country, who have gained the best education that this country can offer cannot sit and create, with the guidance of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, or the Senator in the Other Place, medium-term strategies for Barbados, that there has to be a prescription that had to be written by the IMF.

Mr. Speaker, we are not on This Side lovers of the IMF but the country is a member of the IMF because there are many programmes that they bring to many countries across the world. Sir, Barbados is not unique in that respect.

H/A60C/ 11.00 a.m. Sequence 9

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Hon. R.D. JONES: It was written in policy that the Minister of Housing will have what is called the 8 to 20 rule. Let us not forget these things. That was part of your policy. That is what they told us. They stood up here at the time and said the Minister will allocate 80 per cent of the houses in the National Housing Corporation, and the National Housing Corporation will allocate 20 per cent.

This Minister, who is busily engaged in seeking housing for the people of Barbados, must now be wrapped in the kind of words, shameful, coming from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North. If I were him, I would submit my resignation as the Representative of the working people for St. Michael North. They are the ones who struggle to find a place to live.

They are the ones who have difficulty in seeking to develop themselves. Therefore, when the Government puts in place serious social policies, inclusive of housing, he cannot create these machinations of his own mind in order to seek to persuade the public of Barbados that the Minister is actually machining the process.

Sir, beyond that, another Honourable Member from the Other Side wanted to put the same level of behaviour that they would stoop to on to the Honourable Member, that he allocates to his family. Sir, let me say, do not retreat. Do not surrender, not ever, because if they have a right, family or not, to have a piece of this rock and they can be facilitated like any of the citizens of Barbados, they too must be facilitated.

Why should a Member of Parliament be kept out in the dark because the Member is a Member of this Honourable House? We are not involved in the kind of behaviour which would put others out and only elevate their own. That is not This Side. If it were, I would not be sitting among these colleagues. I do not follow straight lines with anybody.

Sir, you have to be speaking the same tune and dancing the same dance that I am dancing, and if you do, then I am in full support. I have no reason whatsoever to be critical of any of my colleagues thus far, for if I am they know that fire will be placed on their heads and on their feet as well. Sir, I beg no favours, fear no hate. That is my position.

Sir, I return to the fear factor, the exploitation of the vulnerability of our people at this time. That is what they are known for, be clear of devaluation, massive layoffs, persons losing their homes and families broken up. This was part of the prescription of the International Monetary

Fund, unintended consequences but the devil is present in the policy, so these things emerge as a result of this, the pauperisation of people.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party demonstrated in the 1990s that we do not bend down to graven images. We fought for Barbados and we did it successfully. Minister of Finance and Prime Minister please take a bow. You were on the front line. I was there at another time wearing another hat. We might not have been the greatest friends then, but we respected each other relative to the survival of Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. R.D. JONES: I would not say now that we are the greatest friends, that might be for the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Asides.

Hon. R.D. JONES: You were there. I remember calling you on many times, even though I was in Another Place.

Sir, as we build social institutions, this is where I take my direct leap into the whole emotions of the society. This Government has always been part of some issues borrowed by the Other Side in the past. They are jealous now as we have returned to our mainstream base in Government.

The issue of National Camps. National Camps were, in fact, developed by the Democratic Labour Party around 1991/1992, and we have returned that to its base. We have taken it further. We said that we have had the volunteers. By and large the people are still volunteers. All you are saying to them is, I will provide a stipend of \$150 a week to those young people who are in the fourth and fifth forms and the University of the West Indies, BCC, SJPP and other parts of our community, to be able to get to and from camp without drawing on their own family resources, or their resources. What is wrong with that?

What is wrong with saying to the Camp Coordinator, here is \$250, which by and large some of them use to help facilitate the camp because \$6 million is not enough. What is wrong, when you bring 14 000 young people to the various locations across this country and you say to their parents go on to work, be productive, we will take care of your children. We will give them a meal and we will give them a snack. What is wrong with that?

Sir, a mere \$6 million! A lot more than that was wasted by the Barbados Labour Party Government in whimsical schemes, in foolish arrogant behaviour. What was wrong with that? No retreat, no surrender. I want to

say to the new Minister of Youth, Family and Sports not to listen to them. They will seek to surreptitiously obtain your files. Keep your eyes wide open. They will seek to surreptitiously obtain your files, but keep your eyes wide open.

Sir, school transport - They talked about reduction from \$11 million, just around \$6 million, but experience has shown us over the two years that students using the public transport service, the allocation does not go past \$7 million. It does not go past \$5.7 million. Therefore, we made the adjustment. Why keep putting \$11 million in our Estimates when it does not go past \$5.7 million? On many occasions I have had to ask my Finance Officer to please check with the Transport Board to see if it is true. Do you understand? Even though the buses are made of steel, we are not going to be involved in steel. We are not engineers. We are not moulders of that metal.

Constituency Councils- These are social and governance initiatives. The country is a society as well. There must be instruments of governance, down to even the lowest level. Therefore, why quarrel? Why get yourself embedded in political stubbornness? Do you know what it is? Jealousy. That is what it is, because no great ideas can emanate from This Side.

Sir, they used to call us wild boys, doom squad, and they want to implant that in the minds of Barbadians. Barbadians know better. We have great people in this country, great Barbadians who use their intellect to shy away and move away from that level of behaviour.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you still addressing the Chair?

Hon. R.D. JONES: Sir, I have never yet stopped addressing the Chair. The Constituency Councils are important aspects of the new methodology of governance where you take it to the heart of the people.

Asides.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Where they interact and interface with the people, adding to the work of all Honourable Members of Parliament because we know we cannot do it alone. Yes, we have strength and fortitude but our time tends to be limited in the various pursuits of governance as well. That is why the abandoned Primary Schools' Committees will be resuscitated in a few weeks. There must be local governance as well for schools and education.

Sir, these initiatives flow out of the hearts and heads of great men and women on This Side. It cannot be stifled.

The Honourable Member for St. George South talked about the crucible. I want to add a word to it, the national crucible.

HA60C 11.10 a.m. Sequence 10

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Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 11, 11.10 a.m.

Hon. R.D. JONES: This is a time of fundamental contestation in this country and as leaders, we have to chart the path of change. If we retreat, it is all over. There is a mad scramble for the hearts and minds of our youth, of our people of this country and what the Other Side should join us in doing is to talk about the encouragement of a nation, talk about the encouragement of our people.

Sir, that is what we want, a people who feel the external or international pressures coming down on them, calling for greater levels of productivity, Mr. Speaker, a greater work ethic, that is what made this country strong, emerging out of the dark days of slavery and this is what will make us more competitive. I do not understand at all.

I do not know why we have this political insanity emanating from the Other Side. We have to speak of more innovation and creativity, bringing out the latent talents of our people. This is what we need. I do not understand what they are talking about. I am perplexed and dumbfounded that at this time in the 21st Century, you are having this kind of dinosaurian behaviour that Barbadians are up to the biggest person who could buy or sell them, either with words or money. No. The people must reject that. We must have greater collaboration among the state and non state actors.

This Democratic Labour Party knows how to work with a social partnership. We developed it, thinking then, greater thinking now and we must get greater governance models. I want us to dismiss that behaviour and that attitude. I said earlier that we are also in a point of change and it is a change that is impacting fundamentally on our young people, from the cradle to the many ages that we characterise our young people.

Today, it is unfortunate that there are individuals who want to accentuate the anti establishment hero. There are heroes at many levels but there are persons who want to accentuate the anti establishment hero, who want to put up on the pedestal the rude boy, bad boy behaviour, that kind of effect and to say to our young people, that is your hero there. Admire him, admire her but we who have been led to govern, we who have been moved to govern must stand up like men and women, no retreat, no surrender.

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

Hon. R.D. JONES: Thank you, Sir, I will have another time to speak.

There is this support of the one who challenges. There is nothing wrong with challenging but in challenging the one who destroys and disrupts, so the swagger effect is present. The trousers wearing below the knee, the buttocks exposed.

This is what we have, a fellow who can hardly walk. The young lady who pushes her upper parts up into her mouth and what are we talking about? You mean that we must import the negatives? We must import South Central Los Angeles into Barbados? The crips and the bloods? We must import Tiverley Gardens and the Ghetto slums of Jamaica into Barbados and place them squarely in our front yards? No.

I ask no one to support me on this. I stand in the middle because it must not be allowed to happen. Barbados is a society, it is a culture and unless we stand up like bulwarks against the penetration of everything, then we will have nothing for ourselves. I will not be able to relate to my grandchildren. God bless my children. I hope they continue to go on the straight and narrow path, those of my seed and those that I have embraced as God's children. You will decide how many they are on both sides of the camp.

We are in a fight for the minds and hearts of our young people. We cannot give it up. We cannot give it up in our schools. We cannot give it up in our communities. We cannot give it up in our night clubs. We cannot give it up in our cinemas or theatres, wherever. We cannot abandon it to our radio stations, those who want to commercialise everything in our lives, so you bring the dumbest person to play music because that is his talent.

There is nothing wrong with that but at the end of the day, it must be a right for us to hear different forms of music as well. What is wrong with exposing our young people to the beauty of orchestras from our schools? What is wrong with bringing back our big bands of the 1960s and 1970s to hear them play beautiful music?

We cannot continue to get one single dose of music in this country. I do not understand why we should be using to catapult before our young people, those who have gone through criminal acts and criminal behaviour, and say to them that they are now heroes. Our heroes must be the ones who are cut in our own image, believe you me.

Asides.

Hon. R.C. JONES: The ones who are cut in our own image must be our heroes, not those that are pelted on us and that we must succumb and say, oh, you are our saviour. I reject that, no retreat, no surrender. This indoctrination by a new element - I am talking about society, people will always grow canes and try to sell them and always try to import a tourist.

These things will happen but when the society is destroyed, we turn back and what do we see? We are turned into a pillar of salt. This is what happens and the Sodom and Gomorrah that are being read by all of those who mean well but do not understand what they are doing and what they are saying, when all of us look back, we will turn into pillars of salt, all of us and not only one, as according to the Bible.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that some time during the Estimates Debate when we go into Committee, we might encounter education. I have a lot to say about that, but before I conclude, I want to speak about university education. A lot of debate emerged in this country about the support of this Government for university education. I want to say now that this Government will never retreat from the provision of university education for the people of Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Sir, if I agree with one thing said by the Honourable Member for St. Peter yesterday it is that I agree with him when he stated I cannot see a substantive economy without the right fundamentals, bred by human resource development, on its foundation laid by education, particularly tertiary level education, buttressed by deep and sustainable research to help push the kinds of areas we are speaking about in the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Empowerment and Innovation, led by two great men of this Party, support the financial initiatives of this country. Therefore it is known by the Other Side that every Estimates, the full amount for the University is never implanted.

I have been in this House about six years now and that has always been the case. Every time it came when I was on the Other Side, it was supported, \$60 million, \$50 million, \$48 million, according to the billing by the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus, and that too will be the case this year. Again, the scare tactics and the fear factor saying to the young people because they want to reap them.

Asides.

Hon. R.D. JONES: We did that a month or so ago and I have all the documentation and information. We have been working well with the University of the West Indies

Cave Hill Campus. In truth and in fact, it was the Democratic Labour Party - do not let us forget our history - under the leadership of the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow who said that Barbados must have a campus of the University of the West Indies, to help develop this great country.

Asides.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Do you think we are going to abandon it now?

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 10, 11:20:14

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Hon. R. D. JONES: I want to say to all, Mr. Speaker, as you point to your microphone, as you look as though you want to speak, that the young people from Christ Church Girls' School; Milton Lynch School; Deacons Primary; Eagle Hall Primary; St. Martin's/Mangrove Primary; Reynold Weekes Primary; Arthur Smith Primary; St. John Primary; Society Primary; and St. Margaret's; and all of the young people of Barbados must know, as they look towards the horizon and as they make their educational journey, that there would be no burden placed on them as individual families, but that we all would subscribe to their education in a collective way.

Mr. Speaker, I support the efforts of the Prime Minister and this Government. I support the work of the Democratic Labour Party. I support Barbados rising to the call, rising to the challenge and to continue to transform this great nation. Barbados is more than an economy, it is also a society.

I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

The Honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to associate myself with my colleagues in this debate on the Appropriation Bill, which lays the foundation for debate on the Annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the fiscal year 2010-2011.

Mr. Speaker, it is not without significance that this debate is called the Estimates Debate because it is not only about the grants and supplies that would be made by Parliament to individual Government Departments. The word "Estimates" means precisely what it says. Estimates are not actuals. Estimates are no more than approximate judgments. Sometimes you estimate and you estimate more than is required, and sometimes you estimate less than is required. That is what estimates are about.

Sir, when the Government came under attack yesterday for underestimating, I could not understand the argument, because an estimate is just an approximate judgment. It is an opinion based on the information before the person doing the estimating at the time. This is what this debate is about. It was a little disingenuous, I think, to conduct this debate in circumstances where all that was being said by the Other Side was being taken away from the context in which a debate of this kind has to take place in the year 2010.

Mr. Speaker, it is common knowledge that the world is going through the worst crisis it has known in about 100 years. What is called the "Great Depression", which started around 1929, was not being called the Great Depression while it was going on, it was only called the Great Depression on the basis of hindsight. People living through that period were experiencing hardships that in many respects they did not understand but with which they had to grapple.

Similarly today, people are going through inexplicable hardships as a result of what has taken place in some of the larger economies of the world. When the so-called Great Depression happened, Barbados was a colony and all of the English-speaking Caribbean countries were colonies and all of the English-speaking colonies of the United Kingdom, both in the Caribbean and Africa, had therefore the protection of their mother country, and did not have to worry directly about what was taking place in the world around them. The mother country looked after them.

This crisis though requires all of those former colonies to look these hardships directly in the face and to come up with solutions to the challenges posed by their citizens, whether here in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia or even in Latin America.

The crisis, Mr. Speaker, is of unprecedented scale. More people are being directly affected by the crisis now than were affected in 1929 or 1930 when the Great Depression happened. That is an incontestable fact. As a result of that, it is necessary for us to zero in on what the Government, in response to this crisis, has been trying to do here in Barbados.

Last year, in the month of January, a new President was inaugurated in the United States of America. In January last year when President Obama was taking the oath of office, 750 000 Americans were losing their jobs. That had been happening in the months leading up to the inauguration and it happened a few months after the inauguration. That is the scale of the crisis.

In the United Kingdom, hundreds of thousands of people were also losing their jobs. In Canada, there was some contraction. Canada was not affected in exactly the

same way as were Britain and the United States of America, but affected nevertheless.

Mr. Speaker, as was indicated yesterday by the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, and as was indicated on Monday by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, it is from the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada that our foreign exchange earners here in Barbados depend for their patronage.

It is from the United Kingdom that we get the largest number of tourists that we get in this economy. It is from the United States of America that we get the second largest number of tourists that we get in this economy. It is from the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada that we get much of our foreign investment and much of the international business which sustains our foreign exchange earnings.

Mr. Speaker, if people in Britain are losing their jobs; if people in the United States of America are losing their jobs; if people in both countries are losing both their jobs and their homes; and if there is a slow-down in Canada; how can anybody in Barbados be telling the people of Barbados that we cannot link what is happening abroad to what we have to do here, that it is the fault of the Minister of Finance of Barbados what we are going through here in Barbados today?

Mr. Speaker, I sat and listened to the Honourable Member for St. John on Monday as he delivered the Second Reading speech on this Appropriation Bill. It was as good a speech as one will ever hear in this Parliament. It was fitted to the purpose. It was relevant. It was insightful and it painted a picture that connected world reality to local need.

House A60C Sequence 12

11.30 a.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, unless this debate is put into some kind of context, the Opposition is being disingenuous. It is not enough to behave like arithmeticians and to talk about how much money was voted last year and how much is being voted this year and what was the size of the cut. Sir, you cannot conduct an ordinary debate in an extraordinary environment.

Mr. Speaker, the environment in which we are operating in Barbados today in the Caribbean and in the world is an extraordinary environment and, therefore, to conduct the debate as though nothing is happening anywhere else that impacts on us here, that we are like so

many Robinson Crusoes on our own little island, touching no one and no one touching us, is really to strain credulity and, of course, to insult the intelligence of Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, mercifully, the people of Barbados do not have to rely on politicians to tell them what is going on in the world. There was a time, in my lifetime, when people in the parish in which I have lived my whole life, St. Philip - which would have been true of every other parish in Barbados - had to wait on a politician to come to tell them what was going on in the world. Today, the housewife learns what is going on in the world at the same time as any Minister of Government does, because in her house is a radio, and a television which keep her linked to the world right through the day. The average housewife heard of Margaret Thatcher's fall in 1990 or whenever it was, at the same time as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Barbados.

The average housewife learns of what is going on, learns of the latest suicide bombing in Pakistan at the same time as any Foreign Minister in the Caribbean. The average housewife learns of unemployment figures in Britain at the same time as any school teacher, university graduate or politician anywhere in the Caribbean. The information and communication revolution that has enveloped the world has taken care of all of that.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados do not need the Democratic Labour Party nor the Barbados Labour Party to tell them what is going on in the world. Where they need us is to provide an honest interpretation of the information that is now so commonly available.

Mr. Speaker, for the whole of last year and the year before, the present Prime Minister of Britain was exhorting the British people to do like him and to spend their holidays at home. That is a challenge that a Minister of Tourism in Barbados has to confront and we cannot pretend that it is not happening. That is not something surreal or fictional. That is a reality that Prime Minister Gordon Brown was telling the British people in 2008 and in 2009.

He was saying to them, we are in trouble, take the example being provided by your Prime Minister, spend your holidays at home rather than go abroad. Sir, Britain is our largest tourist market. Therefore, how could anybody in a Parliament that lays any claim to legitimacy or sanity come into this Honourable Chamber and suggest that what is going on in the world does not affect us here?

"O judgment! thou are fled to brutish beasts,

And men have lost their reason."

Mr. Speaker, I listened yesterday with amused interest to the speech delivered by the Honourable Member

for St. Peter. Sir, I was amused because throughout the speech the Honourable Member was saying that we have to create a modern economy in Barbados. I really thought, based on all that I was hearing for the last 14 years or for the 14 years between 1994 and 2008, that the modern economy had already been created.

I did not know that it was still awaiting creation because everything we were being told suggested that earthshaking changes were taking place in the economy of Barbados and that the most modern economy Barbados had ever had, had been already created by the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, marvelous to relate, yesterday I sat and listened to the Honourable Member saying that we now have to create a modern economy in Barbados. Sir, this is after three full terms, with three two-third majorities, and with the largest revenue yield available to any Government since 1627, when Barbados was settled, and we are still waiting for the modern economy. Mr. Speaker, that was not all. The Honourable Member for St. Peter, who was followed faithfully by the arch follower on the Other Side, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph...

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: No, those books confused him.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter committed the remarkable distortion of the Honourable Prime Minister's statement by suggesting that we in the Democratic Labour Party are saying that economic matters are not important, that only social matters are important. Sir, I got to my feet yesterday in this Honourable Chamber to correct that misrepresentation.

The Honourable Prime Minister did not say the economy was not important. He has never said that the economy was not important. In fact, from 1996, in a by-election in St. Michael North West, the present Prime Minister and I were expressing our misgivings about the direction in which the Government of Barbados was taking, in behaving as though Barbados was only an economy and not a society. Sir, this is nothing new. We now have a chance to put it right, but we were expressing our concerns as far back as 1996.

Sir, I will explain. The Honourable Prime Minister did not say anything about social engineering because most of the social engineering that needed to be done in Barbados was already done by the Democratic Labour Party. Therefore, we do not have to reinvent the wheel in terms of social engineering in Barbados. That has already

happened but we are concerned about the direction in which this society is taking, in terms of its values, its priorities, its emphases.

Sir, that has to do with the fact that for the 14-year period, between 1994 and 2008, we had a Government of Barbados which spoke to people's pockets but did not speak to their souls. We had a Government that defined success in terms of material acquisitions but cared nothing at all about any emphasis on what kind of citizens we created in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I had to deal with this in the Other Place when I sat there, when I heard proud and glib boasts about how well Barbados was doing because school children had three and four cellars, about how many cellars could be found in one house, about how many houses had cars and that kind of thing. I heard all these arguments from a Government that spoke to people's pockets but never spoke to their souls.

Mr. Speaker, none of this should surprise any of us because within the first six months of the previous Government coming to office, the then Prime Minister was asked what was his vision for Barbados.

11.40 a.m.

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Hon. F. J. STUART: He made clear that his vision for Barbados was to see a car parked outside of every house. Sir, that was the extent of the vision of the Barbados Labour Party for this country. Why is this Prime Minister to be condemned if he has a vision that locates himself in saying that we create the best citizens in this country, people who have opportunities at their disposal to realise whatever potential they have in whatever areas they want to realise it? Sir, what can be wrong with that?

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing new about this emphasis of economy versus this emphasis on society. Sir, anybody who understands Barbadian history well understands that this year represents the 383rd year of Barbados' settlement.

It has been 383 years since the settlement in 1627 and, for the better part of that settlement period, Barbados was an economy concerned only with how much sugar we produced, concerned only with what was the price of sugar being fetched on the world market and, of course, in those days, we had full employment in Barbados because the only period in West Indian history when we have ever had full employment was during the days of slavery.

Mr. Speaker, we have always had full employment in Barbados during the days of slavery, but the enslaved population was not benefitting from the price of sugar and it was not they who were enjoying the posh lifestyles. Sir, they were not able to leave Barbados and go and luxuriate in any Metropolitan capital. They did not have any family structures here. There were no schools here. We had prisons but we had no schools. Sir, Barbados was an economy then and, Sir, for the better part of our history, we have been an economy.

Mr. Speaker, since the creation of modern, mass political parties and trade unions, the emphasis in this country shifted from an economy to creating a society of which all of our people could feel a part and the Democratic Labour Party had made no small contribution to that effort and to that emphasis, so let us be very clear.

Mr. Speaker, what has concerned us is that when we thought that battle was substantially the way and that it would have been continued by the Barbados Labour Party over the last period they were in Government between 1994 and 2008, we saw a reversion to those old planter attitudes that basically said, as long as a man has money in his pocket, as long as a household has some cell phones and as long as a man can drive a car, that all is well with the world.

Mr. Speaker, it does not matter whether that same man who has the car is a good father, it does not matter how he came by the money to buy the car, it does not matter what kind of attitude he develops to his colleagues at work, as long as he could show that he had acquired materially, according to the Barbados Labour Party, their vision of the future was being realised.

Mr. Speaker, we take exception to that approach and the Democratic Labour Party is committed to the pursuit of the development of a genuine society in Barbados resting on a solid and well-managed economy. Let us get that clear. There is going to be no resiling from that and no attempt at distorting our approach will divert us from our course. Sir, that is why, as the Honourable Member for St. James North quite correctly observed yesterday, there are quite a few things worrying people in Barbados in the year 2010.

He touched on the ones that served his purposes but there are many other things that are worrying the people of Barbados today. Yes, the economy is worrying them. We know why and the Government is spending its energy ensuring that things do not spin out of hand.

This year's Estimates show that the Government is running a large deficit, but that is precisely what we have to do in circumstances like the present circumstances if we are to keep people at work and if we are to continue to

provide the level of social services the provision of which this Government has always emphasised.

Mr. Speaker, I took up an article sometime last month written by one of the leading economists in the United States of America. I think I said last Sunday I think that I am surprised he is not a Nobel laureate yet but I am sure he will get there. I speak of the economist Jeffrey Saks who paid a visit to Barbados some years as well. Sir, the article was entitled "How to tame the fiscal deficit". Sir, it was a well-written piece but when you got all of the charm of Jeffrey Saks' writing, and the beauty of his analyses, it came down to two points. You either have to raise revenue or reduce expenditure.

Of course, he went on to say that you can borrow, which we have indicated that we will have to do as well. Sir, that is in the United States of America. Mr. Speaker, I find the Opposition disingenuous on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, there was a recession in the world in 1981. The Barbados Labour Party was in office and we went to the International Monetary Fund. Sir, the letters "IMF" are not bad words. The Democratic Labour Party carried this country into Independence and it was the Democratic Labour Party that joined Barbados, as it were, to the International Monetary Fund, so we are not ashamed of the IMF.

We demonstrated in 1991 that the IMF cannot rule Barbados. Sir, they can come and they do their Article IV Consultation and they can make what recommendations they like but, when all is said and done, the elective representatives of the people of Barbados will decide what policies are pursued here in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we had this recession in 1981 and there was a recession again in 1991. Sir, when one sits down to read the literature nowadays, one is amazed that in 1991, and between 1991 and 1994, one scarcely heard the word "recession", but one heard the word "Sandiford". It was as if he was the big, bad wolf who had created all the problems that Barbados was facing, but when one sits back soberly now and reads all the literature, it emerges that there was a crippling international recession in the world between 1991 and 1993 or so. Mr. Speaker, the IMF came down and, as I just said, they made their recommendations but the Government of Barbados decided what was best for Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, in the year 2001, ten years later, there was another international recession, but the Barbados Labour Party was in office. Sir, I listened to all the talk about deficit.

H/A60C/11:50 Sequence 14

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Hon. F.J. STUART: As a result of that recession, the people of Barbados were introduced to a new phrase in the Barbados Labour Party's economic vocabulary, not a phrase that is original to them, but it is certainly a phrase that they were using for the first time, that they were introducing counter-cyclical policies and those counter-cyclical policies involved the running of a larger than usual deficit.

Sir, that was in a recession that was born of what had happened to the Twin Towers in New York when people decided that it was not safe to travel and so on, and, of course, since the United Kingdom and the United States were in this grand alliance, this whole Trans Atlantic alliance, the British people felt as threatened as the Americans and travel was done.

Sir, that is when the Best of Barbados Programme was introduced by the local authorities here. The point is, the Barbados Labour Party ran a larger than usual fiscal deficit to respond to that, a security threat that basically gave rise to a recession.

Now, there is nothing wrong when the Barbados Labour Party is in office pursuing counter-cyclical policies. There is everything wrong if the Democratic Labour Party is in office and we decide, in the worst crisis that the world has had to face in the last 100 years, to run a larger than usual deficit. Everything is wrong with that. It is only right when it happens over there, but if it had to happen with the Democratic Labour Party in office, somehow it becomes wrong, because, of course, all wisdom resides in the Barbados Labour Party.

We heard for the full duration of their term in Government that they had the best economy. All of a sudden the Governor of the Central Bank knows no economics. None of the advisers around the Prime Minister understand economics. They cannot right a medium-term strategy plan for Government because their International Monetary Fund teachers have to be around to guide them.

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

Hon. F.J. STUART: The best economist to be found anywhere in all the economic wisdom resides in the Barbados Labour Party, but that is a fact that escaped the notice of the people of Barbados in the month of January 2008. I do not know that people vote against a Government when they like it. I do not know that it is experienced anywhere that people vote against a Government when they like it. Everything imaginable had gone wrong in Barbados by January 2008, and the people of Barbados realised, as the Democratic Labour Party was saying around the year

2004, that we have passed through a decade of deception and, of course, we were on our way to a second decade of deception, and the people stopped it.

All the economic talk that we were hearing about, this economy ended up with the same indicators. The only saving grace, of course, that some of them were worse, but the same indicators that were bequeathed to the Barbados Labour Party in 1994, when they took up office.

Sir, the indicators that they said were so bad in 1994, and that justified a change of Government, with all the great economic wisdom at their disposal, they bequeathed to us in 2008. The only difference, of course, was that the international debt had doubled. Whereas we handed them a current account surplus on the balance of payments, they have handed us back a deficit. That is the only difference, but otherwise the indicators all showed the poorest possible signs after three terms, three two-third majorities, and the largest revenue yield available to any Government of Barbados since 1627.

Sir, that is the context within which these Estimates have to be analysed and evaluated. They are not as the Honourable Member for St. Joseph would have had us to believe, yesterday, a simple arithmetical exercise. The Honourable Minister of Labour, this morning, made the point that if you are pursuing efficiency, you have to look to see how money is being spent, and you have to justify allocations in terms of ensuring that efficiency is realised.

The fact that something is cut does not mean that the quality of the service is going to be reduced. We have had to take a close hard look at allocations made over the years by successive Governments to Government Departments. The whole process has become quite mechanical. You asked for \$3 million last year, so this is a new year, add on another million, without any reference at all to the quality of the programmes that are being provided to the people of Barbados. As I said at the beginning of my speech, these are Estimates. These are not actuals.

If during the course of the financial year it emerges that we need to come back to Parliament to supplement the Estimates, we will do that. After all that is part of the process that we operate, but to come into this Chamber and to give the impression, and to accuse a Government of underestimating, as though to estimate is to state a fact. To estimate is only to exercise an approximate judgment, and that is what we have done in these Estimates.

Sir, I commend them, therefore, to the House. I applaud the Honourable Prime Minister and his team for the wisdom and insight that have given rise to these Estimates. I am sure, and the people of Barbados can be assured, that the Government will maintain its vigilance, not only in respect to what is happening here in Barbados

but will be like a sensitive seismograph registering every fluctuation taking place in the international economy to ensure that we respond in timely fashion to what changes we need to respond to, so that we can lead the people to the promised land.

Barbados is not just an economy. It is a society and to the pursuit in creating a just society in Barbados, the Democratic Labour Party is the irrevocably committed.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Prime Minister.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking all Honourable Members who participated in this debate, particularly the Members on This Side who were extremely frank. I started by thanking all Honourable Members. I am saying particularly the Members on This Side, because I thought the contributions they made were focussed on the challenge that we face, and focussed on the strategies that this Government has outlined as being relevant to this particular crisis in Barbados.

Sir, in my address to the nation a few days ago, I commended Barbadians for their positive response to my call for the adoption of positive attitudes in tackling the social and economic challenges that face our nation. I remain heartened by the response of the social partners in particular, notwithstanding the persistent pessimism of some, primarily the hotel and tourism sector.

HA60C 12:00 noon. Sequence 15

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Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 16, 12:00 noon

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I am generally satisfied that Barbadians have firmly resolved that it is their intention to make Barbados work. They are not daunted and they are not alarmed, despite the attempts by others to alarm them and they are not oblivious to the seriousness of the challenges that beset us. In my view, Barbadians are up to the fight.

Sir, this is why I remain optimistic and confident and I will continue to confide in the people of Barbados and to rely on them to work with this Administration to navigate this country through the maze of economic hurdles that we have to traverse.

It is for that reason, Mr. Speaker, that I take very seriously the advice which was given to this Honourable House, to the Government and to the country as a whole by the Honourable Member for St. Peter and to a lesser extent,

the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East during the course of this debate.

Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to walk away from public life having not sold the patrimony or the birthright of Barbados and Barbadians.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: In the Honourable Member for St. Peter's comments yesterday, he started off with his usual line that whatever debate he speaks in will become to be known by future generations as the most serious debate or most important debate that has ever occurred in the Parliament's history. It is the only time you hear it, when he participates in a debate. Those are his stock and trade opening remarks.

Last Estimates it was that. This debate will forever be known as the most important debate in our economic history. Then, he came in the Budget and he said I am only entering this debate because future generations will come to understand how significant this debate was and then yesterday, he started by saying again, not with any reluctance, because he was very forthright in his advice and I thank him for being so clear and pellucid, in giving that advice because it is this that is the point of departure.

The reason this debate is historically important is first of all because I want to say to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East that whether you run a fiscal deficit, or the size of your fiscal deficit is not a philosophical issue, it is an arithmetical issue.

Sir, when I constantly hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East at the consultation, and yesterday saying that we have a fundamental philosophical difference, in relation to the size of the deficit, this cannot be, to my mind, a point of any philosophical argument.

In the course of a fiscal year, your finances may improve and you may end up with a surplus. What are you going to do, say that well I am philosophically opposed to a surplus, so let me lick out the money and run up a deficit? In some circumstances your deficit may end up being higher. What you are going to do, say that you are going to run down the country, simply to get the deficit to an appropriate level? This is not a point of philosophical difference, unless I do not understand the word, "philosophy". You run a fiscal deficit in an economy like this when you have to. If we had the luxury of surpluses like Trinidad, we would not be having this debate.

Trinidad made in this fiscal year, a fiscal correction of the order of 40 per cent, put up land taxes and all kinds of things like that but, in addition to that, drew down on the surpluses that it had run in previous years. We do not have

an economy that is similar to the Trinidadian economy. There is no philosophical difference on that point that is arithmetical.

We have advisors who tell us during the course of the year, these are the circumstances that you are grappling with and this dancing on a pinhead over the size of your fiscal deficit, and there are a lot of people who get great intellectual organisms out of talking about that kind of thing.

I am saying that we are very much victims of international circumstances in Barbados and we know that, Sir. This is not to say that there are things we cannot do in Barbados to orient our economy, but most of all to orient our society to success.

Yesterday, the Honourable Member for St. Peter came up with the formula that the only thing that is missing when he carries out the analysis, the only thing that is missing from Barbados' formula for success is foreign direct investment. He said that is the only thing. What is the difference between Barbados since 2007 and the Barbados that he had the 14 years, the privilege of leading, as if the people on the bus, if he got up in a bus and met a housewife and a gardener and told them your problem is foreign direct investment, they would genuinely believe that this is the heart of the challenge that they face in Barbados today? Therefore, he said when he recognised that was a problem, he alone sat down with his officials.

There is a lot of individualism on That Side. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East spoke about a lot of projects in her response but all of the projects she spoke about were in relation to the Ministry that she had when the Government lost. Invest Barbados was an exercise in self congratulation. I had all of these projects underway. If we had stayed in office, despite how the economy performed, we would have all of these arbitrators walking around Barbados. We would have turned out hundreds of people qualified in international business. We would have had the most successful Chinese Mission in the world, and somebody in the Hong Kong export promotion effort.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of Invest Barbados, one of these days I am going to bring the letter that he had to write to the Director, and the correspondence between them, and make them documents of the House to see what was really going on in Invest Barbados, but I am not going back there. I am sticking to the script.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter said that when he, as this brilliant economist, recognised that the challenge was for foreign direct investment, capital investment in our economy, that he sat down with his advisors and he worked

out a strategy to get this investment to increase. This is what he said was his strategy for 14 years of development.

Sir, when the Honourable Member for St. Peter came to office in 1994, already in place was the largest private sector investment, prior to Four Seasons, that had ever taken place in Barbados, Royal Westmoreland, and he criticised it bitterly.

There were people at Bushy Park about to start a major initiative. The Honourable Member for St. Peter was in here crying about the size of his salary how he could not pay his mortgage and all kinds of things. He was not sitting down devising any strategy. Do not mind him with that. The strategy had already been devised as part of the Government's structural adjustment effort.

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 16, 12:10:12

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Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Even if he said that he devised that strategy, how is it that every other Caribbean island benefitted from the same foreign direct investments? It was not only Barbados. St. Lucia, Anguilla, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands had massive foreign direct investment prior to the crisis. The Bahamas had the Paradise Hotels. Every economy in the Caribbean benefitted. If you go to Guyana now, you would see brand-new hotels.

Mr. Speaker, we were told that the Honourable Member for St. Peter sat with his team and came up with a brand-new strategy, no doubt the rest of them followed his strategy, because he is the leading economic thinker in the Caribbean. It had nothing to do with the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, do you know that in 2001 - I see the wry smile on the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East's face - the Honourable Member for St. Peter rushed in here and delivered a speech and said, right where I am standing, that as a result of 9/11 the other economies in the Caribbean would be basket cases and frightened us into supporting policies. All this counter-cyclical talk that you hear about now - Do you know that every other economy in the Caribbean grew and they did not follow those policies?

I am not an economist. I do not pretend to be one, have never pretended, and I do not intend to start now, despite the goadings of others who seem to think that the only discipline of any relevance is economics.

I heard somebody in this debate, who I am not going to characterise now, setting out the difference between Barbados' position in tourism and the rest of the Caribbean. What is so spectacular about that? It is true that we are

characterised as the number one developing country in the world and that Barbados has always had a well-run economy, that goes without saying.

Barbados' economy is not simply well-run because of who the Minister of Finance is. There are elements of social trust that we have that other countries do not have. There is an infrastructure. We have bright officials who can write medium-term fiscal strategies and development strategies, who have worked for successive Governments. We have had a strong Central Bank, a strong middle class, a strong private sector and generations of Barbadians. We have tolerance and respect for Law. That is what makes it up.

If the Barbados Labour Party wants to continue to characterise it in their demagogic way as the responsibility of any one individual, go and look at what has happened in the world economy. There were no basket cases between 1994 and 2007. In 2007, the Icelandic economy, which was one of the strongest in the world, collapsed almost overnight. They were about to lease some planes or something and everything fell through with Iceland.

Mr. Speaker, look at what is happening with the Greek economy. Look at economies like Hungary and Latvia that have been graduated from the World Bank and are now under International Monetary Fund programmes and back under that arrangement.

Sir, if we want to continue to believe that there is only one brain in Barbados and only one single individual who has been responsible for economic transformation, and you can roll back the hands of time, ignore Westmoreland as the most significant private sector development ever to take place. Ignore all of the other initiatives.

I gave Barbadians one statistic or one piece of information to chew on in this debate. The largest public sector investment by the Barbados Labour Party Government in 14 years was the building of a prison. When we calculate the cost of the Prison to Barbados, it will be over \$700 million. The Barbados Labour Party has not paid a cent toward the Prison, that was a bill that we had to start to pay.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the graphs in relation to our foreign reserves - the Honourable Member for St. Philip West could tell you - in January of every year, we have to look for \$30 million in one shot in management fees and interest to pay for a prison. That is the legacy that has been left. All of this talk about I am willing to pay a levy for university education - This is the man that saddled us with \$700 million in expenditure on a prison, and he now willing to pay a levy.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I note the figure already. I told you it is \$15 million. When the Barbados Labour Party was in office, in January you would see the graph in relation to the reserves going up. Every January, you suddenly see a drop like that and that is because we have to look for US\$15 million to pay for a prison that would cost the people of the country \$700 million to house 1 000 people.

There are nearly 20 000 young people in this country every year being educated and we are not spending that amount of money on them. We are paying \$700 million for 1 000 people in a prison and our university, our Community College and our Polytechnic need money and expansion. What kind of society were we building for 14 years? I am not talking about the infelicities and why those management fees are so high. That will be another matter.

Mr. Speaker, it was drawn to our attention only two weeks ago that we have to do something about it, either pay off the entire thing and get this Prison from around our necks... This is an economy that is beholdened because the largest public sector investment undertaken by that Government was the building of a Prison. Sir, Grantley Adams built the Deep Water Harbour and the Hospital. Errol Barrow built schools throughout this country. "Tom" Adams built the ABC Highway and opened up the centre of Barbados - like him or not - the Central Bank Building and a whole range of other things.

The substantial contribution of a Government that was in power for 14 years was to build a prison, and you really think that we should not be asking what kind of society we were creating in Barbados? I have to ask that question. I would have to ask my children, because my eldest daughter is 19 and she has that saddled around her neck until she reaches the age of 44. Mr. Speaker, I want to make it...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am not finished yet, do not worry, there is a lot more in that.

House A60C Sequence 17

12.20 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be arbitrarily permitting the unsightly

development of the coastlines in this country, merely to earn enough foreign direct investment to balance any budget. I want the people who have elected this Government to understand that there is a price that you pay

for development and that it is for the legitimate Government in office to determine what price we are going to pay.

Mr. Speaker, there was an impression sent abroad yesterday, a very dangerous one, that we are about to reintroduce exchange controls in Barbados. The Honourable Member for St. Peter alluded to it twice. I do not know what that has been intended to do, but there has been no discussion or proposal in relation to monetary policies, or the adjustment of any rules in relation to capital control, or any kind of foreign exchange control. That is total foolishness and it is to be rejected out of hand.

Mr. Speaker, the second theory is that when we came to office, we scared away foreign investors. Sir, every other tourism economy in the Caribbean saw the exodus of foreign investors. Sir, it was either that or unemployment. We have seen that Paradise Hotel has laid off 800 people, and that the Prime Minister of the Bahamas had to make it abundantly clear that he has given concessions and, therefore, since he has given concessions, he expects that investors would keep the hotel open and to employ Bahamians. Sir, I credit him for that.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to another vital point about this particular debate and about an issue to which I did not think we would have had to respond. Sir, truth be told, I always try to anticipate what the Opposition could say about our policies. Sir, speaker after speaker attacked the fact that we decided to celebrate with 30 homeowners in St. Philip on the acquisition of their first home.

Sir, let me tell you all something about which I feel extremely strong. Sir, we give tax concessions almost every day in this country to people who come for condominiums. If you buy a condominium for \$1.5 million, the concessions that you get on that are worth more than \$150 000. In fact, in some cases, it could be as high as \$300 000. Sir, VAT is waived, duties are waived.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You did not know that? You did not know the Act they passed, together with all the agreements with respect to all of the condominiums built in Barbados for foreign investors? Sir, foreign investors are given all of those concessions, and this Government takes up \$15 000 to celebrate with 30 Barbadians who are investing in this country and giving them a housewarming party, in economic circumstances where they may not be able to do it for themselves, and you mean to tell me that people could be criticising that?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: That means you do not like Barbadians. You go to the cocktail parties when they open up all of these condominiums. Even now that the Democratic Labour Party is in office, I go to the receptions and I see you all at them, drinking champagne and celebrating with investors, yet we have a little function in which most of the things that were provided were given free, for example, the Calypso King of this country sang at it.

Sir, every year there used to be a reception at Ilaro Court that used to cost Government \$400 000. When the Democratic Labour Party was in, it was all DEMS. When the Barbados Labour Party was in, it was all Barbados Labour Party acolytes.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, when we came to office, I said no, we cannot do it this way, let us have a purpose in it and so we changed it to around Crop Over when the Diaspora was here, so that Barbadians and non nationals should benefit. We hold our function every month at Ilaro Court for loyal visitors.

Sir, Ilaro Court does not belong to me. I do not know why there is some resentment on That Side. There is never a speech or debate in this Honourable Chamber on which Honourable Members on That Side do not talk about Ilaro Court. What is it about the place that is so fascinating? Honourable Members on That Side talk about there is a party there every week, there is this, there is that. I do not bring the parties there. The people said they want to use the place and we agreed. It belongs to the people of Barbados. The Lions' Club asked for it. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has asked for it for its staff. It was so popular there that we had to reduce it to two events per month, but it belongs to the people.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Who never criticised it? You see, you do not listen. Mr. Speaker, the first thing that was said was that it should be sold.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You did not know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North said that Ilaro Court should be sold? He only worked out that when the Democratic Labour Party got in office. He said it should be sold. It should be a hotel, and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas said every week there is a party at Ilaro Court.

Mr. Speaker, I do not like to respond to anything the Honourable Member for St. Thomas says anymore. I am

not a hypocrite and I do not use the word “friendship” loosely. I have not come to any apophysis in here. Whatever stage I was at in life, I may have improved but there is nothing that defies me on becoming Prime Minister and I do not expect that, and there are all these people who pretend in these debates that suddenly they have become defied, that they have a right to be in office.

Mr. Speaker, I was privy to a conversation once in which I heard the Honourable Member for St. Thomas saying that she cannot wait until Sunday, when she is going to take the chalice in the Church and lick it on somebody’s false teeth. I heard that with my own ears.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, I have never played any role in any Church to offer communion, or to make such comment. Sir, I would ask that those comments be struck from the record.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, there is no way I can determine whether or not the Honourable Member is telling the truth. Honourable Member, you know that.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, you have been consistent in striking from the record things that have not even come close to the allegation which has just been made against the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. The Honourable Member has said it is not true and I am therefore asking that it be struck from the record. It is not right and it is not fair and I am asking for the Chair to be fair in these matters, if not you are going to open up the floodgates.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not like the suggestion that the Chair is not being fair. In the same way yesterday you were allowed to talk about negligent suits being brought and so on, there was no way in which one could tell whether or not they were wrong, but from the time you spoke about the fact that legal action had been started, that is when I was able to take action.

I cannot take action and have things stricken off the record, simply because one Honourable Member says it is true while another Honourable Member says it is untrue. That cannot be the basis of it.

Sequence 19

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Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, Karmath was before the Courts in Trinidad, so you understand that all they attracted to this country to be involved in those projects

were a bunch of criminals. Sir, that is not unparliamentary because it is the truth.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. It may not be unparliamentary but it is misleading. The Honourable Member cannot say that all they attracted were those. If there were three people who were affected by criminality then he can say that, but there were a whole set of other people who were legitimate businessmen some of whom they are doing business with too. So let us be correct rather than trying to give a political perception that is not grounded in facts or reality. It is a hyperbole.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, let me tell you how hyperbolic it is. The two largest public sector projects that the previous Government was involved in, they negotiated with known criminals. In each case people went to prison, or the court said that they were dishonest, that they had made bribes in Jamaica. A minister in Jamaica had to resign because of receiving bribes in respect of the people connected with 3S. The people in VEGO went to prison, including the Speaker of the Assembly in Alaska.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: It is true that was a small project, but if you say two out of three big projects - it has not been awarded to anybody. You better check your facts. You are talking to the same person all the time, and that person is confusing you and confusing themselves, because they worked and the contract ended with you. They are not getting any under the Democratic Labour Party Government.

When you are at your cocktail parties you are receiving the wrong information. Sir, I do not circle in that crowd.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, is it a point of order?

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber, neither do I, but the reality is, he wants the public to believe that he is not doing business with the same people, and he needs to say who has BTII recommended to do the Marina.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, there is no need for a recommendation because I made it abundantly clear two or three months ago, when this issue blew up with all of the confusion to put everything on hold. The one thing that will not happen to this Democratic Labour Party Government and this Prime Minister is, you will not be able to make the

allegations against me, or any of my Ministers, that can be safely made against you.

I am saying that the two largest projects you entered into were entered into with known criminals, many of whom are currently behind bars. I am here battling in Barbados to try to find money to pay Barbadian subcontractors and others to try to unravel this unholy mess that we found when we came to office.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: In what way?

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, as far as I know, the entity, 3S, that built the Highway, I do not know if there is anybody in prison. I do not know the men, so I only know what he has said, because he has hidden behind the fact there is an allegation of dishonesty, but they are not behind the prison.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, if you do not know, how can you say the Honourable Member does not know? Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I do know, because I am telling you what I do know.

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

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have a right to speak on a point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat. There is no point of order.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have a right to speak on a point of order. I have not yet given the point of order. Sir, if you want to rule me out of order when I am finished, that is your right, but I have not finished making the point of order.

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

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am going to take it and get back up on a point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. Thank you. Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: The Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, he has not said anything besides "thank you, Mr. Speaker". That cannot be misleading the House.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member has misled the Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have already ruled on that point of order.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Fine, Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege now.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, there is no such thing as a point of privilege.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just a minute Honourable Members. Please, please. You may if you so desire bring a matter of privilege to this House for consideration under the relevant order of the House. I am sure if you get assistance from the Clerks at the Table they will indicate which order you may use. You cannot rise on your feet to raise a point of privilege like this.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I gave notice that I will be bringing such a motion, because a Member has a right in here to be able to finish a point of order, before he is interrupted by the Speaker, and then being told that they are out of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Member has no right to speak as she wishes.

Honourable Prime Minister please continue.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, the Members on That Side have not learnt. In December 2007, it is that kind of behaviour in here that brought down their Government. That behaviour by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and Leader of the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have made a ruling. Please move on.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Thank you very much. I will move on from there.

Sir, if undermining and threatening the water quality of Barbados by changing land from Zone 1 to Zone 2 to

facilitate foreign investment is what I am required to do to satisfy what the Honourable Member for St. Peter said is the missing link in this economy, I am not going to do it. That is what is really being recommended, investment facilitation. Do you understand what that means? The money might have flowed into Barbados in those glory days, according to the Honourable Member for St. Peter, but I can also think of several monstrosities along the West Coast that Barbados could have done without.

Sir, therefore, our development in Barbados must not only be for the satisfaction of international lending agencies and we must not be motivated only by the quest to achieve performance targets.

The development in Barbados has to be holistic and I draw equal pride in presenting the balance sheet of our fiscal situation to the Standard and Poor's and Moody's, as I do handing over keys to 30 Barbadians in Marchfield, St. Philip.

Sir, it is against that background that I have to say that ceremony may not have meant anything to Members on That Side, but I consider it to be the highpoint of my political career so far, being able to give keys to ordinary Barbadians to have a chance to own a home in this country, especially in difficult economic times.

Therefore, I want to make the point very clearly that we are not against foreign investment. We have never been against foreign investment. In fact, ideally, we will like to see a lot more foreign investment in our country.

I have sat down, through the Ministry of Finance, and there is a Member in here who is very intimately involved in the project, even though that Member is pretending that they are not involved.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: How do you know I mean you? You are very "touchous". At least we have 24 people in here today. I cannot understand it. I am not worried about what is said in here. I know what was said in St. Patrick's about the Four Seasons project.

HA60C 12.50 p.m. Sequence 20

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 21, 12.50 p.m.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I tell you that it would be the height of hypocrisy if any Honourable Member of this Chamber went on a platform and criticised a Government for entering into a mortgage or a guarantee or any other arrangement with a foreign investor, knowing that they

were working for some of the people involved in the project and drawing large fees.

It would be the height of hypocrisy and if any Member went into St. Patrick's and opposed the project, knowing that they were working for two of the principal investors in that project, it would be a crying shame.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that we went out of the way.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I do not have to deliver the speech you want me to deliver.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is seeking to mislead the House by suggesting that any one of the nine Members here on this Bench went into St. Patrick's to criticise a project, knowing full well that they were working for it.

Mr. Speaker, I have been an Attorney-at-Law for the Four Seasons project. I have not yet spoken on this project publicly but I have told the country that I am an Attorney-at-Law for it. I, like the rest of Barbados, would like to see it started back because 800 people stand to benefit, as well as US\$160 million in foreign exchange, but to suggest that is, as usual, to cast innuendo and there have been no fees because there has been no money in the project.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am unmoved by all of that altruism that does not move me. I know the people of St. Patrick's left that meeting and did not know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was going to draw large fees from the Four Seasons project. Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I do not have a difficulty in telling the public that I work for Four Seasons. I told them before the St. Patrick's meeting.

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

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: The Honourable Member needs to tell him that Thompson and Associates are still doing all the work for CLICO, even on the eve of judicial management.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of that. I do not own Thompson Associates. I sold that within 15 days of becoming Prime Minister.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: It is not even registered in my name. I had four young Attorneys that I had nurtured from the time they came out of Law School and I told them, you can have it. It is yours. I am moving on to a different phase in my life.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Declare what assets? I do not own anything down there.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I will not tolerate this cross-talk between Members like this. There is a proper way of doing it. Honourable Member, you know what the procedure is so please continue.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I agree with you, so let me make the point to you, Sir, because I know you live in that area of St. Patrick's.

If you were in your patio that night, Sir, when the Barbados Labour Party went to St. Patrick's, you would not have gone to sleep with the view that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East supported Government's intervention to save the Four Seasons Hotel.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Let me be clear now. The Honourable Member is not only misleading the House, but not only have we helped in putting the legal work together, we helped in putting a position that would protect the interest of the people of Barbados by giving them a shareholding in the company, by giving them access to a second legal mortgage and other matters that would protect the interest of the people of this country.

I have never, Mr. Speaker, spoken out against the Four Seasons project because I believe that it is critical to resuming foreign direct investment in this country. Unlike the Prime Minister I did not tell them it was going to start the next week.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I think you know the purpose of the point of order and I think you are coming to the stage where you are abusing it, please.

Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to repeat myself because I know you would cite another rule, but for clarity, anybody who attended the

Barbados Labour Party's meeting in St. Patrick's, would not have left there with a clear and unequivocal position, advanced either by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, or anybody else, that the Barbados Labour Party supported the Four Seasons project initiative by this Government.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber again. I did not speak about supporting Four Seasons. In fact, I do not even think I spoke on Four Seasons and I will make sure, Mr. Speaker, that since this is now the subject of repeated attempts by the Prime Minister that the speech will be printed, because this Prime Minister must be shown to the public for what he is, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, it was also publicised in the newspaper in Barbados that the Honourable Member for St. Peter felt that our guaranteeing the Four Seasons project, would have a negative impact on our debt profile. I said also in addition to what was said at St. Patrick's.

I am going to put it now another way. There were people who left that St. Patrick's meeting firmly of the view that the Democratic Labour Party had done two very wicked things. One was to waive the Turf Club debt and the second one was to be involved in the Four Seasons project, two positions that the Barbados Labour Party took on that night, so all of this talk now about...

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I know you are supporting it. I was really to let the House know that all you all are saying about Four Seasons, if there is one person in here who supports the project would be the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I do not benefit from it. None of you all benefit from it. There is only one person in this House, once I have signed on the dotted line, who will benefit from the Four Seasons project and that is the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Sir, when I heard again, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas lambasting us because the Four Seasons project closed down, I do not think the Member realised who stands the most to benefit from it's reopening.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: It is not the Honourable Member for St. Thomas that I say, mouth opens, story drops out. Sir, that is when you speak, without engaging what is contained in the cranium. Sir, that is the end of the Four Seasons project.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter comes in here in an altruistic mood, after having been interpreted to have said that the guarantee of the Four Seasons project would affect our debt profile, he comes in here and says to stop the free fall of the Barbados economy because remember, in the Estimates he said that the one joke that he enjoys telling about me is that a man jumped out of a 40-storey building, and when he got half way somebody looked out of a window and saw him and said something and he said, so far so good.

This year now, he is not going with the “so far so good story”. He is saying what I said since last October. The Town Planning gave me a list. The Ministry of Investment gave me a list. The Ministry of Finance gave me a list. I spent a week in London last October, the Cabinet knows about this, I met with every single approved developer from the United Kingdom of any development of significance.

I asked each of them what will it take to get your project back on track. Some were likely to do that, some frankly said we have to redesign it and we had different responses but in each case, the Ministry of Investment has been working with them to get those projects back on course.

The one reason I was willing and I am still willing to provide assistance to the Four Seasons project, despite that taunt and despite the inappropriateness of certain things, is that every single one of those investors who came into the room, asked about the Four Season project.

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 21, 13.00.14

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I recognise that just like Royal Westmoreland, Four Seasons is a project that would pull other projects in its tailwind, and therefore although the Government of Barbados has never given guarantees in that way except through the Barbados Development Bank, perhaps some special arrangement with the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited and otherwise, we would be willing to consider a guarantee with the Four Seasons Project. A committee has been set up. I believe an agreement has been signed and arrangements are being made for that particular project to proceed.

Sir, I am supposed to hold the hands of the Four Seasons developers. They are not employing anybody right now and the resources they have in Barbados right now are probably zero. I am supposed to hold their hands, but I am not supposed to hold the hands of insurance companies that are already employing 1 600 Barbadians. I am supposed to cut them loose and put them under judicial management to protect the policyholders.

Right now, because of the decision taken and the advice given by the Supervisor of Insurance, over 100 agents in the first instance from CLICO International Life will have to go on the breadline. I spent two years trying to save the company from that because they are ordinary Barbadians. There are over 40 people at Rayside who come from the Honourable Member's Constituency.

I keep saying that the advice that the Honourable Member is giving that CLICO should go into judicial management is wrong because every other CLICO subsidiary that went into judicial management essentially sent home a substantial number of workers and even closed down operations.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, what do you think? The Honourable Member asked why they are going home now. Since January...

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I did not ask why they are going home now. I am asking him why is he now carrying CLICO and British American into judicial management. If you want to answer, answer that question.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I agree with you. You should not ask why they are going home now because you do not have the right to speak at this time, and I would like to suggest to the Honourable Member that he ignores the cross-talk and get on with his job.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I have never said in any debate that any insurance company is under judicial management in Barbados right now. The Barbados Labour Party saw Great Northern go under and there are still people in the year 2010 waiting from 1997, I think it was. You had Narsham Insurance, New India Insurance...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: No, some of them were put under judicial management and up to now the people have not got their money. Apparently, that is a red herring.

No company had been under judicial management. I said in respect of CLICO International Life that we have had to ask them to stop writing new business until the statutory fund has been fully constituted. That is what I said and that is all I said.

With respect to British American Insurance Company, the OECS has been in an arrangement following on what we proposed in relation to CLICO. They were about to put the company under judicial management and saw what we did in Barbados to try to keep the company operating. We have had advice since January of last year from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, every month on the month. I want to see the MOU. It should be under judicial management. You protecting a friend. Well, let me tell you something, I am protecting 1 600 friends, including 40 that live in your Constituency, as well as all of the policyholders.

I want to let the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East know this because she gave the statistics that every one in two Barbadians would be affected. I am protecting every one in two Barbadians. However technical the Supervisor of Insurance has his or her responsibility, I am only the Minister of Finance. The companies are entitled to appeal the decisions that they cannot write new business, and it is at that point that the Minister takes a role.

I do not get involved in the day to day Administration of the insurance sector, but the Honourable Members on That Side want to give the impression that on a daily basis I am meddling in decisions in relation both to CLICO and to the subsidiary of CL Financial, British American.

The reports come across my desk. Sir, do you know that the product that has undermined CLICO, the Executive Flexible Premium Annuity, was approved for sale in Barbados by a Barbados Labour Party Administration in 1997? The Supervisor of Insurance approved it in 1997. It was not approved by the Democratic Labour Party. Anywhere else in the world, even if the entity under you is supposed to be an independent entity and the person exercises flawed judgment, you have to take the fall and resign.

Sir, we have a situation now in which that accounts for \$300 million of the portfolio of CLICO. In 2007, the 2005 accounts were made available and no action was taken. I said to the Honourable Member for St. Peter that he knew that the statutory fund was not fully constituted and he still went down to CLICO's headquarters and delivered a speech and said it was one of the best run insurance companies in Barbados and nobody cannot get between us. We are friends now because Elections were approaching.

Sir, you know that they had always been generous to the Honourable Member for St. Peter and the Barbados Labour Party particularly in the 2003 General Election? I was not the leader of any party then, nor was the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Sir, I met with all of them. The reality, as these investors said to me, is that even though there is some appetite for these properties, the question of bridging from the banking institutions is creating problems. The first position they took was that there was no appetite for the property. They could get the money from the banks because of the stimulus arrangements. The banks were liquid but they did not have a...

Sir, we have a situation where a number of these developments are selling high-end properties - it is clear that is happening - and we have to make sure that the resources to finance those developments are available. We have therefore been holding their hands. We are holding the hands of Barbadians and we are trying to build a society in which everybody gets a equal chance and opportunity, and for the benefit of all.

Mr. Speaker, there is not a single economy in the Caribbean that is enjoying robust foreign direct investments. Only last week, I was at a CARICOM meeting and every single country in the Caribbean is suffering the same circumstance that we are suffering. They are coming to me sometimes and saying - I am very reluctant to say this - what have you done to keep the hotels open? Our hotels are discounting terribly.

I heard hoteliers here talking about discounting. Go and look at what is happening in the rest of the Region. Even though we were providing money via the Tourism Industry Relief Fund, you still had a situation of discounting taking place. I made the assumption that the Tourism Industry Relief Fund would have avoided discounting as much as possible but that has not happened.

There is an Honourable Member on That Side, the tourism expert, the only person who ever did any work in civil aviation and tourism in this country, who comes in here and gives the impression that he has been studying this area and he came up with these statistics.

House A60C Sequence 22

1.10 p.m.

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Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, when he used to write a column, he went into a barber shop one afternoon. There were about 15 people in there and he asked: "Fellows, you all read my column?" Sir, nobody in

that shop even knew that he used to write a column. That was when he used to write for the Nation Newspaper prior to 1991.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: No, it is a fact. A point of order? That is a fact. A mutual friend of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and mine is the person who told me that. He almost fell out the barber's chair. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North went into a barber's shop and asked: "Fellows, you all read my column this week?" Sir, there were 15 people there and not one of them had read it, and I would advise you all to follow the same approach as those 15 people in that barber shop, in respect to what he said in this particularly debate.

Mr. Speaker, in the days of plenty in this economy, we frittered good opportunities away. Sir, all this talk about complaints about debts, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter said he is glad to hear that we are not talking about debt this year. Sir, do you know why? Sir, in our first year in office, we had to bring to account all of the PPPs that the Barbados Labour Party had entered into. We had to bring to account the Defence Force pensions.

We had to bring to account a whole set of transactions, and we may have in addition to that, to look for other payments. We have to finish the 3S contract, once that is agreed. Then we will have the challenge in relation to possibly the National Housing Corporation's building. I do not know but what I heard about was a fiasco.

Mr. Speaker, I am terrified at the response of Honourable Members on That Side to these allegations. Last week, I happened to be home later in the evening and I listened to the debate. Sir, even though I did not see the person, it sounded like the Honourable Member for St. George North and I think you said the Honourable Member for St. George North. The Honourable Member got up in this Honourable House and said that there were five pavilions laid out in a building in Six Roads, St. Philip, that Hardwood Housing had up there.

Mr. Speaker, when we came to office, I had a forensic audit done by PriceWaterhouseCoopers. Sir, do you know that the computers, ledgers, all of the office equipment, everything had been removed from Hardwood Housing? Do you know that there is absolutely no evidence, other than some pieces of wood on the floor in the building. Perhaps there might be pavilions, I do not know.

That is a company that had taken deposits from 16 people. That is a company that had been paid substantial monies by the Government to build pavilions. I thought, knowing the Honourable Member for St. George North as

well as I do, he would have got up and said: "Gentlemen, I saw the pavilions on the ground, let me take you up there, along with the police and show you where the pavilions are, so that we could help to recover some of that \$5 million." Sir, instead of that, the Honourable Member for St. George North and others got up. He denied it. He said he did not really say it was there. He said he heard it was there. The Honourable Member then attacked this Government for not finishing five pavilions.

Mr. Speaker, the one thing that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East cannot deny is this. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said, and it is in the records of this Honourable House, that Hardwood Housing Factory is not a Government-owned company, it is a private company. That was her response to the very first allegation I made.

Sir, here you have a private company that the Government had to put \$5 million into carrying away five pavilions that the former Minister of Housing and Lands said he saw on the ground in St. Philip. He said he saw five pavilions on the ground and instead of him saying why does the Government not sue the gentleman who was responsible for the company, his associate and accomplice, who you know very well...

Sir, apparently the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East does not speak to him anymore, if we are to go by what we read in Monday's newspapers, the associate of the gentleman with Hardwood Housing.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister has asked me a direct question whether I speak to Mr. Mascoll, Mr. Mascoll and I were together all day Sunday. Sir, I needed to say so because the Prime Minister really wanted to ask something else but I would not say it at this stage.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, that was a very helpful intervention. Sir, I am saying that you had Greenland, GEMS, the National Housing Corporation and that we are still trying to contend with them. Sir, all those people who say that we are harping back to when the Barbados Labour Party was in office, the chief proponent of that is the Nation Newspaper telling us to get on with the business.

Every week they have some person called "Fed Up" writing and saying get on with the business. If you look at "If I Was" a column in the Nation, it is saying that you should get on with the business. Mr. Speaker, do you know that approximately 20 years after the Democratic Labour Party had instituted a wage cut in this country that we are still hearing about that wage cut?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Do you understand what I mean? But he saw the pavilions too and so I plan to talk about them. If you say they are still seeing it and feeling it, the theft of the five pavilions is still being felt by this Government.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House.

Mr. SPEAKER: In what way is he misleading the House?

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I never said that I saw the pavilions. I was told before the last General Election that the pavilions were built and were in storage. I was told this. I never knew about those pavilions. Therefore, the Honourable Member for St. John must tell us what happened to the pavilions after he became Prime Minister.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please continue, Honourable Member. That was not a point of order.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I have asked the police to investigate that because within weeks of coming into office the entire building was emptied. What do you expect me to do? All of those who are talking about this Government and that we must have the investigations and so on, what would you investigate? The only fingerprints I would find out there would be yours. I thought you said you saw them?

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I was told that the pavilions existed and that one of the pavilions was to be moved to the site before the last General Elections. I do not know what happened to those pavilions after the Honourable Member became Prime Minister of this country. Somebody may have taken the pavilions after he became Prime Minister. I do not know.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay, Honourable Member.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, do you really believe that there is any building in Barbados that could house the wooden outlines for five pavilions and 16 houses?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Well, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North said "yes", so he like he went up there too. Sir, it is one of the most crooked and

corrupt activities that ever took place in the history of Barbados. Sir, nobody would ever get me to go into that building, either before or after the Election. That is too associated with corruption. That is probably why the prison ended up next door to Hardwood Housing.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, it is not funny. It is very serious. These were pavilions that were to be built for young people in this country. One was to be sited in Silver Sands, Brandons and three other places. The tracks for these pavilions were dug up.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: That is the familiar strategy of the Barbados Labour Party.

1.30 p.m.

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Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, in 1986, they sent marl down in College Savannah and they did it in this Election. They agreed to do a number of roads and put up signs and the money was not there to do it. Sir, that is tucking trade, digging the tracks, knowing that the company did not have the wood and that it did not have the resources.

In fact, it was said in this Chamber that the company was under-capitalised, so where would they have got the money from to build those pavilions? Sir, apparently the pavilions were already paid for. The company already received the money for the pavilions and it was to build houses.

Do you know that the Honourable Member for St. Peter said that we are only finishing off his project? Do you know who the Honourable Member for St. Peter put to build the houses in Four Hill - Hardwood Housing? They were going to build a whole set of houses all over Barbados, a company that could not even build 16 houses for the people that paid them deposits. Sir, that is the level to which Barbados had sunk and all of these have to be brought to book under a Democratic Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Speaker, I have said repeatedly, and I say here again today, that the attitude and approach to our development in this country must change. Sir, it has to change because that era of economic development that we heard about yesterday, development at all costs, and whatever that means, that era is over, at least, for as long as the Democratic Labour Party is in office in this country. Mr. Speaker, there has to be a social component to

development and there has to be a measured approach to our physical and infrastructural development.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot talk of glory years when 23 000 in this country were looking for houses. You cannot talk about a model for fiscal management when the number of people knocking down the doors at the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission more than quadrupled in the period in which you were in office.

You abandoned the poor people of this country and that is a fact. Therefore, you compromised the living standards of a majority for the acceptance of a few hors d'oeuvre and drinks at cocktail parties and in the living rooms of the rich and famous in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we are not about that. I have a stake in this country and my mission transcends staying in office at all costs. We will be in office for a reason. That is the mission of this Democratic Labour Party Government.

Mr. Speaker, we have to romanticise about the type of Barbados we want to leave for our children and I say to the Attorney-General, do not let the Honourable Members on That Side sidetrack us about our mission to effect some kind of change.

Sir, some of the measures are going to have to be unorthodox because we have a growing problem in this country and I am not going to allow anybody to give me any tutelage in relation to moral standards on That Side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden, we are supposed to be exemplars for children when we all know that as human beings we have flaws. There is no guarantee that any child of ours will not end up in prison, committing crime, doing all kinds of things. Sir, that is a possibility that all of us have to face.

We have to work collectively in the society with everybody who is supposed to be exemplars but there are people in here who act like they are the best role models ever, and maybe they are, but the people who are looking at them did not necessarily think so. Mr. Speaker, there are people who look at me and do not think so, and I adopt the biblical injunction in relation to my politics.

Mr. Speaker, we have not been called simply to satisfy the righteous, but we have to bring some sinners in this society to repentance. If you think that because you go to a function that young people are at, that because they are playing music or doing things that you do not think are appropriate that gives them sanction, they are not foolish. Sir, young people will not be young forever and when they

get older, they are invariably grateful to the people who try to help them along the way and show them.

Mr. Speaker, everybody has a favorite school teacher. Everybody speaks in this House when we have obituaries about the influence of their parents, grandparents and others. We went through that phase and we have a duty to make sure that children in Barbados are children, and that they enjoy their childhood. We cannot have children that are adults at age 11 running this country and challenging the police and doing as they like. We are not going to stand for it.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that part of the problem we face was a preoccupation by the previous Government with meeting those economic indices that the Honourable Member for St. Peter said were so important. I have never heard the Honourable Member for St. Peter delivered any speech in here on social development. It was always about social entitlement, the cost of this, how much money he is putting in the Urban Development Commission and Rural Development Commission but, Sir, you cannot run a society like that.

You can run an economy like that to the credit of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. I do not think she needs any credit in that regard because she experimented with a few things, not all of them went well but to the Honourable Member's credit, there was never a debate on a social issue on which the Honourable Member did not participate.

It has been part of her natural heritage and upbringing but I think she genuinely enjoyed it. She tried with EduTech but it did not work out. She tried with a few other things but they did not work out but, Sir, I am not going to be ungracious and say that the Honourable Member did not try.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter will never say that she tried, but I am going to say on behalf of the people of Barbados that the Honourable Member tried. It may not earn you any stripes over there. In fact, it probably has earned you much opprobrium rather than stripes on That Side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I know we need to go to lunch. I will not commit the taxpayers of this country to \$750 million for any prison. I am not going to change the water zones willy-nilly to facilitate any foreign investment in Barbados. I have said so and I will repeat it.

I am not going to curry favour with any high-flying investors and then send anybody down at Bush Bar to shake them down after I meet with them officially at Government Headquarters for any contributions for my Party.

Sir, I am not into that. If recommendation about foreign direct investment means that, and that is what I have to do to facilitate investors, I am not doing that. I am not going to take up a set of run-down hotel properties because they belong to friends of mine, or friends of my Party, invest in them and then find that 10 years later that the cost of investing them have brought no significant returns to the country, but it brought returns to those people who I have helped.

Sir, if that is what attracting foreign direct investment means for Barbados, this Democratic Labour Party Administration is not going to do it. Sir, that is the story of the GEMS in this country. Therefore, I am not going to allow the moral fabric of Barbados to be destroyed.

Mr. Speaker, likewise, I am not going to deny the school children the opportunity of free travel on the Transport Board buses, and we are not having any dedicated school bus service either because we do not have the resources for that. We have to work within the resources that we have. That is another example of a project proposed to the Honourable Member for St. George North, but that proposal would only have benefitted the people who brought in the buses and their agents.

It would not have benefitted school children because the buses would have been sitting down somewhere in Barbados for three and four hours in the day and then all through the night. Sir, we cannot afford that luxury.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to deny them holiday camps because I know both those holiday camps and the free bus service to school children have made an impact on ordinary people being able to send school their children.

Mr. Speaker, I have had in St. John, constituents who had to rotate sending to school their children, two this week and two next week, but they can all go to school now. There is no excuse for being home.

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Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: There is no excuse for being on the road. The project has only been in existence for a year-and-a-half. Give it a chance. You cannot give it a chance if you allow it to go for one year and then say it failed and it is wrong, we should not give them. It is a political high wire act only to attract support for the Democratic Labour Party.

We did nothing, apparently, to help the cost of living but there are ordinary households in St. Thomas in which people, now, do not have to look for \$30 for a group of

children to send them to school on a day. The same lady that I heard has six children that we did nothing for, well all six of those children can go to school free on the bus, from St. Thomas, as a result of the Democratic Labour Party.

During the summer vacation, if the mother cannot afford to feed them, this Democratic Labour Party has contracted small caterers in Barbados to help us with our Summer Camp Programme, and to give them an opportunity to earn a little something.

We have an industry of caterers in Barbados. We did not have it when School Meals started. We have it now. Why should we not support them? The big contractors are not the only private sector people in this country, or small business people.

We have event coordinators, the people who organised the event at Marchfield. The people who got the money who provided tents, the sound system, catering and transportation, they were the people who benefitted, all small business people. Sir, every initiative is resented, \$8 million to provide Constituency Councils, camps and the school bus service will break the Barbados Treasury.

Sir, look at what has been spent so far? I am talking about being spent so far.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Since when what is voted, is what is spent? We voted a whole set of money for you for EduTech except for the year you blew it all and we had to look for more. You did not spend all.

The point is, we have to make adjustments and therefore quality school meals, university education - I am not going to go to any Standard and Poor's meeting and tell anybody that I am going to eliminate them simply to get a rating. I am not doing it. I would rather resign as Prime Minister of this country than have to go into a situation - you said that I am the first and second worst Minister of Finance, where I place before any international institution all of the social programmes in this country, university education, free bus rides and all of them before them, and tell them to cherry pick which of these you think we should not have. Those are decisions that this society have made, and for as long as we can afford them, I think everybody should be happy that we are able to provide them.

I have never told anybody to vote for the Democratic Labour Party because we let your children travel free on the bus. I am certain that when another Election is called, there is only one person on That Side that would be foolish enough to go on a platform and tell people that he is going to stop the free bus fares.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you really cannot refer to Honourable Members. It should be struck from the record.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, I withdraw all of that. I apologise.

The only person who would adopt that stance would be somebody who would think, and who said in this Honourable Chamber, that the last Election is about this, so Barbadians are commodities to be bought and traded on Election day. Everybody who voted in the last Election, according to that Honourable Member, for the Democratic Labour Party voted because of that.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, some of the people that are not supporting you, you do not need their support. You continue. Keep them out of your piling. Keep them on the outer side, they cannot help you.

Sir, I am not quoting "Shaggy". I am not quoting "Mavado, Mr. Vegas, Vybzs Kartel" or anybody.

When I was a youngster my mother used to wash clothes every Saturday, and she had three Joseph Niles albums. One was called the "Royal Telephone". One was called a "Rose Garden" or something so. I cannot remember the third one. I remember one song that used to excite me, called "I know where I am going, yes I know. I know where I am, I know. Joy bells are ringing, and happy children are singing, I know where I am going, I know."

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, I do not need the assistance of any international artist. I prefer to take my queue from Joseph Niles. I know that when all is said and done, that the ordinary Barbadian will be able to sing with me, "I know where I am going, I know. Joy bells are ringing and happy children are singing."

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill, 2010.

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

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

SUSPENSION

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now suspended until 2.50 p.m. today.

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

The question that the house be now suspended until 2.50 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

HA60C 13.40 p.m. Sequence 25

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Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 26, 2.51 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Good afternoon, Honourable Members. This Sitting is resumed.

Honourable Members, when the Suspension was taken, we were on Order No. 5 and to that we shall now continue.

On the motion of Hon. C.P. SINCKLER, seconded by Hon. F.J. STUART, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply on the Resolution. Mr. J.D. PAUL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

Hon. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, in moving that Head 55 stand part of the Estimates, permit me to welcome you to the Chair and to wish you well in your sojourn as the Chairman of Parliamentary Committees.

Asides.

Hon. R.L. SEALY: Of course, your predecessor, I found him very affable and agreeable as a Chairman and I want to wish him well as he now journeys on to ministerial responsibilities.

Mr. Chairman, I would say that in the Tourism Head for this year, we are hoping to spend a total of \$101 323 543 million that is statutory as well as non statutory. The bulk of that money, of course, is going to the Barbados Tourism Authority to the tune of \$92 million. Sir, \$3.25

million is going to the Barbados Conference Services Limited and, of course, less than \$6 million is going to the Ministry proper to do the programme that the Ministry does at the level of policy Administration, research, product development and so on.

Mr. Chairman, I would just clarify something with respect to the overall vote for tourism. During the course of the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill, we heard of the cut that Tourism has received. If we are going to be fair and honest in our comparison, when we were going through this exercise last year, only \$90 million was allocated to tourism.

The additional monies, of course, came by way of Supplementaries, so if we are to compare like with like, the original vote actually is \$2 million higher than the vote of last year.

I say that just to make the point that the Government of Barbados understands the importance of tourism and understands that even within the context of the limited fiscal space we have, or the medium-term fiscal strategy that we have committed to, et cetera, but tourism still has to receive a high level of attention and hence, the reason for that increase.

Tourism is still the largest provider of jobs direct and indirect. If you are thinking of jobs indirect or direct after Government services and certainly, the largest buyer of goods and services in Barbados and therefore it is a very important sector. We well understand, of course, in terms of foreign exchange the critical role that tourism plays in the life of Barbados and we as a Government, have decided to prioritise the funds allocated to tourism.

Asides.

Hon. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I think that everyone is aware of the challenges we have been having. The world has been dealing with a severe recession and that has impacted tourism because of the situation in our source markets. It has been particularly severe in the United Kingdom market, where the economy is highly challenged at the moment and, for that reason, we did see a decline in both arrivals and spend in tourism last year, 2009.

These challenges continue in 2010, but I think it is important that the people of Barbados realise that we are working feverishly to correct that situation. Mr. Chairman, even though we have lost a lot of seats out of the United Kingdom because of reduced airlift, BMI being taken over by Lufthansa and opting to end long haul flights in this part of the world and, of course, the Excel Leisure Group going out of business, we have seen a reduction in the number of seats available from the United Kingdom.

Sir, it is important to realise that in the face of that reduction, the two existing partners that we have, which are providing scheduled airlifts, the scheduled carriers, that is out of the United Kingdom, Virgin Atlantic and British Airways, are both actually seeing very good loads. The flights are full but obviously because of the overall reduction in seats, we will see a decrease in that UK market. What that tells us, Mr. Chairman, is to urgently address the issue of getting more airlift out of the UK.

Sir, I understand and I know that it is easy to jump up and say, well get more airlift, but unfortunately, you do not just shake a tree and an airplane drops out, particularly in the United Kingdom, where your options are a bit limited. We are talking to a couple of providers and we are hoping to have some charter services coming in. We are negotiating with at least two people and looking at other options because we need more seats.

I think I should say that we are working feverishly at trying to get that UK situation in order. I do not need to go into all of the details. I believe everyone in the House is well aware of what is happening in the United Kingdom even though there are those who may pretend not to be aware.

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 26, 15:00:14

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Hon. R. L. SEALY: I believe that everyone in the House, even those who may pretend not to be aware, are well aware of what is happening in the United Kingdom with the airline passenger duty; the challenges with the economy and more recently the falling Pound. The Pound has declined a great deal. These are areas that we do not have control of but we have to deal with them and manage them.

Mr. Chairman, let me just say that we have not been sitting down at all. If I could move to some of our other markets here very quickly. Canada has been performing very well. That is not an accident. That is a deliberate decision that this Government took in January 2008. Canada used to be our top performing market at one stage and it was a market that we felt needed more attention and we gave it more attention. Sir, fortunately, because the economic situation is not quite the same in Canada, unlike the United Kingdom where we are losing seats, we were able to gain seats in Canada and we have seen some definite increases out of Canada. The Canadian market performed very well last year and it is still performing well. It is still on the increase. We are looking in 2010 to have, at least, 70 000 Canadians come to Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, it is important to make the point that this is due not only to the introduction of the WestJet

service but our longstanding partner Air Canada which celebrated its 60th Anniversary of service to Barbados recently increasing their seats coming into Barbados. Far from losing seats with Air Canada, we have increased seats.

The Montreal flight that used to come in only during the winter season is also coming in during the summer and they are using larger aircrafts. Only recently the Toronto/Barbados aircraft had to be increased to an airbus 330 providing, I think, close to an extra 50 seats per rotation, so we are on the increase as far as Canada is concerned, and I think we have to continue to focus on that.

Mr. Chairman, let me also speak about the United States of America because we were experiencing some declines in the United States of America during the course of 2009 but we made a deliberate decision to bring in again more seats out of the United States of America and an additional carrier.

From October 1, last year, we not only had US Airways back on track with the Philadelphia/Barbados route, but we also introduced the JetBlue service. The Leader of the Opposition suggested that JetBlue was mainly bringing in Diaspora people, but that is far from the case. JetBlue is very much a legacy carrier. It is a low-cost carrier but with a fantastic network and an impressive frequent flyer programme. It has all of those characteristics of your traditional legacy carrier. They have a JetBlue vacation programme, so it is not simply just for Barbadians to come back home. It is definitely a major boost for our tourism work coming out of that market.

Mr. Chairman, it is interesting to note that when you look at the situation in the United States of America, up to the end of September last year, we had a decline of about 17.6 per cent year-to-date because of the situation with the whole United States of America economy being in the tank. The capital markets are practically collapsed with Lehman Brothers and so on going under. We had a 17.6 per cent decline but as a result of deliberate work by this Government, and a deliberate decision, we were able to turn that around and in October to December last year, as a result of the additional flights and the programmes we put in place, we had a 30.6 per cent increase in arrivals out of the United States of America market.

I guess that someone would jump up and say that is only one market. When it suits the Other Side, they talk about the United Kingdom market being down. Why do they not talk about the United States of America market being up? I think that is only fair. It is not by accident. Let me make this point on the Floor of this House, because there are people who did not believe that we should have gone after JetBlue.

JetBlue and American Airlines have been at war for some time and many people close to me, advisors, told me to leave out that JetBlue thing, not to upset American Airlines that if American Airlines pulls on me, I would be the worse Tourism Minister ever.

Mr. Chairman, I picked up the phone and called the officials at American Airlines and said, listen, we want to bring a little competition to this route. As a result of that decision, we not only have JetBlue but the same American Airlines is doing better. There is more life in the market. I believe that very strongly. I think that the example is there.

You had British Airways dominating a particular market. Virgin Airways has now actually taken over British Airways and is now the leading carrier out of the United Kingdom, but the same British Airways has benefitted. More life comes to the market when you have a little competition and some jockeying.

We have seen that in Canada as well. Both Air Canada and WestJet are benefitting. That is the whole reason why I am very happy with the way in which that JetBlue service has worked and I think that we need to continue to make sure that we could sustain this airlift. I think it is a very wonderful example of how you can make deliberate decisions that can benefit the country, so we are quite happy about that.

Mr. Chairman, let me also say very quickly that it was mentioned in this debate that the opening of the Embassy is an extremely good thing. I want to support and laud the work of the Honourable Member for St. John and the Honourable Lady in the Other Place who currently has portfolio responsibility for what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West once did, in getting those Missions in Cuba, Brazil and China going.

In the case of Brazil, we are off to the races. It is official. GOL Airlines will be coming into Barbados from June 26, 2010. The flight originates in Buenos Aires, stops in Sao Paulo and comes here and opens up a new market for us. Some people are apparently again a little wary over whether or not we should be allocating resources to a new market at this time and not do more work trying to get the United Kingdom situation back on track.

Mr. Chairman, how could you ignore a giant right there in your backyard? It is an emerging economy. It is a service that not only has tourism potential but there are all sorts of possibilities there, trade, culture, sports everything else that goes along with it.

I feel that it is a wonderful opportunity to bring Brazil and Barbados, two countries that have a very interesting history, a longstanding one as well, in terms of trading years ago, to sort of get those relations going again.

Mr. Chairman, I will take responsibility and say again that GOL Airlines was something that this Government decided to do. The same way that I was told not to bring in JetBlue and we brought it in and now we have a 30 per cent increase out of the United States of America, I will take the responsibility for opening up Brazil because it is something that we need to do. Now is the time.

Mr. Chairman, I am hearing that the time is not right, that the recession is on and so on, but when is it going to be the right time? Are you going to wait until the world's economy is galloping away? At that time, the people would not have any planes to bring to you as they would be busy minding everybody else. You get on the bus now or get left behind. Mr. Chairman, we are therefore very happy at that decision.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. James North in his usually very balanced and erudite way, raised the concern about the Brazil flight and whether or not we would be able to sustain it. I enjoy his presentations. I am not soft-soaping him because he is a serious partisan, as I am. We sit on opposite Sides, but I will give Jack his jacket. He does make very balanced, reasoned contributions. He also mentioned the BWIA services that existed and is concerned that the GOL service might end up failing just like the BWIA service.

House A60C Sequence 27

3.10 p.m.

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Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I said I cannot go to the Ministry of Finance and ask for sums of money that are not small, it cost a significant sum to start a service. I did not want to be coming back and apologising that we did not make it. We did our market testing, we went down there, there is an Honourary Counsel there, who is a very energetic man. He made sure that we met all of the players.

We had the tour operators here only recently, observing the product and the attractions that we have. We are building those partnerships to make sure that this service works. I think what is also important to note is that with GOL, it is not a BWIA scenario, this is an airline with serious connections. It is a very large airline, one of the largest in Latin America and it also has the right model.

Mr. Chairman, this is very much a cut of the cloth of a low-class carrier like WestJet, the model that seems to work in this day and age and South West Pioneer, that low-cost carrier model that seems to work. GOL is very much a cut of that cloth and therefore I think all of the ingredients are in place for us not only to sustain this weekly flight, but

also eventually to grow it, maybe to have a number of flights a week, so that perhaps we could not only have 7-days or 14-days vacations but we could have 10-days or slightly shorter or slightly longer vacations.

Therefore, Sir, I would want to assure the Honourable Member for St. James North that it will not be a BWIA-type scenario, that we have done our work and that we will continue to do our work to make sure that we can sustain that flight.

Mr. Chairman, it was not raised in this debate but I think it is also worth to note that when we get everything on an even keel where GOL is concerned, we are also looking at COPA out of Panama City, where already they fly into Trinidad and Tobago five times a week. We have had some initial meetings with them and we are looking at eventually having that service going as well. They are extremely keen.

As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister has had conversations with the President of COPA and we have had some interaction with the officials there. They do not have the equipment presently to start a service like that but that might just be a blessing in disguise. Let us not try to bite off more than we can chew. We still have to protect our existing markets. We are trying that GOL service with Brazil, so let us see what we can do first and then build from there.

Sir, I think it is a natural progression. I do not think that anyone in this Honourable Chamber needs to be educated on the role that Barbados has played in the development of Panama - the building of the canal and also the fact that Panama City is a serious gateway into the rest of Central America and even parts of South America. There is also the potential for Barbadians to go to Panama City to be trained in goods and other items. Sir, I think that we are going in the right direction where that is concerned.

Mr. Chairman, as far as China is concerned, another market that we have looked at, we have more or less taken the decision to do some more homework and eventually in the fullness of time, we will get something going where China is concerned. The Shanghai Expo this year presents an excellent opportunity for us. The Barbados Tourism Authority is chairing the Task Force responsible for the Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo and we hope that we could start to do the ground work. Sir Lloyd is already there and he is very keen that we can promote our tourism services to what is the largest and growing market in the world, both in terms of its influence and its affluence. We are very keen on that. We wait to see how that is going.

Mr. Chairman, I think it is important that we understand the context within which this debate is taking place. The crisis has forced us to take some creative

approaches. Sir, last year we had two tranches of something called the Tourism Industry Relief Fund. That worked very well. It worked well because as we understand 2009 was a declining year, it was an unprecedented year, naturally we had to work with the players in the industry.

Sir, let me also remind this Honourable House that we felt that we would not go the route of simply having a Hotel Relief Fund but that we would go the route of having a Tourism Industry Relief Fund. In other words, all the players were suffering and all of them should get help.

Sir, when the crisis was upon us, naturally the interest groups started lobbying. They reminded us what happened in the face of September 11. After September 11, the last Government set up a Hotel Relief Fund. This time I said no, not a Hotel Relief Fund but a Tourism Industry Relief Fund because there were other players in the sector who were suffering from declining arrivals and they too should benefit from it. Sir, when we introduced that Fund, the one thing that we asked was that employers maintain their level of employment. That was all we asked.

Mr. Chairman, I heard talk by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition about job losses in tourism but, as far as I know, we have had no major retrenchment nor major layoffs in Barbados' tourism sector during 2009. Sir, I do not suggest that this Government should take credit for that. I have already said on the Floor of this Honourable House and I will say it again, the captains of industries, the private sector players, they deserve some credit as well. They worked with us.

We said "work with us and let us not lay off persons" and they agreed. Sir, from our research, at least 5 000 jobs were protected because of the Tourism Industry Relief Fund. Sir, again, I am very quick to share the credit with the very matured manner in which we dealt with it.

Mr. Chairman, you will notice that there is no money in these Estimates for a 2010 version of the Tourism Industry Relief Fund. Sir, it is very simple. I thought that 2009 was an exceptional situation and 2010, as you can see, we are improving. Sir, I would like to think that rather than just getting money put in your hands or have a cheque cut to you, you would prefer to have Government as a partner to help get people in your hotels and restaurants and other attractions.

In other words, let Government use our resources, change our approaches and maybe the declines, which will not be anything like 2009, could be dealt with through a stronger, better working relationship. Sir, that is what the decision not to have a Tourism Industry Relief Fund is predicated upon. We do not want to start this idea that every time there is a little decline that Government must

turn up with money. I do not think that is what anybody in the private sector would want.

Mr. Chairman, I was once in the private sector recently. I would not want to think that the only way I could meet my payroll was because Government had to cut a cheque to me. I think we need to do more work to promote Destination Barbados, to see that we can get more traffic coming. I think we need to try to increase the spend, such that we would not need a Tourism Industry Relief Fund for 2010. That is my aim and that is my target. I think we can make it because all of the indicators are going in the right direction. We just have a few challenges with which we need to deal.

Mr. Chairman, I think that the crisis has been managed well by the Government. We have put the Tourism Industry Relief Fund in place. We have shifted resources to Canada. We have our protection mechanisms in the United Kingdom to make sure that those flights, as few as they were, were full.

Sir, I can also report that the forward bookings out of the United Kingdom for March to December 2010, on both British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, are up.

3.20 p.m.

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Hon. R. L. SEALY: we are going in the right direction even in the United Kingdom market. Sir, we have really tried to deal with the crisis in a very progressive manner.

Mr. Chairman, the use of events to drive people to Barbados. Again another deliberate decision by the Government that a natural way to try to get people to come to Barbados is the use of sporting events, cultural events and, of course, meetings, incentives groups, conventions, conferences and so on.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I was just talking about events like sporting events, cultural events and all that we have been able to do is as well to try to move people to Barbados even during this crisis. We met with the sporting organisations at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre at two separate symposiums and out of those meetings, Mr. Chairman, we are doing much better with sports tourism. Sir, sports tourism is alive and working in this country and we are doing it in many different disciplines. We have tennis, polo, horse racing and all these things, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, we have been working along with the different organisations to have special events. Sir, the equine sports, both polo and horse racing are doing very well. Sir, we have been doing a lot of work with polo. I hear a lot of criticism in here about it but we know that the \$1 million that we spent on polo brought \$36 million in exposure for Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: You want me to talk about the World Cup? You should talk about the sports tourism fiasco. Sir, ten of millions of dollars were spent and all we have to show for it is debt all over this country. Sir, we are going in the right direction as far as using events as well not only to pull out of the crisis but setting the right platform for further growth as well.

Mr. Chairman, the netballers are having a Regional tournament and we are working with them. We are working with the Masters Football. We are working with Softball Cricket and bookings for the 20/20 World Cup are strong. Sir, the World Female Boxing, we have at least 200 officials, competitors and others plus the supporters on top of that.

Mr. Chairman, the World Fireball Yachting Event is going to be held here in another month or so. We are working as well with the yachting sports. Sir, we are doing what we have to do to make sure we have some life here as well. It is always a good idea to use events as well to move people to give them an extra reason to come to Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, Barbados has an excellent structure and good facilities, relatively speaking. It is a comparative advantage which we have to make good use of and hence the reason why we have decided, even in these times, to find those resources to make sure we can pack the calendar with a series of events and cultural events, working with the major festivals but adding in a few.

We hope to take Gospelfest to another level, and there is another event to be held later in the year involving Dr. Bobby Jones. We hope to have a pool and rum festival as well later in the year and we are doing what we have to do in order to see that we can pull out of this scenario.

Mr. Chairman, of course, I would want to talk about the work with the Diaspora in the context of crisis management because you would find that the patriotism element is always one you can pull on to get people to come in from the Diaspora and also to use the Diaspora as an extended sales course.

Sir, it has worked well because 1 000 people have signed up for the BFF Club. Sir, Barbadians all over the world are excited about their country and about the

destination, who want to work to see if we can pull Barbados out of this situation and that we can build on it for future gains and future developments.

Mr. Chairman, there is a lot to say about tourism and I will be coming back several times. Just relax yourself, sit down, and once again welcome to the Chair and I appreciate the time given to me.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Just one moment, Honourable Member. Before you speak, I noted during the discourse....

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would also begin by congratulating you, if I may, on your recent appointment.

Sir, the first point I want to make is that we are failing to get any significant return on our tourism because our sole marketing agency is in chaos and, therefore, incapable, in the state it is in, to really focus on devising any proper marketing strategy for Barbados. Therefore, we are getting scratch grain for our tourism while others around us are getting a lot more.

Mr. Chairman, the Minister seems to glory in how bad we are doing and is trying to give the impression that all is well. Sir, the Minister brags about little things. He brags about 50 000 additional seats out of the United States of America last year, but Jamaica had 850 000 seats, so 50 000 is no big deal. Sir, by January 4, 2010 - 19 days into the tourist season - Jamaica had welcomed 94 000 long-stay visitors to its shore.

Sir, this is three times or four times what Barbados did. Sir, the Minister brags about these little things but this is nothing to brag about because we are in serious trouble in our tourism and the quicker the Minister recognises it, the quicker he can get on with the job.

Mr. Chairman, for the last 14 months, there were only three months that saw an increase in our tourism arrivals. Sir, three months out of 14 months and the rest were declines, double-digit declines. Sir, one or two of them were declines of the magnitude of over 20 per cent and the Minister is contented with that.

Mr. Chairman, our tourism is not doing well. It is not doing as well as you can expect neither is it doing well when compared to other places. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South yesterday started to read from a document but, Sir, he did not tell the whole story. Sir, compared to some of the 28 countries that reported to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, Barbados was 16th out of 28.

Sir, only six countries did worse than Barbados last year. Sir, the summer was a disaster. We were 19th out of

27 countries reporting to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, so there is nothing to come in here, beat your chest about and get smart about our tourism. Sir, our tourism is in a deep, deep hole and the Minister would want to gloss over Barbados' tourism performance.

Mr. Chairman, I heard the Minister speaking and it is really the only leg he can try to stand on, so I would understand why he would try to do it, to talk out the US market and JetBlue.

The first thing I want the Minister to do is to give us the details of the arrangements that the Government has with JetBlue. The Minister has been very deliberately vague in explaining the details of the arrangements with JetBlue. All the Minister has only said he is not subsidising and that the financial input by the Government is developmental.

Sir, JetBlue flies out of New York. I do not know what development would have to go into flying between New York and Barbados because it is a fully developed route.

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Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN: So you do not have to spend any money developing that route. The only thing that the Minister has said in relation to the JetBlue operation and the arrangement with JetBlue is that it is developmental.

Sir, I want the Honourable Minister to give us the full details. I really do not want to burst the Minister's bubble, but the truth is, JetBlue was in an expansionary mode. It had already been introduced to the Region and would have come to Barbados any how. It would have come any how, and that is a fact. Now, it may not have come every day. It may not have started on a daily basis, and it may not have started on October 1, but it would have come anyhow.

The strange thing which made it mandatory for the Minister to explain the details of the arrangements are those two things I just mentioned. The fact that a new carrier would start with daily services, that is the first thing, and on October 1, in the heat of Fall, for want of a better way of putting it, airlines would give you a little run up to a winter service, starting maybe in November, but airlines do not really commence operations in the Fall, but JetBlue started on October 1, and I want to know what induced them to start on October 1. I want the Minister to tell me these details. Barbadians want to know what they are paying for this service.

Jamaica had a similar arrangement, but they made an arrangement with American Airlines out of Texas, Chicago and Miami. There was such an anger or raising of issues about it, that it was actually probed. The details of the arrangement the Jamaica Government made with American Airlines in relation to those particular services, nothing came out of it.

I am just saying that I want to know the details. I want to know what was so magical? What was so enticing that JetBlue would have commenced daily services on October 1, a service that we would have got and could have got any how, because it was in an expansionary mode.

Sir, the Minister is clear in his comments that he is not commencing any service that will ever collapse or will decline. He is going through it very slowly and methodically because he is not bringing any fly-by-night services.

Sir, at the same time that JetBlue commenced services, pursuant to an arrangement that we do not know the details of, US Airways also went up from one service per week to four services per week in December, and thereafter, in January, to daily services, and I think at one stage it was giving eight services per week.

Will the Minister therefore tell us why now it is going to happen again? US Airways will be cutting back from one service per week. A Minister who said that he will never take it up to bring it back down, but US Airways is now going from seven services per week from April, back down to one service per week.

I want to know, therefore, what the Minister has in place to ensure that the JetBlue services will continue, long-term, and we are not going to see a decrease in those services as well, as we will see in relation to US Airways from next month. What is the Minister doing to expand the JetBlue services?

Sir, when JetBlue first started in Jamaica, within a few months it commenced about two or three services from different destinations in the United States. Is the Minister just going to sit down and say we have New York?

Sir, I want to ask the Minister a fundamental question about JetBlue. Who are these people coming on these cheap flights into Barbados? Who are these people really coming? The Minister is saying that they are not the Diaspora. Perhaps he is denying that it is ethnic from travel, but I want to know who they are that are coming. One thing for sure, they are not spending any money at all. They are not spending money.

Sir, the Minister was clear to point out that between October and December, 2009, we saw this massive, 30 per

cent increase in arrivals out of the United States, or 33.6 per cent, whatever figure he gave. The tourism spend in Barbados for last year, despite this massive jump was a decline of \$170 million. That is what the Prime Minister said in his opening remarks. Actually the Central Bank said \$230 million, but I will go with the Prime Minister, \$170 million. Sir, these people are coming but they are not spending any money, so what really is the benefit of this service to Barbados? In fact, I want the Minister to do the maths, and it can be done.

The Jamaican authorities were put under this severe pressure to justify that arrangement with American Airlines. This cannot be news to the Minister. He should not look that surprised when I made the statement. They were told of it, and they did it mathematically and announced publicly the amount they were injecting into American Airlines for those services and the revenue that was generated. Sir, they were saying that Jamaica benefitted to the tune of \$50 million from the arrangement with American Airlines.

I want the Minister to do the maths in relation to JetBlue, and tell me if it is worth Barbados' while, financially, to be having that service, which as I said, is bringing people to Barbados who are not spending any money and contributing to the Barbadian economy.

Sir, similarly, I heard the Minister speaking about this GOL Airline out of South America. Again, nobody is going to say no to an additional carrier, but that carrier has also been in an expansionary mode. It is really a severe failure on the part of the Minister that only now he can attract it out of South America.

Sir, from the time the crisis that they speak about so much started to impact in our two major markets, the United States and the United Kingdom, they should have headed straight to Latin America and South America, because the crisis was not really biting down there like it was elsewhere. It was not.

Sir, for the Government to have taken this long to get a service that was in an expansionary mode that they should have approached immediately the crisis began, means that we are now only playing catch up in relation to that particular market. The Minister should hold his head in shame. Only now we are going to be getting that service.

Sir, with respect to the UK market, the Minister's comments perplexed me. When a Minister can be bragging that you have lost four or five services and you have gone down to two, but you are to pat yourself on the back because the two services are full, what else would he expect to happen if you are losing services and you have brought it down to smaller numbers? The demand you would have had for the other services automatically would

be transferred to those, so that is nothing for the Minister to brag about.

The Minister must get up and really ensure that we regain the lost ground in the United Kingdom market, not by just saying that he is talking to a few carriers and cannot even tell us who they are. Sir, the Minister cannot tell us who they are because I really do not believe he is talking to any at all. You need to get up and start to do some work.

Sir, the fact of the matter is, the inertia, the lack of energy of the Minister of Tourism and the Prime Minister are now starting to bite in the United Kingdom market. The thing that is really biting now is not only the pending strike and the issue in the fall in the value of the pound to the US dollar, it is also the air passenger tax.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has three minutes.

Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN: It is the question of the air passenger tax.

Sir, I came in this Chamber last year, in late February early March, and I said that the UK Government had announced from November, the year before, that from November of last year they were going to be increasing the air passenger tax, and the Prime Minister said that he was going to get involved by sending off a letter by February 6. I said that. That is what my sources had told me.

The Minister of Tourism, on the instructions of the Prime Minister, said I was talking foolishness and it was not true. Now even if it was not true that the Prime Minister had agreed, or even if he had not known, it was quite possible that given the amount he was and still is in the area of 41 000 feet, he would not know. If he did not know before then, he certainly knew then.

The Prime Minister sat down on his laurels with the same Minister of Tourism, the two most incompetent people ever to be in charge of any aspect of this country's management, waited until the passenger tax was about four or five weeks away from implementation, then for the first time to get involved in the matter. So what do you expect to happen?

Sir, other countries were out there doing hard work. One country in particular got their residents in the UK, 60 000 of them to sign a petition.

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Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN: The Barbados Government waited until two or four weeks away. Do you know what that issue really reflects? The inability now of the Barbados Government to lead anything, under the incompetent present Prime Minister we have, Sir.

We had serious challenges with the OECD. Barbados led successfully. We had issues with the Shiprider Agreement. Barbados led, Sir, successfully. Now we have an Air Passenger Tax, Barbados followed, unsuccessfully, complete jokers. Sir, you know what it shows apart from inertia? it shows that, as I always knew, the present Prime Minister of Barbados has no stature. Outside of the 25 Members of Cabinet, nobody takes the Prime Minister of Barbados seriously anymore, whether it is at the CARICOM level, CARICOM meetings or anywhere, or in the international arena, Barbados' stature now has fallen and has fallen big time.

Sir, we have now found ourselves with a UK, market...

Asides.

Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN: The Minister can laugh at these things. Sir, he can continue to laugh at these things but in the UK, the losses are phenomenal, the decline is massive because on one major issue, Barbados failed to lead.

Sir, I see your signal but there is a lot more to speak about and I will definitely be coming back.

I thank you, Sir.

Asides.

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

His Excellency D.St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I rise to support this Head and to say from the outset, Sir, it is clear that the people of Barbados made the right choice when they got rid of the Barbados Labour Party from managing their affairs of tourism in this country.

It is clear to anyone, Sir, who understands any type of financial management that at a time like now, the two countries that you would focus on, in terms of increasing tourism will be the American market and the Canadian market. If you were to only look at the positioning of the currency, one would recognise that the Canadian dollar is strong and the American dollar is strong and that was on the horizon for a long time.

When you look at it, Sir, it is quite clear that the Canadians can afford to travel because they have increased

capacity as it relates to earnings. It is obvious that you go after a market that has an increase in capacity. The Honourable Member set up a straw man and then knock him down in his last sentence. He said that the tourism planners did not go after the English market but instead they went after the Canadian market and the United States market. Sir, the Honourable Member behaved as if that was a negative.

Sir, the Honourable Member went on to say that the reason the English market was not performing well was because of the Travel Tax. In his words, not only do you have a decline in the English currency, but you have another impediment where you have a Government putting policies to ensure that they strengthen their stay vacation.

Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He is saying things that I did not say. I have not yet gotten to the Canadian market. I have not mentioned the words, Canadian market yet in my presentation.

His Excellency D.St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, once you mention WestJet and JetBlue you do not have to say anything more, but what I am saying, Sir, it will be foolish of any Minister of Tourism not to recognise that the English market was soft, the economy was poor and that you could not depend on that economy to get your tourist at this time but you try to consolidate, and that is exactly what occurred.

They tried to consolidate the market to get as much as possible, even though they knew that the market would not increase, but instead of accepting it, what you got were the planners going after two markets where the currency would have been in the favour of the traveller. Sir, not only the currency but seats were available for people to travel at a reasonable rate and we are hearing in here today, Sir, that we should have left those seats for other countries to accept.

Sir, look at the statistics. We are hearing a lot in here about how well Jamaica has performed. Check and see where they got their tourists from, not the English market. Ask the Honourable Member to point out where they got their tourists from, the same market that the Honourable Member is complaining that we have tapped into, the same market, Sir.

Do you know what is interesting? Sir, Jamaicans are next door to America. The Honourable Member should have been complimenting the Minister for his foresight in going in, and what is interesting is that currency is not something that you could zero in, just like that. You have to carefully study it, and I want to congratulate the Minister for not only increasing the numbers out of the North American market, Sir, but understanding the strength of

currencies and how to play currencies. He behaved as if he were a finance minister in that relationship and he should have been complimented and not chastised for dealing with this issue.

Do you know what is regrettable? Sir, I must say that he is a good student too, because that is exactly what I have been telling that Government for years to stop depending only on the English market and to deal with the Canadian market.

Sir, what the Honourable Member did not tell you is that a part of the tourism is doing well in the Caribbean and he did mention that it is community tourism, something they said that they did not want anything to do with, Sir. They were only interested in all-inclusive tourism.

If you go to Dominica, you would see how they have been able to come after us and to capitalise on Community Tourism. The same Jamaica that the Honourable Member is speaking about, Sir, that community tourism is very big in tourism. There was not one word from the Honourable Member on community tourism and how it has impacted on the tourism in Jamaica.

Sir, if you want to come in here and produce facts, Sir, you must produce them in a positive way because facts are supposed to be positive not negative. The Honourable Member should apologise to this House and should chastise the previous Minister of Tourism for not following the lead given by the Opposition at the time and instead of allowing tourism to be a one-legged programme as it was under them, Sir, we should have been building on what they should have taken advice and should have done.

We in here told them to do that and they refused. We told them to go after the Canadian markets. We referred to the fact that in the 1970s, Sunset Crest was built off the Canadian market and we showed them the relationship between the Canadians and the Barbadian public, and they refused to accept.

The Canadian market was there ever since to be accepted and to play a major role and they refused, all because they were caught up only in the English market. I am not saying that the English market should be ignored but like everything, Sir, when you are building an industry, you do not just concentrate on one sector of the industry, you concentrate on all sectors and all parts of the industry and that is exactly what is occurring in here today.

Sir, we have a Minister of Tourism who understands how to deal with tourism and he understands looking at the larger picture and not part thereof.

Asides.

His Excellency D.St.E. KELLMAN: I am not begging for a job. I do not need a job. I have a job. I created a job since 1994 when I walked away from the BAMC, unlike you, Sir, who could do better and still asked for a pick. Everybody knows you can do better.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say that we have to understand the strength of community tourism and we have to understand that we have created a niche and we need to build on it, Sir. We have to understand the impact of tourism in the 1960s and 1970s and this is the difference between that Government and this Government. Sir, we were there when we saw small people being players within the tourism industry and we understood how that created the engine for growth in this country but instead, all we were interested in is all-inclusive tourism and condos. What you are seeing today, Sir, is a combination of all sectors and all systems in tourism and every man now can play his part in tourism.

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His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: That is not only a saying, it is a fact. Previously, you just heard words. You were asking people to play a part in tourism when it meant nothing for them. Mr. Chairman, as you go through Barbados today you would see that everyone can now play their part because they are part of the tourism plant and the system.

Mr. Chairman, we are happy to have JetBlue. The same Government that took the taxpayers' money to pay airlines to come here are now behaving as if this is something new. Sir, I thought they had a policy when they went to the South Coast and spent so much money on tourism.

Sir, I thought they understood what they were doing but it is clear today, after hearing the last Honourable Member speak, that they do not understand anything about tourism. Mr. Chairman, when I thought that they were expanding the hotel growth on the South Coast, it was for another reason, if not the Honourable Member would not have made the statements the Honourable Member made in here today.

Mr. Chairman, in the 1960s and the 1970s, when we bought those estates from the plantation owners, we bought them because we wanted to keep capacity. We understood the importance of plantations to the sugar industry and to the agricultural industry. Sir, it is clear that when those hotels were bought on the South Coast that they were not bought to keep capacity, or to increase the capacity, they were bought for a different reason based on the arguments I am hearing now from the Other Side.

Mr. Chairman, I am proud that the Minister of Tourism understands what is community tourism. I am happy to know that he does not see it as \$20 tourists and that he understands the multiplier effect of that part of tourism to the economy of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, we also have to understand that we have to utilise our coastlines much better. We have to understand, as I said in here before and I will not reflect, but I would make this statement, that for every one hotel that was built on the coastline in Barbados, we have deprived ourselves of six inland hotels. We have given advantage believing that we were doing something right but, on reflection, not one single hotel should have been built on the coast of Barbados. All of them should have been built on the other side because all we did was to give the capacity of Barbados to one owner when we could have been giving it to many owners. What we should have done is not allowed that beautiful side of Barbados to be blocked and misused. What the Honourable Member does not understand is that if we did not build on the sea coast, that the lands inland would have been of greater value and of greater usage to this country.

Mr. Chairman, if we had not allowed a "two few" in tourism - which is well-known to the Other Side, because they know how to look after the "two few" - tourism would have been a larger pie and the Minister of Tourism would have been in a position to be speaking of higher figures today. Sir, all we have done is to block our progress by allowing people to build on the beaches of Barbados. If the Honourable Member does not understand that, I cannot help him.

Mr. Chairman, we should be happy that we got a 30.6 per cent increase in the United States of America market. It reminds me very much of the early 1970s. There was a time when we took charge of the United States of America market.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has three minutes.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: That is okay, Sir, one minute would have been enough.

In the 1970s, it was the United States of America market that was leading tourism in here just before the Naval Base was kicked out. Go and look at the statistics. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party kicked out the Naval Base. From the time the Naval Base was kicked out, St. Lucy stopped developing at the rate it did and the American tourists stopped coming to this country the way they did. They did not understand the importance of the Naval Base to the tourism market. By the Naval Base being there, it attracted families and friends to come to Barbados to visit

the personnel working there and to expand our tourism market.

Sir, we got caught up in revenue without looking to see the damage we did to our foreign exchange. That is why I have always said in this country that we concentrate too much on revenue and ignore the impact of foreign exchange.

Mr. Chairman, any country that puts its focus on foreign exchange would get all the revenue it wants. We need to expand, not consolidate. All we are doing is glossing over the issue and ignoring the facts without having an appreciation for building foreign exchange in this country, as if we could get up one morning and push our hands in our pockets and get foreign exchange. The reverse is true.

Sir, now that this point is made, I hope that my Honourable friend for St. Michael North, who once served as Minister of State in the Ministry of Tourism, would have understood the teaching of Tourism today so that he would have enough knowledge to be elevated in the next Government as a Minister of Tourism.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I rise just to clarify a few comments which were made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North. I do not propose to spend too long on this. It is unbelievable that this is someone who was a Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Tourism and International Transport. I think it is fair to say that he was not too involved in the tourism component and probably not in the international transport component either.

This business that when airlines are in a expansionary mode, they would come to you anyway, like if we stand up and look outside in the sky and tell airlines to come and land here. I do not know where that happens. Airlines do not just come here because they are in an expansionary mode. You have to go and sit and negotiate. In the first instance, you have to negotiate an air services agreement and then you have to go and sit and talk with them.

Mr. Chairman, Governments for a long time have been spending taxpayers' money to try to get airlines to come here. Sir, getting up and trying to suggest that something sinister happened with JetBlue...

First of all, he should know that those details are not things you can just announce on the Floor of the House. You cannot give out those details. They come to you and there is a fiduciary arrangement where we give information

to you in terms of the load factors and so on. You cannot just give that out, and he should have known that. I understand why the files had to go to Billie Miller's desk after they left his desk because you cannot take a chance and leave him to do anything.

The arrangement with JetBlue is no different to the one with American Airlines. I made the commitment that I would not enter into an arrangement with JetBlue that would put them in an advantageous position over the carrier that was already on the route. That is the plan.

Let me also add, that if you want to know the arrangement for American Airlines, you can call the former Honourable Member for St. Michael South - I do not know if you started talking to him yet, I know that you were not talking to him before - because that was an arrangement that I did not negotiate. That was an existing one I found, and the JetBlue one was brought on stream with it, so nothing sinister has occurred there.

I have warned this Honourable Member to be careful with that Jamaican model of discounting rooms by 65 per cent. He likes to talk about earnings. Jamaica gets 1.7 million long-stay tourists a year and they do not even get US\$2 billion from the industry. Barbados gets a third of that, and we get nearly US\$1.2 billion. You cannot compare the two.

Am I to understand that we follow the Jamaican model and end up at the International Monetary Fund and having to sell Bridgetown to the Chinese? Do we follow the Jamaican model and still see hotel plants closing down and retrenching people because of the earnings?

Asides.

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4.00 p.m.

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Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, one of the world's most natural harbours is now in the hands of the Chinese because of the perilous state of affairs in Jamaica, and I am being told that the Prime Minister should go "gungho" with the Jamaican model. It is not going to happen, not this Government. That is not what the people of Barbados voted for.

Mr. Chairman, at any rate, the Honourable Member also talked about the situation at the Barbados Tourism Authority, about how it is in this terrible state. Sir, I do not see anybody with placards outside the front door. I do not see anybody striking. Sir, do you remember the confusion

that existed under the last Government? Sir, they now want to advise me about the situation.

I will tell you about the situation at the Barbados Tourism Authority. Sir, we are going through a restructuring exercise. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is not here. The Honourable Member spoke about the fact that we are splitting Boards and that nothing has happened. Sir, I would have thought, as the Leader of a political party that was born out of the Trade Union Movement, that the Honourable Member would not have been asking me about Boards but would have been asking me about the workers there.

I would have thought that the Honourable Member would have been asking me what are the plans for the workers but no, the Honourable Member's concerns are about the Boards. Therefore, apparently the Party of Grantley Adams and Sir Hugh Springer is not concerned about the workers at the Barbados Tourism Authority, they are more concerned with the Board members.

Sir, since it matters to the Honourable Member, I will tell her. I wrote the members of the former Board before we decided to embark on the restructuring. I indicated what Government plans were. We are setting up a tourism marketing company. We are setting up a product authority. The members of the Board all said that they were willing to participate.

Sir, this is what happened since then: one former member of that Board is the Deputy Chairman, Caves of Barbados, a serious product issue, Barbados number one tourist attraction. Another member of that Board is the Deputy Chairman for Kensington Oval, another product issue, sports tourism cricket. Two members are now under the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. Board - an investment issue. Sir, we are going to talk about that also because of some of the advice rendered in here by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter.

We have to talk about investment within the concept of tourism. Sir, we have a serious philosophical divide there and not mock philosophy, not fiscal deficit philosophy, this is real philosophy and we will talk about that. Sir, one member left the jurisdiction and has come back and has reminded me that he is still willing to participate in our efforts to get the institutional arrangements right for managing tourism. That is what is happening with the Board issues, since that was all that was raised by the Opposition.

Mr. Chairman, I will just mention to the nation, through this Parliament, that we do have an arrangement with both the Barbados Workers' Union and the National Union of Public Workers. We have set up a plan of action. There is a communication plan that we have and we are

also about to consult further with other stakeholders. Therefore, we are going to have a restructured entity.

Mr. Chairman, we are going about it in a very methodical way. We have the draft legislation done as far as the product authority is concerned and already our lawyers are about to incorporate the marketing entity. Sir, work has been going on.

Mr. Chairman, I would readily concede that in my enthusiasm, I may have set some optimistic targets, but I do not mind missing a target to make sure that we get it right. Sir, this is too important, therefore, we are going through a process.

There is a protocol that we are also trying to put in place as far as ensuring that we would have very little loss of jobs and that in such cases those separations would be voluntary, and that we can have the institutional arrangements that we all believe are necessary.

Mr. Chairman, it is interesting to note that the last Government did some talking about restructuring the Barbados Tourism Authority. In fact, they did a lot of talking about restructuring, but that is all we heard - talk. We have actually gone the whole hog. We have an advisory committee set up.

There is a lead consultant, Mr. Cecil Miller, a tourism specialist. There is a Human Resource specialist, Ms. Ingrid Parris. There is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Barbados Tourism Authority. There is the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport. There is a legal advisor, Mr. John Connell, Q.C., a former Justice of the Court of Appeal. Sir, we have been putting things in place with regard to getting the organisational arrangements correct for the Barbados Tourism Authority.

Mr. Chairman, I would say as well, and it is important, that even though we are going through that restructuring as far as the existing arrangements are concerned, we are still trying to improve upon them because, unfortunately, you cannot shut down the Barbados Tourism Authority while restructuring. Sir, it is like how you would convert a board house to wall and still live in it. You build around it, then you take down the existing structure and then you have the new property there. You cannot just shut down the Barbados Tourism Authority and start up a new entity. You have to work with the existing arrangements.

Sir, to that extent, we are establishing a management trainee programme at the Barbados Tourism Authority, something that has never before existed, so that in the future when we are looking for specialists and managers at the Barbados Tourism Authority, we would not have to

recruit from all over, but that we can have career paths and talents that have been developed from within the organisation coming up through the organisation.

Sir, that is what is happening at the Barbados Tourism Authority and was not happening for the last 14 years when people were picketing, when people were sent home, when people were being escorted back to their cubicles to gather their personals and were escorted back out.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I am hearing about confusion at the Barbados Tourism Authority. Sir, the most confused state the Barbados Tourism Authority ever had was when that existed. I would not bother talking about Board meetings occurring at Holder's House two weeks before Elections, or about giving half-million dollar contracts to people, with part payments occurring. I would not get into that. You take it easy. Do not let us talk about the Destiny Agreement. You take it light. The Kiwanis Board was the worst Board the Barbados Tourism Authority ever had.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, nonetheless, let us talk about some other things that we are having. We also have a number of initiatives to try to save money. We have committed ourselves to making sure that we get better value for money as far as our goods and services are concerned. Sir, prudent management systems have been put in place.

Sir, because of the mess we found, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance, we brought on an internal auditor at the Barbados Tourism Authority to put some better systems of accountability in place. Coming out of that, we have been reviewing our sales agents, the sales agents that work all over the world for us, making sure that there is a better system of accountability.

Sir, I would want to say that in some cases where we may have to reallocate resources, we will do that. I am told that you cannot have a Vice President for Latin America based in Miami. Well, honestly, Mr. Chairman, every half idiot knows that the gateway to Latin America is Miami. That is the perfect place to put somebody who is doing work in Latin America.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, that is the ideal location, It is some place where the Barbados Tourism Authority already has an office and, therefore, there is

existing infrastructure in place. What are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to just show up in the middle of South America and set up an office? It is not done like that.

Sir, because the gentleman responsible for Latin America is based in Miami now, that does not mean he will always be based there. Sir, it is the correct place for now. It is a highly appropriate place, considering what we are trying to do in Brazil, Argentina, Panama and so on. It makes total sense.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying that in relation to the Barbados Tourism Authority, we are trying to get those issues corrected and that in terms of the vending of goods and services, we are also negotiating those contracts.

H:No.A60C (33)4:l0 p.m.

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Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, we are quite happy with how the work of the internal audit is coming along and that person will be there on a constant basis also. You must understand that the Barbados Tourism Authority has two offices overseas and so, naturally, keeping appropriate systems of accountability are important. Sir, we are satisfied that is what we are doing and where we are going.

Mr. Chairman, if I just talk about the restructuring a bit more. The product identity would allow us to focus on product, which is something that was, unfortunately, not happening for quite a while in Barbados, taking time to focus on our tourism product. Yes, the bricks and mortar, the hotels and attractions and so on, but also those other peculiar things that make up that vacation experience that need to be given critical attention.

If we are going to be in this industry, and if we are going to be in business, we have to study those things, put the resources together, to do work to see if we could develop all of those other areas like heritage tourism, agro tourism, community tourism, which we have heard about already and all those other entities as well. Mr. Chairman, we want to make sure we get them in order.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to talk of some of the efficiencies and savings that we would be able to incur with respect to even how we promote the destination and some of the programmes and so on that we have as well with the private sector. Mr. Chairman, I am aware of the time and it is certainly my intention to come back and deal with that issue as well as a few others.

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

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, I wish to revisit this issue, which I consider to be very serious, of the arrangement between the Government and JetBlue Airlines. Sir, the Minister is wilfully, and I now have to add, maliciously refusing to give this information.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, you have to withdraw "maliciously".

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, I withdraw the word "maliciously".

MR. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, could you take your seat please. I understand the emotion but I really believe that we have to be careful in terms of the statements that we make. As you have said, you have withdrawn the remark.

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Sir, the Minister is wilfully refusing to give this information. There can be no so-called fiduciary relationship privately entered into that would preclude a Minister from telling taxpayers how their money is being spent. Sir, this is the people's place. We come here and we were asked to approve money to go to the Barbados Tourism Authority for marketing purposes and, Sir, some went towards this venture. We want to know what this venture is costing the taxpayers vis-a-vis what the returns are.

Mr. Chairman, there is no such alleged fiduciary clause or whatever in Jamaica, that prevented the contents from being not only disclosed but being probed. Sir, I want to know what are the details of the arrangement. The Minister cannot just say that he cannot give it out because it is the money of the taxpayers. Sir, he cannot just say that. He has to say what the returns are and if it is worth the while.

Mr. Chairman, not only that, but in relation to Jamaica, Sir, Jamaica is like years ahead of Barbados when it comes to tourism. The Minister would do well to recognise that, and try to work with it to find out more about it, and enact some of the policies that they have enacted because they are like years ahead. It is really insulting to compare Barbados' tourism with Jamaica's tourism.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to clear the record. Sir, Jamaica went to the IMF not because of, but in spite of its performance in tourism. The Minister must stick to his league and do not try to get into higher things that he really does not understand.

Mr. Chairman, yesterday, I explained the effects of the 8.5 magnitude Minister of Tourism on the Barbados Tourism Authority so I am not going to repeat all that I have said yesterday. I would just ask the Minister what are

the costs implications of what he is doing at the Barbados Tourism Authority?

These two companies that are going to be formed, what are the cost implications, not only at the level of staff, so that when companies are set up abroad, then you have a Government entity. You get all your duty-free concessions and so on, but there are companies in which you do not get that. Sir, any idiot knows that so I am just asking the Minister what would be the cost implications now of this new structure that will be put in place in relation to the Barbados Tourism Authority.

Mr. Chairman, I want to revisit the United Kingdom market because the Minister spent about three minutes on what is really an important matter. A number of issues are arising there and I really would like to hear the Minister elaborate more on how it is that he is coping with what is happening or what is likely to happen.

Mr. Chairman, there is a strike pending. We have heard about it. Is the Minister ensuring that work is going on with tour operators in the event that this strike materialises, or alternative arrangements for people to get into Barbados and out of Barbados if that strike should take place? Is the Minister doing that?

Mr. Chairman, what about the morale of staff up there as well. There is a Vice President of the United Kingdom. What is the status of the contract with that individual? Is that individual still on the job? Is the contract being renewed again? Is the person going to be kept on a yearly or whatever contract? Is the person going to feel stable in the job, or is that person just like the other people that the Barbados Tourism Authority will be sending home, as has been happening here in droves?

Mr. Chairman, more important, what of the Best of Barbados Programme particularly as it relates to the United Kingdom market, and the North American market. What of this programme particularly as summer is almost upon us? Sir, the Government has called off the Best of Barbados Programme. They have not yet announced what they are going to be putting in its place. I have been hearing things about plans and so on but nothing has been announced and summer is almost upon us. I hope that the Government does not really intend to repeat the mistakes of last year in relation to summer because last year Barbados was some 19 out of 27 countries in the Region reporting to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, and we had an exceptionally bad summer period.

Sir, so far, knowing what happened last year and knowing that summer is coming, Barbados is yet to put anything in the market by way of packages and the like to try to safeguard or secure a proper performance for our summer period. Sir, I want the Minister to ensure that he

does not make the same mistake he made last year and that we can see a better summer.

Mr. Chairman, despite that there is a lot of money being spent on our tourism sector, I repeat, it is as if it is just going into a bottomless pit. Sir, particularly given the Minister's reluctant to account to us how our money is being spent, I believe on This Side, as I have said yesterday, that we are going to have to look very carefully at whether we can just come in here and automatically rubber stamp, on This Side, the spending of money by a Government that is now saying it is not going to account to us for how it spends the money.

Mr. Chairman, we are in a hole. We hear about the Tourism Investment Relief Fund but, Sir, that was a complete joke. Sir, as Bajans would tell you, it is a bare joke. Sir, after 2001, as the Minister likes to point out, the then Government decided to set up a fund and they put \$10 million into that Fund. Sir, it was restricted to hotels and the Minister likes to use that as a negative. Mr. Chairman, that would have been a few hundred players.

Mr. Chairman, the Minister has pointed out now that they set up a fund last year that was not restricted to just hotels but for the entire tourism sector, including ancillary services. Sir, that was thousands upon thousands of players and only gave \$15 million for a quarter, and only made the money available long after the quarter was finished.

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Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, \$10 million for just hotels, as opposed to a couple hundred people, as opposed to \$15 million for thousands of people. What happened? Very few people applied. It did not make a lot of sense applying. Very few people applied and the few that applied, of that few, they got very little among themselves. That was for the first quarter of last year.

Sir, what did the Government turn around and do, after seeing that \$15 million did not really work for the first quarter? The Government decided that they were going to and allocated instead \$15 million or more. Seeing that \$15 million did not go any distance, they cut it to \$10 million, the second time around, to service the same number of people

Sir, then magically, and this is really new maths, redefined the concept of a quarter, which you and I know to be three months, to four months, April, May, June and July, instead of three, and sought to divide a measly \$10 million among all the tourism players in Barbados. Eventually very few people benefitted. Sir, what we saw and continue to see, is unemployment increasing.

There is no point the Government coming in here and giving the impression that there has been no loss of jobs in the hotel sector, and nobody knows about any loss of jobs. I know people that are on my committee that lost jobs in the tourism sector, lost jobs outright.

Sir, apart from those who lost jobs, and what the Government has now brought to the fore in this country is a category of under-employed people. Sir, when hotels are not laying them off outright, they are keeping them on for one or two days a week in hotels. That is what is happening, so the Government's policies are resulting in us seeing in the hotel sector and in broader Barbados, unemployment increasing and under-employment coming to the fore, and increasing at a rapid rate.

Sir, beach vendors do not bother now to go to work, because they tell you that even if they go to work, they are not spending any money. They do not have any money to spend.

Sir, what is significant too, the small operators in this country, we see restaurants closing like ninepins, but small operators.

Sir, you have guest houses, private houses, places that provide 50 to 100 rooms taking massive losses, because the occupancy rates are very low. There are hotels of all sizes and accommodation, locations of all sizes, with some 20 per cent occupancy rates, so when I hear the Minister talk about increases of 30 per cent out of New York, people come to Barbados, but where are they staying?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has three minutes.

Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN: Where are they staying, because they are not staying in the guest houses or hotels, and the Barbados economy is not going anywhere. Government needs to stop playing games and get on with the serious programme.

Sir, I am going to give way at this stage because I want to talk about the aspects of capital investment, but I cannot develop that point in three minutes, so I will give way.

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

Mr. H.F. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, John Stewart Mills once said, "all good fruits that exist are the seeds of originality." Sir, when the history of Barbados is written, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would always be remembered for being the pioneer, the person who conceptualised the whole idea of Community Tourism.

I am saying that against a background because for years in this Honourable Chamber there has been a lot of talk about Community Tourism. This Government, on coming to office, actually implemented the whole idea of community tourism.

Why I am so passionate about this because I see ordinary poor people in the Pine, the City and St. Lucy benefitting directly from the concept of community tourism. I am saying that the whole product of community tourism is actually reaching, as the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would say, the masses of people in Barbados.

Perhaps, I would like the Barbados Tourism Authority to consider initiating something called a Community Contact Day. It will be an extension of the community tourism product. In addition, for Community Contact Day, we will select those communities that have the necessary infrastructure.

There might be a need to build the capacity of some, but it would be a revolutionary stroke of social engineering, in my view, because for once in a number of years the valuable tourist dollar will then trickle down to poor people into the communities. That is the point I want to make.

I also strengthen the point by saying that it was usual in Barbados - there was a time when tourists were put in an area of reservation, South Coast and West Coast. I am saying that you are seeing the tourists, particularly the cruise line tourists, entering the communities and enjoying themselves.

I also think that the BTA must also talk to the agents and owners of the cruise lines, because with all the discussion in here, we have not yet said that the arrivals on the cruise lines have not decreased. The cruise line aspect is holding its own. I would really like to see, in a sense, that we strengthen those communities across Barbados, and also contact the agents and owners of these cruise ships with a view of having them bring the tourists directly into communities across Barbados.

Sir, in my view, under the topic of Heritage Tourism, Queen's Park is greatly under-utilised. It is virtually in the heart of Bridgetown and I really believe that when cruise liners arrive in Barbados, we should be able to carry some of those tourists into Queens Park as part of the Heritage Tourism product. We can set up a kind of lime and, for that period of time, the tours should always carry some of them to Queen's Park. We could sit down and work out how we can make it a very attractive package for tourists when they go to Queen's Park.

Sir, those were just the opening sentiments that I want to express. The Minister hosted a very successful sports tourism conference at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford

Centre. It was very successful and was attended by a number of persons across Barbados. I would like to see us host a Regional conference on Sports Tourism. I am saying that from the point of view that some of the objectives would be to meet key operators and event organisers.

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Mr. H.F. LASHLEY: Sir, I am saying that against a background that South Africa is hosting the Global Conference on Sports Tourism and more than 25 000 promoters, persons who are involved in tourism, are going to South Africa. I am saying that Barbados being the hub of tourism in the Caribbean, should also look to foster and develop the product in the Region.

Sir, I am saying that against a background also, that recently, on the Garrison Savannah, the Barbados Turf Club hosted the Second Best Run in the Prestigious Gold Cup. Do you know what was amazing? This time around, as opposed to the very first Gold Cup, we have more than 1 000 visitors at the Garrison Savannah. Primarily, that is due to the fact that we have persons living in Canada, North American and England who promoted this event.

One such person was a man by the name of Eugene Melanick. I know that there is some dispute between Mr. Melanick and the Barbados Turf Club. However, that did not stop him from fulling an airplane of visitors from Canada and bringing them directly to the Garrison Savannah. Sir, that has not stopped him from naming every single racehorse he has after some place in Barbados. Sir, that has not stopped him from acting as a kind of ambassador for Barbados, where now in North America, Canada, England, et cetera, across the globe, where his horses are running, you know that horse is named after some place in Barbados, and all of his horses are winners.

I am saying, Sir, being a very astute fan of horse racing, because I was born near St. Matthias and I used to be at the Garrison almost every Saturday. Even when I used to go to Church, I would slip out of Church and head to the Garrison. The fact is that this man is doing a lot to promote Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, the introduction of night racing to Barbados is a great thought and a great initiative because if there are 100 tourists in Barbados, you could bet that at least 60 of them would go to the Garrison Savannah. Sir, I am saying that with the coming of night racing, that is going to strengthen our local tourism product and it is something I am hoping that the Barbados Turf Club pursues.

Sir, from time to time, I hear people talking negatively about sporting initiatives like this and the importance of it to the tourist product in Barbados, but the Barbados Turf Club employs more than 2 000 poor Barbadians as grooms, trainers and jockeys. This is an industry that once night racing takes off, will add value to the tourism product.

Sir, there is an organisation in Barbados that I want to really compliment because I believe that the Minister is going to have to look at some point in time at something called "Youth Tourism". The Barbados Youth Development Council, Sir, is currently very active in promoting what they call, Youth Tourism, Youth to Youth. They have established a secretariat in Barbados to coordinate with their other organisations across the Caribbean to bring more youths to Barbados.

This year is the International Year of the Youth. The last time the globe designated a year for the youth was in the year 1985. What they are doing is making contact with all the other youth Parliaments across the Region and the globe, and will be hosting a major conference in Barbados by bringing the Youth Parliaments from Suriname, Trinidad, the Bahamas, Canada, Wales and as far as Australia later this year.

This concept of Youth Tourism, must be seriously considered. There is nothing more that a young person loves to do but to fly and meet other persons and their peers. I am saying that we have here on the West Wing of Parliament, I believe that the West Wing of Parliament could become a permanent place where the Youth Parliament of Barbados could meet and discuss their business.

I am saying that against a background, Sir, that also later this year, there will be a second meeting of the Assemblies of Caribbean Youth also in Barbados, and we have to come up with new and innovative strategies and programmes to continue to help the Minister, in terms of promoting the tourism product.

Mr. Chairman, also in April, we will be having the West Indies' Women Softball Cricket Tournament in Barbados. Already, Sir, despite the harsh economic times, teams are coming in from Trinidad, St. Vincent, Guyana, St. Kitts, St. Maarten and Antigua.

Also, around that same period of time, there will be the Regional Scaletric Tournament in Barbados which will be staged at TriMart Mall in Haggatt's Hall. Sir, in that tournament there will be small racing cars along an electric circuit, Sir, and more than 75 persons from Trinidad will be coming to Barbados. It will be a clash between Barbados and Trinidad.

Sir, the importance of what I am talking about is creating more linkages in the Caribbean with our youths, Sir, youth to youth connection, youth to youth through sporting organisations, through cultural organisations.

There is a Caribbean grassroots fusion existing in the Caribbean now. There is a cultural grassroots fusion which is headquartered in Barbados. Sir, that fusion of bringing cultural artistes from across the Region to Barbados would benefit significantly. Sir, what we should realise by now is that the entire Region, in all endeavours of activity, looks up to Barbados for leadership, for guidance. Once it works in Barbados, it could work anywhere.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has three minutes.

Mr. H.F. LASHLEY: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying that because I seriously believe that we in Barbados, our greatest resource is our human resource. The Prime Minister has spoken about Team Barbados. This is one initiative that calls for the effort of all Barbadians to be on board.

Perhaps, Sir, as I conclude, I still feel that the Prime Minister of Britain should really reconsider that very gruesome tax that he has imposed on his people, which could seriously restrict persons travelling out of Britain to the Caribbean. There has been a lot of negotiations on it but I believe that the Opposition Leader in England should really press the Parliament of England and force this Prime Minister - if the electorate does not do it - to withdraw this burdensome tax.

The world is facing challenges. The challenges that the current Minister is facing are not unique to him. It is across the world and, Sir, as the Representative, you should feel heartened in the fact that you are doing a good job, despite the criticism. Life is not worth living without a little bit of criticism. I am saying, Sir, that despite everything, he is trying his best. He is doing a good job and I am sure that with all of us helping, particularly from the aspect of community tourism initiatives and with new initiatives coming, that Barbados would safely sail through these turbulent economic times.

Mr. Chairman, I will be back and I thank you very much, Sir.

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 36, 16:40:14

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I wish to make a few comments in relation to Head 55 and to indicate at the outset that I wish to laud the efforts of a Barbados Labour Party Government in upgrading the Grantley Adams International Airport where we enjoy here in Barbados the status of international standards. I think that is pertinent to the continued growth in our tourism sector. Despite what is said, that airport has made a significant contribution to that expansion.

Mr. Chairman, I want to be a little more parochial in respect of St. Thomas being one of the central parishes where there are no less than six to eight places of interest. I heard the Honourable Minister speak of Harrison's Cave, which I always speak of in the fondest of ways to say that it is the eighth wonder of the world.

The redevelopment of Harrison's Cave is a project that was started by a Barbados Labour Party Government and I am happy that this new Government has continued with it, because we know that tourism is one of the major pillars in this economy. I know that there was a launch just a few weeks ago and I am happy to see the completion or near completion of that project.

Sir, the emphases I would wish to make are associated with the linkages that the parish has with St. Andrew, St. Joseph, St. James and the other parishes for visitors and locals to go to sites for entertainment, recreation, leisure or whatever you would wish to call it.

Mr. Chairman, in relation to Harrison's Cave, we have Allen View, Sturges, Bloomsbury, Bryan's Road, Vault Road and so on, folks who have for the last 10 years been working assiduously with the Environmental Special Projects Unit to be able to generate interest among locals as part of the tourism project.

We know of the Heart of Barbados and the races and so on that are integral to that exercise. That happens almost every June. The year before last, it did not happen. I believe there was an effort this year. I know that the races took place but indeed not the Heart of Barbados with the fullsome approach that has always been there, but I would wish to indicate that it would be a wonderful exercise to engage those people.

The residents of those various communities and the surrounding areas have been very integral to volunteering their services with the Heart of Barbados and other projects. I know that there is a UNESCO Project called "Youth Path" engaging the young people of those communities. I have seen excellent work coming out of that project. I believe that aspect of it should continue. They are

engaged in cultural activities and so on. That helps to bring a measure of pride and ownership to the young people, and indeed, the residents living in those communities.

What bothers me at this time, Mr. Chairman, is the expansion of the redevelopment project to engage the residents. Some of them are unemployed. Many of them have excellent skills. They can cook and make souvenirs, but they are lacking in employment.

I understand that an aspect of that project is to do with kiosks that would line the Allen View Main Road where the tourists have to enter from the Welchman Hall Main Road. Of course, it would give them a chance, if they walk in, to be able to use their funds to generate some money for those people who are the locals. Indeed, it would bring a further measure of pride to their hearts.

There is nothing more disconcerting than to be living near the Cave and not feeling that you are an integral part of it in the way that you should be. I am not saying that in the past enough was not done, but there is an opportunity and there is potential for even more to happen. Sir, I would like to see the expansion of that project to embrace those persons whom I know would be happy to be an integral part of the exercise.

Sir, the second point I would wish to raise is associated with Highland Tours, the nature walk that leads through to Mount Hillaby and the other communities there that are places of interest. I had made some communication with the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. Every visitor who comes to Barbados does not want to go to the beach alone. They need the variety. We all know that. We are the same when we travel overseas. We do not just want to go to one place.

Now that the cruise liner interest is generating among Barbadians, we go down to the islands and we want to explore, and that is how many of us spend money along the road when we see the vendors and so. I believe that is something that should happen.

Mr. Chairman, what has me extremely concerned is that at Mount Hillaby, the condition of the area is really lacking in development. Every tourist says the highest point we understand is 1 100 feet in the air. Drivers of buses, coaches and so on always go to that high point but when they get there, there is little or nothing to be seen except the beauty of the East Coast and the villagers who are extremely warm and embracing.

I believe that it is time that an effort could be made with the community to help with the enhancement of that area, even if it is no more than putting up a large stone or some kind of monument to say this is the highest point in Barbados and, at least, put a few benches and bench tables

that when visitors drive there, or walk there as a part of their exercise programme, they are able to be a little more comfortable.

As I said, there is a link between Airy Cot and Mount Hillaby. The communities are adjoining each other. I must tell you that the folks in Airy Cot and Canefield have excellent skills. They are the ones who would have used what we call the wild cane to make dung-baskets. They use the cane-lily, that we call ping-wing in our language, to be able to make baskets to serve bread and to use as coasters on tables. They put in the raffia. A lot of that is still going on. There are persons in Hopewell who join them to make large Khus Khus grass mats, beautiful mats like rugs that can be used.

I believe that the upgrades at Mount Hillaby and the linkages that go with Highland would help to add flavour to what is being offered in the parish. Sir, by the time you leave there, a five-minute drive, you are on to Welchman Hall Gully, the Flower Forest, Harrison's Cave and so on. I believe that if we could get that kind of assistance coming through from the Ministry, and indeed, from the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., that would add...

I am not going to forget Vault Road because that is where the Vault was established in 1666 and it is an interesting landmark. Again, there has been no response, I am not blaming anybody. I am just making the point that the potential is there to help with our heritage tourism so that when people pass they say what is that and why it is there and the locals would tell the story.

I know that the oral tradition would help a lot because we always boast, and it is correct, that the ordinary person in tourism, the taxi drivers, the persons selling the fish cakes and so, make an indelible mark on the lives of visitors here. It is not necessarily always the promotions as are done, or at the hotels as the case may be. I am, therefore, Sir, asking for that kind of assistance.

Mr. Chairman, I support the venture for the funds in the budget for the ongoing sessions and the emphases that are placed on the HIV/AIDS Programme. I think that it is pertinent that hotel workers and other workers in the industry get the opportunity for education, and that best practices are engaged when they are on the job as well as for other persons who are on the beaches plying their trade so that they have best practices in whatever they are doing.

I also wish to support the efforts of the \$420 000 being offered through the Barbados National Trust, because heritage tourism and the preservation and restoration of sites are also very important.

4.50 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I am saddened that the replica of a slave hut at the Rock Hall Freedom Village was destroyed in 2008. It was an important aspect of that project. I believe it is about time that a little more be done in St. Thomas because the folks at Rock Hall are eagerly awaiting the opportunity for nature trails to be developed, for training of residents for them to be able to ply their trade in the kiosks that were promised, and for them to be intimately involved.

Sir, at the end of the day, the slogan we use: "Tourism is our business. Let us play our part" is still very pertinent. Sir, Barbadians are always very genuine. They always give a broad smile. They give directions to tourists and so I believe that the folks at Rock Hall need to get involved in the exercise.

Mr. Chairman, with regard to the engagement of schools in the whole tourism exercise, again I will make a plea for the schools in St. Thomas. Sir, I know in the past that schools, particularly Holy Innocent School, have played a very important role in the education, to prepare and to sensitise them about tourism. That school is also closest to the Cave and to the Welchman Hall Gully. I know they have done a number of projects. They had a garbage can project where they painted the cans and had them posted throughout the parish, so that persons were better able to get an idea of where they should dispose of their garbage.

I know they write compositions. I know they do their own choirs and that at Christmas time they go around carolling. They still work intimately with the Environmental Special Projects Unit. I believe that if that idea is replicated across the country where businesses and hotels and others would continue to adopt schools...

I know there are no hotels in the parish and that is why the Environmental Special Projects Unit is doing it, but we have Hillaby/Turner's Hall School doing exceptionally well. We have Sharon, Lester Vaughan, Welches Primary. Those are schools in the community that if they are engaged beyond writing compositions, I think that would help to make a tremendous difference.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has three minutes more in which to conclude.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, the other thing I would wish to say is that in respect to those ideas that have been identified, perhaps a subvention would go a long way, if we cannot get the opportunity for hotels to adopt the schools. I know there are some challenges with business

houses now. I believe that when things improve that, perhaps, that is the route we could go, where that subvention would help.

Sir, there are many teachers and volunteers in communities across the length and breadth of Barbados, who would be willing to tithe their time and to work with our children. We know that children's minds are impressionable. They are the ones who bring home the stories. They are the ones who try to practise and enforce a number of ideas that are put for them. There is nobody who could impact on them when they are young, like their teachers. I believe that if an effort like that is pursued, that would help to make a difference in what we are doing in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for the City.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, in dealing with this Tourism Head, I would wish to support those Honourable Members who have spoken earlier, highlighting the importance of community tourism. I would like to congratulate the Ministry of Tourism for taking the bold step for funding the community tourism project at Parkinson Field, since the last General Election. I was able to attend this event, where I saw tourists interfacing with the local residents.

I saw tourists interfacing with small entrepreneurs, be they persons who make condiments, locally-made foodstuff, jams, jellies, confectionary, good old Barbadian things such as fishcakes, sugar cakes, glassies, persons involved in craft, leather craft, textile, batik, tie dye, which are all integral parts of the Barbadian experience, or in the performing arts whether they be drumming, dancing with the complimentary costume, be it the Landship and the Tuk Band.

This has allowed these tourists to experience firsthand the depth and beauty of our Barbadian cultural heritage. This is what tourists would spend thousands of dollars and travel hundreds of miles to experience.

Mr. Chairman, I agree with the Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, in highlighting the need for us to expose tourists to these simple experiences, be they a visit to a local rum shop, for example, to sample the best rum in the world, of course, within moderation, or the Barbadian cou-cou and flying fish, or pudding and souse. Sir, these are things that we take for granted as born and bred Barbadians, but these are novelties to people from other lands.

Sir, sometimes even in the tourist product, be it hotels or what have you, we have to provide tourists with food stuff which they are accustomed to on a daily basis. We saw the failed experiment with the Big Mac some year ago. Sir, because that American hamburger giant may be popular in North America, we in Barbados like our good old Barbadian hamcutters, cheesecutters, fried chicken, baked chicken, barbeque chicken and so forth.

Therefore, it is important to expose tourists to properly prepared local foodstuff, for instance, be it sea cat, if they can get it. Sir, I know that you get it in Oistins and I look forward to it being offered in Baxter's Road, as we seek to revitalise the Baxter's Road experience of years gone by.

Mr. Chairman, I saw the community fair that was hosted by the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport at Parkinson Field as a first step. I look forward to this project being extended to areas such as Queen's Park, in the heart of the nation's capital, or to other locations around the island, be they pastures such as Emmerton, New Orleans, Passage Road or other areas in our island that allow the community to be able to interface directly with the tourists.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying that we can look, for example, at what happened in St. Michael East, under the aegis of the United Nations Development Programme, where a similar community fair was held one Saturday at Blenheim Pasture. I know our officer in charge in ensuring that poverty is eradicated and that we achieve the Millennium Development Goals, all play an integral part in that regard, as well as the Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member of Parliament for that Constituency.

Sir, a similar situation occurred where there were local small entrepreneurs being able to offer their goods and services for sale, with assistance from the sponsoring agencies.

Mr. Chairman, a few months ago at Queen's Park, I myself was able to be the patron of what is called an "urban festival", where tents were provided for these small retailers in craft, vendors, food and beverage retailers, jewelry and souvenir providers. These tents were provided free of cost, so that these persons who may not have had that amount of funding to provide those tents themselves, were able to get that assistance. All they had to do was be there. Tables were also provided.

5.00 p.m.

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Hon. P.M.T. TODD: This is where the Government, through the various Ministries, in this case, the Ministry of

Tourism, can facilitate and assist the provision of markets for these young entrepreneurs and more mature entrepreneurs to offer their goods and services to the tourists and earn that very valuable foreign exchange for our nation.

Mr. Chairman, I wish the Ministry of Tourism well. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Thomas talking a lot about Allen View, but I was there at the reopening of the Harrison's Cave Project. I congratulate this Government for cleaning up all the mess in terms of what was going on there, and the cost overruns that we will hear about as the months go by. We were able to, with the oversight of the Infrastructure Committee of the Cabinet, wrestle those challenges to the ground and see that project through.

Mr. Chairman, I remember during the Administration, the former Honourable Member from St. James South, who was Minister responsible, trying to justify why that Government had to spend excessive amounts of money for those trams that were produced, where the Government was buying the rights in terms of the copyright, or the patent for these trams, as if Barbados would be ever realistically, in the short-term, be interested in producing these trams for the international market.

Sir, the last Administration squandered the taxpayers' money in that regard, threatening the viability of the Harrison's Cave Redevelopment Project, but this Government has cleaned up a lot of that mess and now we have a spanking, new, state-of-the-art operation that would bring those tourists because it is a wonder of the world, the Harrison's Cave experience, second to none around the world. These unique aspects of the Barbadian experience are what would drive tourists in their hundred of thousands to our wonderful shores.

Mr. Chairman, the same Harrison's Cave was threatened by the pollution which would have occurred as dry pit toilets or water-borne toilets, in terms of well, that ecoli bacteria and other contaminants seeping through the coral-like stone actually resulting in discoloration of the stalactites and stalagmites.

That is why the Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, which this Government has signed into, will provide a sewerage treatment plant in the same Allen View area to mitigate against the threats of contamination of the Harrison's Cave.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party made a mess of that Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme and this Government is seeing that through. Sir, we will hear more about that in the housing Head.

Mr. Chairman, I support the concept of community tourism. The last Government had a little experience called

a “duflicky”. Sir, we know a “duflicky” to be a shot of rum, but they had something called a ‘duflicky’ at Pelican and they did not support it properly in terms of marketing and, Sir, that fell through. I look forward to this Government ensuring more appropriate and better supported initiatives that would see Bridgetown come alive.

Mr. Chairman, for example, I have been able to visit in the early 1990s as a student leader, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. They have a natural harbour and they have a massive cruise ship industry. I saw the St. Thomas commercial district filled with thousands of tourists as they stretched from the cruise ship via a local indigenous tour bus to the heart of the City of St. Thomas, and where they were able to patronise the local craft and other general retail sector.

Mr. Chairman, this too can occur in Bridgetown, our nation’s capital because cruise ship passengers have a limited time on land and the harbour is in the heart of the City and so they can walk, take taxis, the tricycle like transportation, which young entrepreneurs have now brought to Barbados.

Sir, I was talking to one young innovator, who pioneered the concept of a non-fossil fuel dependant tram which that person is now seeking to put back on the road to have guided tours throughout historic Bridgetown. Indeed, most of the Cabinet recently was taken on a tour of Bridgetown and the historic Garrison are.

It was tremendous as we went on the tour bus via the PA system, local historians and other persons in the National Trust were able to take us through and see the intrinsic history of Bridgetown where we looked, for example, at the various Churches, the Jewish Synagogue, which is one of the oldest in the Western Hemisphere, where the bath was recently uncovered by the archaeologist and, I understand this bath was used by men after certain innate activities who had to bathe themselves to purify their bodies.

This is one of the few baths of the Jewish culture which has been uncovered. It has a tremendous potential in terms of bringing tourists here. Sir, the VIP was able on that same compound to develop a Jewish Museum where you have the other historic churches like the Roman Catholic Church, which was built by the Irish soldiers which came down here to guard the colony against foreign attacks of other colonial powers.

You have James Street Methodist Church which is where our National Hero, the late Right Excellent Sarah Ann Gill has been interned and the late Right Excellent Samuel Jackman Prescod, another National Hero is interned at St. Mary’s Church.

Sir, these are historic buildings - the Old Dry Dock which there is a possibility of refitting to return it to its glory days. There are several other areas within Bridgetown that we could really spruce up in terms of providing jobs for young craftsmen and women, retail outlets that would come up to see locally produced textiles, be it sea-island cotton and where people could earn income in a legitimate way as we interface with the tourists.

Mr. Chairman, talking about the cruise ship sector, I really look forward to more Barbadian companies being able to provide supplies to these cruise ships like milk and other dairy products, meats, juices, local rums and so on, and local performers going on board these cruise ships so that the tourists spend, in terms of the cruise ship passenger, is increased so that more of this foreign currency would be left in Barbados.

Sequence 39

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

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

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: Sir, Barbados is a special and unique place, but not so unique and special that it is insulated from the ravages of the world economic crisis. Like Barbados, several of the countries across the world are experiencing similar ravages on their economies. The prospective or potential visitor to Barbados, most of these countries are affected in one way or the other by layoffs, and in some cases by unemployment and others.

For instance, in the United Kingdom, the unemployment figure now stands at 7.8 per cent, USA 9.7 per cent, Sweden 8 per cent, Ireland 13.8 per cent, France 10 per cent, Germany 7.6 per cent, and in Canada, 8.3 per cent. Now the common thread that runs through each of those countries is that those countries are really source markets for Barbados tourism.

It does not take a genius to understand that if the unemployment statistics in those countries are high, then the prospects or potential visitors to Barbados and throughout the Caribbean will be diminished in some way.

Across the Archipelago Islands in the Caribbean, also on the South American continent, you also have high unemployment figures. This is also one of the other source markets of Barbados’s tourism. In Belize it is 8.5 per cent, Grenada 22 per cent, Guyana 9 per cent, Jamaica 12 per cent, St. Vincent 17 per cent, and the Bahamas 8 per cent. Sir, the prospective visitor to Barbados, each time you look at the unemployment figures across the world and in the Caribbean you see it is affected in some way or the other.

Sir, I want to make a likeness between tourism and culture, because I believe that the two sectors are inextricably linked in most ways, and I believe that there is a natural synergy between the two areas. Now culture contributes to the vibrancy of the tourism product through several festivals that are held annually here in Barbados. We have the Barbados Jazz Festival, the Barbados Music Awards, GospelFest, Holder's Opera Season, Reggae on the Hill and Soca on the Hill.

Of course, principally among them would be the Crop Over Festival. I believe that the Crop Over Festival in particular should be fully embraced by the Barbados Tourism Authority.

It is a point that I have made over and over again. We may differ in some ways on that point of view, but nevertheless, I want to reinforce it that the Barbados Tourism Authority should be fully on board with the Crop Over Festival.

Crop Over is integral to our tourism offerings. I believe it is the single largest money earner among all the festivals held here in Barbados on an annual basis. While there is a need for the significant cuts, especially in our 2010/2011 Estimates in the Ministry, it is clearly understood. It must be remembered that the National Cultural Foundation is constrained to stage the country's major national festival in such a way as not to compromise the high quality with which it has come to be associated.

At this stage, I wish to congratulate the members of staff at the National Cultural Foundation. Year after year they plan and execute a festival of the highest quality and I believe that few may be equal to the task of planning an event of that magnitude, but certainly none can surpass the proficiency of the staff at the National Cultural Foundation, and they do this year after year.

Sir, this year, in particular, when there are economic challenges, the true value of Crop Over on the national economy will be revealed, since a water down version would undoubtedly result in challenges to the entire business sector in Barbados, especially so for the tourism sector.

After all, the viability of many businesses in the summer months depends heavily on Crop Over, especially the last two weeks leading up to Crop Over, where the major events occur in that period, that will be the Finals, Semi Finals, Kadooment and Cohobblapot. Such businesses, hotels, car rental companies, airlines, restaurants and some entrepreneurs, vendors and all of the people who are involved in the ancillary services, they look forward to this particular period, especially for business from the Crop Over season.

I think it is about time the Kadooment component of Crop Over becomes more attractive and marketable. I will tell you what I mean by that. Barbados is still among the few countries across the Caribbean that offers only a day for the street parade. I think, on my desk now, and I am seriously considering it, not for this year, but for next year, that we ...

Asides.

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: I mean two official days for the actual street parade.

I think we have to move aggressively towards presenting Barbadians and our visitors alike, with two days of street parade in Barbados. Like I said, across the Caribbean several countries have those two days. I believe the extra day would make Crop Over, especially the Kadooment component, more marketable, and more presentable for the Barbados Tourism Authority or whoever agency is responsible for marketing it. I believe it is an ambitious plan. I am going to pursue it.

Sir, we have two bank holidays in August and I do not propose to add or take to Cabinet any additional bank Holidays, but we will have to use the two bank holidays that are available to us in the month of August in a better way.

Sir, it is recognised that in terms of returns on Government's investment, Crop Over is unique and results in a significant multiplier effect. The Government invests \$1.7 million in the festival on an annual basis, but statistics show that the Crop Over generates over \$85 million in the national economy every single year.

These figures were collected through - this is really hard empirical evidence, and it was collected through a study that was done by SALISES a few years ago, which shows that \$85 million was actually generated in the economy through Crop Over.

I would like to show you that Crop Over costs us an estimated sum of \$5.3 million to actually stage, and most of this finds its way into the hands of individual business people. In most cases it finds its way into the hands of entertainers and all the people involved with the Crop Over Festival as a whole.

Sir, there are going to be a few changes this year to the Crop Over Festival. I do not want to reveal them at this time. I would like the National Cultural Foundation to apprise the members and the stakeholders in the particular areas where they would be fully aware of what we plan to do. Of course, most of it would be with their agreement. I will hold a Press Conference next week and reveal exactly what we will be doing regarding the Crop Over Season.

We will be experiencing some reduced sponsorship this year because of the economic downturn. I am sure that we are looking at a reduced sponsorship from \$1.7 million, which we had last year and the previous year, to around 20 per cent less, certainly in the area of \$1.4 million.

Nevertheless, we are anticipating that we will have to make up the shortfall by some imaginative thinking. We are planning to go to the Art and Sports Fund to supplement some of the shortfalls in that revenue, especially in the developmental areas of Reading and Visual Arts Exhibition, and certainly the Junior Kadooment and Junior Monarch.

Sir, what we are doing here is certainly to reposition the overall Crop Over Festival to make it more marketable for our tourism planners and for those people who are involved in marketing tourism on a whole.

HA60C 17.20 p.m. Sequence 40

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 41, 5.20 a.m.

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: We are planning as well to move towards the establishment of a Festival Agency, which will plan and execute the Crop Over Festival. This will be presented to Cabinet very shortly for ratification and for sign off.

Sir, what we intend to do with that agency, in particular, is to segment the developmental portion of the NCF with the commercial portion of the NCF, leaving the planning and execution for all the national events and festivals with the commercial component and, of course, segmenting the commercial from the developmental, leaving the main apparatus at the NCF to pursue the developmental role, which is their primary remit.

The overall restructuring has already commenced. It is really for the better management of our resources, monetary and human and, of course, to refocus the developmental interest and also to ready the Foundation to be the principal agency to implement the national policy, which I will speak of later if my Head comes.

Mr. Chairman, the alternative sources of funding for the Crop Over Festival have a number of critical developmental events, which are designed to make money but to encourage creative expression and to enhance the quality of the cultural activities and to promote positive cultural developments. It is, therefore, against this background that I am recommending that consideration be given to alternative strategies for the funding of these developmental events.

I directed that an application should be made to the Arts and Sports Fund, like I said before, to cover the cost of those events that are considered to be developmental.

Mr. Chairman, we are well on our way to creating a vibrant National Cultural Foundation to assist my Ministry in establishing a robust and bustling cultural industry, an industry that will position Barbados to be a better choice for the prospective visitor, who is preparing to make a choice of a holiday destination. Sir, as I said before, tourism and culture are linked and we should continue to be connected to set our country apart as a special place for that prospective visitor to visit.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Chairman.

Asides.

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

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, I want to join this debate on tourism and support the measures, very strongly, that have been offered by the Honourable Minister in his presentation earlier this afternoon. I want to again congratulate the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the team, who have seen to it that the Estimates that are provided here are properly represented and the objectives which this Administration has for Barbados and in this case, tourism.

Sir, I represent a constituency which depends heavily on the fortunes of tourism, as I have indicated before, from Worthing in the west to St. Christopher in the east. Increasingly, the activities that the residents and the constituents take part in, are largely towards the tourism industry, in some sort or in some fashion, if not the tourism industry itself, in the related industries.

Sir, of course in a couple of weeks, the Easter weekend, we are going to be celebrating in Oistins the Annual Oistins Fish Festival. This is an event which attracts many Barbadians and many visitors. I fully expect, with the resurgence of Oistins as a venue for relaxation and dining in the evening, it is going to even play a larger role.

Again, Sir, in fashioning the Fish Festival, we need now to make sure that it represents a much wider array of the available activities in the Constituency, in Oistins in particular. I would like to call on the Committee to move away from, what I sometimes term, certainly for the times that we are dealing with, too much of a narrow view of how this festival should develop.

I want to congratulate them on their plans to include a Kiddies Carnival and a Vintage Car Parade this year, which will add variety. Certainly, all of the cooperation

that we can give at the Ministry of Transport and Works and, for sure at the Ministry of Tourism and, indeed, all the cooperation and assistance that I can as a representative, will be made available to them.

I want to call on them to include both the vendors and the business people who operate at that Award Winning Oistins Bay Garden. This is a fundamental and they have to fashion their programme around the activities which these business people are taking part in, Sir.

After all, these people at the Oistins Bay Garden have invested a lot of energy and money into building the entertainment they offer on a nightly basis and this has borne tremendous results to the extent that no longer is it only Friday and Saturday, but nearly every evening now, they enjoy a reasonably large clientele and visitors especially.

I will invite all Barbados to continue to support the Oistins Festival. Come and mingle with our visitors, share experiences with them and use this as an opportunity, Sir, to sell our great island, our great heritage, Barbados. Sir, we cannot stop there in terms of our development of that area.

I want to give my commitment to the potential vendors and the crafts and vegetable area to make sure their facilities are brought to a standard which can allow for an even better offering, in respect to what is made available at the Oistins Bay Garden. As I say, Sir, this has to become a completely sustainable project, where Barbadians who invest their money, effort and expertise by way of the variety that is offered, can look forward to a long-lasting business arrangement with that facility.

In terms of details, Sir, I am committed this year to making sure that we can provide adequate sidewalks from the St. Lawrence Gap area, straight into the Oistins Bay Garden on both sides of the road.

Asides.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: I have visited the area with my team from the Ministry of Transport and Works and we are very confident that we will be able to put to the Cabinet of Barbados, a meaningful cooperation arrangement with the persons, other business people, other investors who are interested in seeing this development take place.

Some time ago, we would have spoken of the extension of the St. Lawrence Gap lighting scheme, and the opportunities for building commercial activity, by extending that entire system, from the St. Lawrence Gap right into the Oistins area. Sir, this is something that, I believe, we are on the edge of bringing into reality and we must not pull back in this regard.

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 41, 17:30:05

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Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, there is, of course, the conflict of any development. The residents who live in the area, Dover and Maxwell, constantly have challenges with the kinds of developments that occur. Although we recognise that there is a price to be paid, I think that more and more we need to put in place regulations to make sure that the rights of the residents who want to rest at a certain time in the evening, or to enjoy precious family time together are respected. Certainly, in my discussion with the Chief Town Planner, I have been able to understand very clearly that this is something, which they bear in mind and are willing to continue to ensure happens.

What we need, like in most cases, is that those who come to these arrangements with our Town Planner, our agencies or whoever they are, need to respect the agreements which they have made. You cannot make an agreement to take the volume of your activity down at 10:00 o'clock or 11:00 o'clock to allow for your permit to be issued, and then pay reckless attention to that arrangement and more or less do as you like. It makes an uncomfortable existence for those in the vicinity.

Mr. Chairman, I certainly understand the call of the residents of Dover for a halt of certain activities which continue to impact on their ability to enjoy the comforts of their homes, and I will do all in my power as the Member of Parliament for the area, and as a Member of the Cabinet of Barbados, to ensure that these rights are respected.

Sir, the opportunities, as we look at the newly constituted Barbados Ministry of Tourism, are boundless. The Honourable Minister who just spoke, spoke to the question of marketing and the extension of the marketing opportunities between the cultural industries of Barbados and the tourism industry. The move to a marketing company, that has been called for, for a long time by the operators of the hotel sector, has been agreed and is a positive arrangement.

I am sure that this company, a non-profit company, when put together, would be able to take advantage of a much broader vista of funding rather than the restricted arrangement which would have been available under the old arrangement. I wish the Minister of Tourism tremendous success in this regard.

I believe it will redound to the benefit of the industry in Barbados and will redound to the opportunities for extracting more dollars per visitor head, if you want to use that term, and will certainly allow our cultural industry to integrate even more seamlessly with our tourism industry

and moving to the realms of success, which we often contemplate.

Sir, it has not been an easy ride. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas spoke to the Caves of Barbados and the fact that we have been able in a few weeks to reopen the Cave, but this has not been easy. We keep hearing the Honourable Members on That Side calling for all of these things.

They called for a roundabout at Lancaster, for nature walks in St. Thomas, from the Freedom Village through the gullies. They did not call for these things when there was money abounding in the country. It would appear that the mouths of these messengers of such glory were sealed shut under the hammer of the former Administration, they were part of it.

I have never heard the Honourable Member for St. Andrew stand up in here and call for any roundabout at Lancaster. As a matter of fact, he stood up and watched the Lancaster Roundabout pulled from under his feet and now is looking at us and demanding... We are committed to doing what is right for Barbados.

We are committed to doing all that is right for Barbados within the bounds of the revenues and the available resources. We are not going to do it on the basis of favouritism or any of that. We are going to do it on the basis of a need, which must be fulfilled.

Very soon too we are going to be launching a bus service from Oistins to Speightstown using the ABC Highway. The ABC Highway is, of course, one of these things which they conceptualised but never paid for. That is the problem we are having all the time. We are hearing about these prisons, which they built but never paid for, and an ABC Highway which they contracted under most loose arrangements and never paid for. We have to pay for it.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, you have three minutes.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is quoted as saying that they believe in this "bring drinks, somebody else would pay". That is the mantra under which they operated.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. It may be a natural thing for him to mislead otherwise, but I have never indicated that this is what we believe in. In fact, I indicated that was the approach of the Democratic Labour

Party in all of the free promises and freeness, and said bring drinks somebody would pay. We now know in these Estimates that it is the taxpayers who would pay.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, I have to wrap up so I am not going to waste any time on the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. She was properly whipped and tied this morning. She and her colleague from St. Thomas were dealt with. I do not have to deal with them this evening. I can get ahead with the business of representing the people of Christ Church South. I can get ahead with the business of supporting an absolutely beautiful Estimates programme for tourism in Barbados. I can get ahead with the business of putting that bus service in place in a couple of weeks.

Sir, I look forward to working with the Honourable Prime Minister and the team of the Democratic Labour Party as we deal with the issues of meeting the challenges of today, the continued development of Barbados, getting Barbados ready for take off when things improve in the economies around us, and even while they are not improving, making sure that we manage them carefully and effectively for the people of Barbados.

I am grateful to you, Sir.

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

On the motion of Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress to His Honour the SPEAKER and asked for leave to sit again and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

House A60C Sequence 42

5.40 p.m.

SUSPENSION

Hon. C.P.SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 5.55 p.m. today.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 5.55 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

5.40 p.m.

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RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Honourable Chamber is resumed. When the Suspension was taken the House was in Committee, on Order No. 5, and to that we will now revert.

Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House resumed Committee, Mr. J.D. PAUL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable Committee is now resumed.

The Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I am delighted to join this debate. The Honourable Member Christ Church South is of the view that the people of St. George do not know about tourism. I want to enlighten the Honourable Member for Christ Church South that tourism employs persons from across Barbados, and that there was a time when that statement could have been made, that tourism only employs persons living in the coastal area.

Mr. Chairman, the Barbados Labour Party, over time, from 1958, tried to develop the infrastructure and developed public transportation to ensure that the bus service of this country, which is second to none in the world from 1958 and onwards, when we developed and nationalised the bus service to ensure that persons can now get anywhere in Barbados from as early as 6:00 o'clock.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South does not understand why the bus service is an integral part of the tourist product. Sir, buses start as early as 4:00 o'clock in Barbados in the morning and goes right across Barbados until 1:00 o'clock or 2:00 o'clock at night.

Sir, that has its genesis in the Barbados Labour Party's programme and, Sir, we are proud of that. Mr. Chairman, that is why in our last term of office, we were able to import into the rolling stock more than 100 new buses for local transport as well as tourism.

Mr. Chairman, that is why we were able to move a bus service from Speightstown right to Oistins, a bus service from Speightstown, through the ABC Highway to the Crane and Six Cross Roads. Sir, that is why we were able to link in the inner St. George from the Glebe, through Walkers, through Dash Valley into Bridgetown because we believed in the integrated approach, so that it will help the tourist product.

Mr. Chairman, the day of tourism only affecting coastal areas is not true because tourism affects everyone.

It is our main business and everyone needs to know about it. Sir, everyone needs to know about the value of tourism to the economy of Barbados.

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Mr. G.A. CLARKE: It is true that the Government prefers, according to them, a social economy over a direct economy. They prefer a social economy. Therefore, whatever the Government does, it does with a social conscience in mind. We on This Side believe that a social conscience is important, but we have to develop the economy as well.

I have noticed that the Government is spending a lot of money on marketing. Government spends a lot of money on marketing, in fact, this year, approximately \$90 million, through the Barbados Tourism Authority to marketing tourism. I have always wondered if the marketing concept that has been used over the years really works.

I have noted that the Canadian market seems to be the number one market outside of the United Kingdom. A lot of tourists come to Barbados whether they hear the Ads in the local media or not. There are persons who have been visiting Barbados and they repeat year after year. Families have come to Barbados year after year and they will continue to do so. We use a lot of money primarily to keep a number of persons abroad.

I sometimes wonder why is it you can see and hear, especially on the number one medium in the world, CNN, you can see Ads coming out of Jamaica. Only recently you have seen the Ads with the number one sprinter, Usain Bolt, advertising Jamaica, but I do not see, at all, any Ads advertising Barbados. Now I must say that Barbados has a good name in the market. That is why I said you will find that people will come regardless.

Sir, more money must be spent on marketing, yes, but I believe that some of this money must be widely spent on developing the local infrastructure. I say this because in our approach to tourism, we had a dual approach to tourism. We saw developing the seaport, airport, the cities, Bridgetown, Oistins, Speightstown and Holetown, as integral parts of helping to develop the tourist product.

Sir, when tourists come here, what is it that they must do? I have heard it being mentioned before that we are not talking about sun, sea and sun anymore. We must find something for the tourists to do when they come here. To entertain them, we have looked at Oistins, St. Lawrence Gap and all of these developments took place under the Barbados Labour Party. We developed Oistins, St. Lawrence Gap, the four cities, the airport and seaport. We

set out to develop the ABC Highway as an integral part of the tourist product.

We need to continue to look at how we are going to develop places, in the inner cities like Belleplaine, the Glebe and Six Roads areas. Out posts like Bath, the Crane and River Bay, nothing has been happening. I think we need to develop those outer posts. Sir, not only develop them, to put more resources in the Royal Barbados Police Force to ensure that all and sundry recognise that the tourist dollar is important.

Sir, still too many do not understand that and therefore I believe that in the last four years or so, the Royal Barbados Police Force has been doing a wonderful job ensuring that the crime rate in Barbados remains low. I think the Royal Barbados Police Force needs to be congratulated.

I do not know if Honourable Members recognise the importance of the security to the tourism sector. I was in London, some years ago, when an incident happened in Antigua. Immediately, flights to that country came to a halt, one single incident. That is why I would like to applaud the Royal Barbados Police Force, the Commissioner of Police especially, for taking the initiative to put more policemen on the beat, using bicycles or whatever to travel up and down the tourist belt, especially, to ensure security.

I hope that the Minister would constantly review the security measures used by the hotelier, those persons that have guest houses and so on. Security is important. The Government must not only spend money on marketing, because I know you spend money on airlifts, you spend a lot of money in advertising, although sometimes it cannot be seen with the naked eye.

The Canadians and the English will come here regardless. You need to spend some money, but I am saying to you that when you develop the local infrastructure, when you put money in the Royal Barbados Police Force to ensure adequate policemen on the beat, technology to track any criminal element, and assisting the tourist sector to achieve the goal of security, this will go a long way.

Sir, we must also have a more integrated approach to tourism. Years ago they used to say that tourism was linked heavily to agriculture. We were taught that at school, mainly the linkage between tourism and agriculture, because tourists used the product and we ensured, in the schools, that agriculture is heavily linked to tourism because it provides a number of produce. We want to encourage local hoteliers to use local produce, which is important.

Sir, tourism today is linked not only to agriculture, but to all the various Ministries. That is why there need to be an integrated approach throughout Barbados. I believe that more has to be done in the local setting in order to make people more aware, because I am not sure that the message has reached all and sundry that this sector has replaced sugar as the number one foreign exchange earner. Everyone must play his or her part in ensuring this.

The Government must go a step further in helping to develop the infrastructure. We did a lot of things in our time. I heard the Honourable Minister speak about the sidewalk from St. Lawrence Gap to Oistins. This was a programme started under the Barbados Labour Party. The sidewalks from Welches to Oistins, we also put in place the sidewalk friendly programme, to ensure the use of wheelchairs for those persons who are handicapped and the disabled. I remember going to Bridgetown, and it was never done before.

We came to Bridgetown to correct those sidewalks that were not friendly to the disabled. We met with the Council for the Disabled and set out a programme which was started under the Barbados Labour Party. I understand that it is continuing.

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Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 46, 6.10 a.m.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: I have seen today that the types of sidewalks being constructed are friendly to those persons who must use the wheelchairs, those persons who have to push prams and so on, and we want that to continue. The Government must ensure that the network of roads they are constructing that they continue to improve all the roads across Barbados, whether it is St. Lucy, St. John, Christ Church or St. Philip. Sir, it is important to note that in St. George we have some good roads but we need more.

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

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Thank you, Sir.

We need to ensure that the infrastructure is well preserved. We want to ensure that there is less frustration on our roads. Sir, the Minister talked about signage which is a good thing. Signage must continue to be improved for direction and location. We need adequate signs.

Asides.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: If you talk about sports tourism because I notice, Mr. Chairman, that there is linkage

between sports tourism, cultural tourism and business tourism. There are many persons coming here every year to play all types of sports and there needs to be a linkage. You would not want to have a team come from Britain to play cricket or polo and you cannot have changing facilities, therefore, we need pavilions on all these grounds.

Mr. Chairman, I am heartened to the fact that we have a good product and we need to work towards improving the infrastructure for tourism. We on This Side believe that we should do whatever is in our power to ensure that more and more tourists come here.

I was also heartened last Friday night when I went to Oistins to see the number of persons going to use that facility, and we are hoping that we can do the same thing in Bridgetown. We are hoping that more tourists can come to Baxter's Road.

Mr. Chairman, of course, the Honourable Member for the City will have to carry through the programme that was started by us. He does not have a blue print for it. He does not understand what was done, even though he talked about it, but I have not seen anything done in Baxter's Road for the last two or three years. The Honourable Member must tell us how he is going to improve Baxter's Road. We have started. He has seen what we have done throughout the City.

They say that we spent a lot of resources in developing Swan Street and the entire Bridgetown and I hope that more can be done by this Administration who would want to take that credit, but they will have to show us what they intend to do in this capital City of Barbados.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I believe that we on This Side recognise that tourism is important and we will play our part.

Thank you, Sir.

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

Mr. A.D. BRATHWAITE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I enter this debate just to make a couple of observations, in particular, because of the importance of tourism to our national development. As you know, Sir, tourism employs, I would estimate, about 14 000 people directly. In fact, it is the largest employer of persons in Barbados outside of Government. In terms of its contribution economically, it is unparalleled, therefore, it is very important for us as a country.

In that regard, Sir, as I always say in these debates, I would like us not to debate for the sake of debating but, in fact, to ensure that we can make contributions that, at the end of the day, we can go away with either enhanced knowledge, or go away with some ideas, in terms of how we can improve on what we are doing.

In that regard, Sir, I have to make a few comments with respect to the contribution made by my good friend from St. Michael North who, as you know, is the tourism guru on the Other Side. Sir, I cannot understand how he could not accept the point that whereas we recognise the idiosyncracies of the Jamaican market that, in fact, if you compare Jamaica to Barbados, you are not necessarily comparing apples and apples, and he misses that point all the time, and so, I want to just say it very slowly. Maybe, he can catch on, to the point. Maybe, the Minister of Tourism when he made the point earlier, was saying it a bit too quickly for him to understand.

Sir, in 2008, according to my figures, Jamaica had 1 767 000 visitors to their shores. Barbados had 568 000. Sir, if you compare them just numerically, you can see there is a vast difference. However, in terms of revenue, out of those 1 767 000 visitors, Jamaica actually received US\$1 984 000. Barbados, on the other hand, received \$1 198 000 for 568 000 visitors. Therefore, in terms of revenue spent, the visitor that we attract to Barbados is significantly different and significantly more attractive to us dollar-wise, as a jurisdiction, than what happens in Jamaica.

In addition to which, Sir, as you probably know, what happened in Jamaica is that you had over the last couple of years, lots of large resorts which, I believe, you will also see in Cuba and in the Dominican Republic - mostly Spanish investors - and they have substantially discounted the rooms. We have tried not to do that, so that they have been playing the numbers game whereas, of course, we want to see greater numbers, but we also want to ensure that there is value for money.

At the end of the day, if what we are having are clogged up streets in Bridgetown but no revenue, then why spend the money? Sir, I do not understand why my friend does not see that point but, if it helps, I can actually go through it with him a bit later, after we are closed at 7:00 o'clock, because I can understand he must have been a very difficult student, and most of his teachers spent an unusual amount of time with him to ensure that he got the point, and I am prepared to put in the time.

Sir, as you know - and I would not spend a lot of time on this point - our traditional markets have been Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and CARICOM. We know what has happened. We heard from the Prime Minister this morning and we heard from the Minister of Tourism, in terms of what has

happened in the UK, and the particular challenges for the UK.

We recognise that there are challenges in the UK market. We recognise also that there are challenges in Europe. In fact, Europe in particular, we are targetting this year because we still reckon that there is potential in Europe, that is untapped. In particular, we are looking at Germany and Sweden in terms of areas where there can be improvement.

I say that, Sir, because that is also for the edification for my friend for St. George North, so he can see that in terms of marketing that there is a strategy. We understand what the issues are in terms of our Budgets. We have looked at where we need to be, but we can only go so far as our budget allows us. In fact, our marketing has to be precise and targetted.

We do not have the type of revenue that allows us to employ all and sundry and let them run around the world, so we have to be specific in our targetting. Sir, without doubt, we need to get the CARICOM market back up. We appreciate the challenge of the CARICOM market, not only in terms of the economies having been doing badly but the cost of travel by LIAT has been a bit prohibitive, but we will continue to work with our CARICOM neighbours to encourage them to come to Barbados.

Sir, just two weeks ago, I met the Ambassador to Brussels from Grenada and he said to me that Barbados is his Number One destination for holidays and, in fact, that Grenadians love to come to Barbados for holidays. I, in turn promised him that I will come to Grenada as soon as possible.

Estimates - House A60C, Sequence 46, 18:20:14

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Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: The point is that Barbados, as a destination, is favourably and highly looked upon by our CARICOM neighbours and we should find ways to encourage them to come to Barbados.

I, like other Honourable Members, recognise that the days of having visitors coming to Barbados as a place of sand, sea and frolic are over. I think the Barbados Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism have recognised that for years, and that is why we have the different events.

We have golf and cricket. We have polo, from which we had a tremendous amount of publicity last year. We have horse racing. We have car racing, which has tremendous potential. There is a car racing possé, as my colleague just reminded me, from Guyana, Trinidad and

Jamaica who come into Barbados whenever there are car racing events, so there is potential there for car racing.

As you know, Sir, there are four English teams that are here practising cricket for their summer which begins in a couple of weeks. I believe that this weekend they should start a 20/20 tournament. This is a successful initiative by the Barbados Tourism Authority in trying to encourage foreign teams to come to our shores and to use our facilities so that they can hone their skills and, at the same time, discover what Barbados has to offer.

Sir, we recognise as a Government that we need to provide more than sun and sea, and that is what we are working towards. Just a couple days ago, you would permit me if I call his name, Tony Thompson, the best male actor that we have in Barbados, if not the best actor that we have in Barbados, said to me that one of the things we should consider is having some place close to the Port that goes every hour, or every two hours, so that when persons come to our shores, especially on cruise ships, they can experience Barbados and see Barbadian artistes at work and, in so doing, not only provide another attraction but to offer real serious employment opportunities for the artistes in Barbados. This is an idea that I believe we can seriously look at, if we have not done so yet, to see whether or not there is any potential there.

As I have said in the past, whenever I travel, I take the opportunity to see a play and there is no reason why we should not believe that others who come to our shores would want to do the same thing, especially if we market it correctly.

Sir, while appreciating that cruise tourism is up this year, I have to say that my reading in the media and my listening to the media would suggest that we need to do something to ensure that those taxi drivers, particularly those who are not attached to the big cooperatives, are able to make a decent living out of our tourism product. From time to time, we still hear them complaining that they are being shut out of the Port, or that all of the business is going to the large providers.

We know that this is not being done by us as a Government. We know that this is being done before the tourist arrives in Barbados. All I am saying is that as a Government we need to ensure that as many opportunities as possible are created for the single taxi drivers so that they can make a living in this industry.

Sir, I know that you are sorry that you are sitting in the Chair right now because if you were standing like I am, you would want to remind us of the importance of the linkage between tourism and agriculture, so I would say it for you, Sir.

I will ensure that we are reminded that, in fact, there is a serious linkage between tourism and agriculture. We have to offer more of our local products. We have to offer the cassava, as we discussed yesterday, and the breadfruit.

Sir, we have to develop our beef industry rather than importing beef. Sir, as you know, at least 60 per cent of the beef that is imported goes back into the tourism market. We pay money to bring it into Barbados and then it is bought and the money goes back out. Sir, it is a double whammy.

Sir, I am sure that with your organisation, we can raise our own beef and improve our beef quality and ensure that it is used, and that is the linkage - Similarly, our lamb.

Mr. Chairman, I am calling on the hotels, as I have done in the past, to utilise more of our local resources. Sir, you have heard me say that there is no reason why in every hotel in Barbados we should not see a piece of art, or pieces of art by our local artists being offered for sale so that they can also benefit directly from this industry, so that is the linkage.

Still on linkages, Sir, I am not sure if we are doing a good enough job in terms of the correlation between our different Ministries. We need to do a serious analysis in terms of the contribution of the international business sector to our tourism product to ensure that when we go into the marketplace...

When Invest Barbados travels, there is no reason why they should not also be focussed on inviting people to Barbados for conferences or otherwise. Sir, I am saying that if it is not being done now, that any officer and every officer who leaves these shores, should not be travelling with insurance brochures, trust brochures and company brochures alone. They should have a CD showing off our tourism product and giving them out to the same potential customers, and that is the linkage.

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

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Thank you, Sir. I was only going to speak for five minutes, so I am surprised that I have three more minutes.

Sir, we have said that we are going to give 40 per cent of our goods and services to the small entrepreneurs. I believe that we should encourage persons to build onto their properties so that they can invite tourists into their homes to stay and be part of their families. In that regard, I am sure that we would ensure that they are also afforded an opportunity to develop a website, if possible.

Sir, there is a property in Six Roads near to my home. This gentleman bought a decent property for a reasonable amount of money and he is able, just by adding a pool, to attract tourists, particularly from the United Kingdom. I looked at the website a couple of months ago.

Sir, one of the mistakes we have made, which is the point the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was making earlier today, and which is the point that was missed yet again by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, is the fact you do not have to have hotels next to the beach for people to stay. I believe that my friend's further point was that, in fact, in placing the hotels next to the beach, you have, in fact, limited your capacity to expand.

Sir, going back to the property in Six Roads, if you look at this website, you would see that it says that it is 10 minutes from the supermarket, 10 minutes from Oistins, half hour from Bridgetown and 10 minutes from the beach. In other words, he is able to market this site easily because tourists do not necessarily want to walk to the beach, a mistake that we have been making.

Sir, I am saying that there is potential for you in St. Thomas and for me in St. Philip, so that we can, in fact, open our homes to accommodate tourists. Sir, there is tremendous potential for the ordinary Barbadian. Sir, I want the Minister to ensure that more of the tourism pie is filtered down to the ordinary Barbadian. Sir, if he has to leave a legacy, let it not be numbers, let it be a significant increase in revenue and that this revenue filter down to more ordinary Barbadians.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Chairman, I rise to join this debate on what is obviously a very important topic for Barbados at this juncture of its development. None of us can deny the importance of tourism. Certainly, I represent a constituency where a number of the residents work in the tourism industry. Quite a number of my constituents from Haynesville, Durants Village, Holder's Hill and Thorpes are gainfully employed in the tourism industry, and therefore, I have to take particular interest in it.

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6.30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Chairman, I want to start by commending the current Minister of Tourism for the outstanding work he has been doing, under very trying

circumstances. Sir, I sat here and listened to the Opposition and I am particularly perturbed by the utterances or comments of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

Sir, it is only since January 2008 that the Honourable Member has found his voice in this Honourable Chamber, since being unceremoniously removed from the office of a Cabinet Minister for his stubbornness. He opted to keep quiet. He has now been given the title as Shadow Minister of Tourism by his outgoing Leader, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Yes, I think the six months' trial period that was granted to her last year has expired. Her probationary period is up and she has been given a failing grade. I am sure that the licks the Prime Minister gave her today in this Honourable Chamber will only seal her fate as former Leader of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North continues to lament about the tourism sector in Barbados. The Honourable Member continues to indicate that, in his view, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central is not up to standards. However, throughout all his comments and deliberations, he has never once suggested what he would do, were he the Minister of Tourism. Therefore, really and truly, this Honourable Chamber and Barbadians, by and large, continue to have foisted upon them nothing but unconstructive criticism from the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, this Administration is busy getting all of the task of building a resilient and sustainable tourism industry that will serve future generations of Barbadians. Sir, no one can deny that the economic crisis that currently engulfs the world has had a profound effect on our tourism product. As a matter of fact, at a lecture given last week by a very close relative of the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, it was revealed that economic crisis may have started as far back as 2007, and Barbados is not immuned from what happens.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: The reality about it is that with what has been happening in the United Kingdom market, which has provided 40 per cent of our tourists over time, where unemployment is at an all-time high, where the value of the pound sterling in relation to the American dollar has fallen and so there is less purchasing power of those British tourists; where in the United States of America market, an economy that has been brought to a level not seen since the Great Depression; where the Canadian market has some challenges, including the rest of Europe and South America.

Sir, none of us has been immuned, therefore, it is somewhat regrettable that with the hard facts before us, Honourable Members on the Other Side could still behave as though Barbados' tourism figures should be up and soaring high in the sky.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central and his team in the Barbados Tourism Authority and in the Ministry of Tourism must be commended for keeping the ship afloat. Let us not deny that.

Mr. Chairman, clearly what has happened, because a new Minister is there, a new Board has been replaced but by and large the public officers are the same officers who served under the former Administration. Sir, all that is different now is that they are given focussed and determined leadership, one that is committed to turning around tourism and keeping it going in this country.

Mr. Chairman, despite all the negativity, this Administration has gone out there and we have found new markets. Sir, even within existing markets like Canada, the Minister and his team have gone beyond the traditional areas like Toronto and have found new markets that bring additional tourists to Barbados, hence they believe that the Canadian market is now up by 11.2 per cent when compared with the period before.

Mr. Chairman, I am told that Germany is also up and only recently we announced relations with an airlift in Brazil that should certainly see more tourists coming from that segment of the market. Sir, we have been keeping things steady. We have not been complacent. We have not thrown our hands in the air and said there is nothing that we can do.

Mr. Chairman, it gets better. We have also sought to look at the tourism product and to diversify. I keep saying all the time that the former Administration always boasts of how buoyant the economy was, they always boasts about the amount of foreign reserves they had, about all the money they had, yet we had a tourism industry in Barbados that was structurally deficient.

We had a former Minister who had a lot of pomp and pageantry, a lot of fluff but was very short on delivery. Sir, what we are doing is seeking to turn that around, hence, the emphasis is also on diversifying the tourism product. Further, cultural heritage tourism, as the Minister of Community Development and Culture has alluded to earlier, is also seriously being developed.

Most of us in the Cabinet had a wonderful tour of Bridgetown and the Historic Garrison a few weeks ago. I must confess I was pleasantly surprised at the quality and

rich history of Barbados that is sitting within that three-square mile radius.

Sir, I stand ready to support the efforts of the Ministry of Community Development and Culture and Ministry of Tourism to forge ahead in terms of developing culture and heritage tourism in Barbados. Mr. Chairman, community tourism has been spoken of, certainly in terms of my Constituency. Efforts are ongoing to develop community tourism products there. Sir, we have to stop creating a gulf between the tourists and the average Barbadian. Individuals come to Barbados not just for sea and sun. They will always tell you when you meet them as they leave the island, that it is that little contact they made with Barbadians, whether it is the maid who cleans the hotel room, the bartender, the taxidriver or the shop attendant they meet in Bridgetown. It is that interaction that symbolises the Barbadian experience and what makes them want to come back to Barbados.

What the former Administration had sought to do was to create an "us" and "them" attitude, where the former Administration thought they could bring individuals and place them in concrete jungles on the West Coast, where they would have very little interaction with the average Barbadian. Sir, every one of those tourists with whom I have spoken, has always told me that there is something very special about being in Barbados and it is that Barbadian experience that we certainly want to forge ahead and continue to develop our industry here.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South mentioned the connections between tourism and agriculture. We do not believe that 80 per cent of every dollar earned in tourism has to go back out of this country. There is ample opportunity for us to be making greater use of our locally-produced products in our tourism industry, hence I commend the efforts going between the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport, and the Ministry of Agriculture to get things going.

Mr. Chairman, we continue to focus on product development. We have seen the reopening of Harrison's Cave, which was almost a financial scandal of great proportion, under the former Administration. When I saw what that redevelopment was costing the taxpayers of Barbados, I shuddered. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas who attended the opening, who was looking very pleasant and pleased, was standing and embracing the Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: The Honourable Member for St. Thomas certainly commended him for getting Harrison's Cave open, which was something that her Administration could not get done.

Mr. Chairman, there are other activities that we are looking to develop in the industry, such as car racing sports. We continue to attract and forge ahead in getting cricket teams from the United Kingdom to come to Barbados to spend a few weeks. I believe there are about four or five teams here presently.

These individuals not only stay in hotel rooms, they spend money, they share their experiences and skills to local cricketers. These are the kinds of benefits that we bring into Barbados in expanding and diversifying our tourism industry.

6.40 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Chairman, we have, certainly, on This Side of the Chamber and, as a Government, not thrown our hands in the air, say that things are bad all around the world and that we cannot do anything. Sir, we have actually done more to diversify and expand the tourism industry in Barbados in the last two years than was done in the last five years under the former Administration and, Sir, we are poised to grow, once the global economy turns around and that is why I talked about building a resilient and sustainable tourism industry here in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I am of the view that there is ample opportunity for more Barbadians to be involved in the ownership and management of the tourism industry in this country, especially the hotel plants.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, you have three minutes more.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In my last few minutes that you have allocated to me there is one new initiative that this Government has embarked upon in this industry which is health and wellness tourism. The Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Health are working closely together to develop a health and wellness tourism policy. We have established a task force headed by the Ministry of Health officials that looks at issues such as capacity, capabilities of service providers and to create awareness and diversity in the industry.

Mr. Chairman, we are of the view that Barbados has a well-rounded, mature tourism industry, and we have a health sector that whatever challenges people may say exist out there, we have a cadre of well-trained health care professionals. We believe that we can fuse the two together to make Barbados an attractive domicile, an attractive place of choice for those who may seek to come to get health care at a certain end and those who focus, more important, on wellness tourism.

Mr. Chairman, that is a billion-dollar industry to which Asia, in particular, gets most of the share and we believe that Barbados, with its network and its connections, certainly, in proximity to North America, Europe and South America offers a wonderful opportunity for development of a health and wellness tourism industry.

Mr. Chairman, certainly, we are very busy. As an Administration, we have created new products and expanded the market share. Sir, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East continue to lament about cuts in expenditure and such like. They like a lot of money and you saw today what they did with all this money in terms of the expenditure on the prisons, \$700 million. We have found very simple and inexpensive ways of marketing Barbados. We have embraced the Barbadian diaspora...

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: That is not a point of order.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Chairman, the reality is that we have found very inexpensive mechanisms to help promote Barbados. I was making the point that we have embraced the Barbadian diaspora, a group that was grossly neglected by the former Administration. It does not cost us anything with our Barbados Family and Friends Programme. We are out there using Barbadians first, second and third generation Barbadians to spread the word in their own homes, work places and wherever they go, that Barbados is a place that their relatives and friends should visit. Sir, that is not going to cost us millions of dollars.

Mr. Chairman, all the glitz, glamour, billboards and whatnots done by the former Administration cannot yield the kind of results we are getting with less expenditure. Therefore, as I close, let me once again commend the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, for leading this particular industry. He is doing an excellent job and as members of the Party, the Cabinet and Back bench, we are fully with him.

There is a lot of creativity coming out of the Barbados Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism and we can only urge them to forge ahead, do not be distracted and let us continue to make tourism our business.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I just want to clear that when Honourable Members are rising on a point of order, I would like them to wait until the Chair acknowledges them. Also, if you are rising on a point of order, I would wish you to state that you are rising on a point of order and I will ask

you what is the basis. Do not presume that you can proceed to speak without being acknowledged by the Chair.

I now recognise the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, this debate is at a very critical stage in our development. It is rather interesting that the Government of the day, well before there was an effect on the tourism industry, came to this Parliament to announce grants, subsidies, whatever you want to call it, to one Particular industry, the tourism industry. When one listens to some players within the tourism industry, one would not believe that it was this Government that went out of its way to provide these initiatives.

Sir, they did not provide them for the fishermen. They did not provide them in the same way for the farmers, or the vendors of Barbados, but they provided them for the tourism players of this country. Sir, when one listens, it was actually cash that was placed there.

Sir, on two occasions, we came to this House for Supplementaries to ensure that the tourism players received money to keep the tourism industry running. Sir, when one looks at the amount given, one would expect the players to match what was given and not to continue bellyaching.

Mr. Chairman, up to today, a spokesman had to tell them that they cannot take the industry into an industry like the sugar industry, that it is too dynamic for them to just be relying on subsidies like how the sugar industry did.

Sir, we have to understand that based on what was said by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, it is clear that what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North really wanted to say in here today was that the tourism players need to get up and do what the Jamaicans are doing and increase the numbers.

Sir, people must understand that this Government gave them the ammunition to go and increase the numbers by using money from the poor people of Barbados which we call the Consolidated Fund, to give them money to keep the industry running.

Mr. Chairman, what must also occur is this. They must understand that the money that comes from the Consolidated Fund, that it comes from the fisherfolk of Barbados, the vendors of Barbados, the ZR owners of Barbados, the taximen of Barbados, the minibus men of Barbados and the farmers of Barbados.

Sir, this means that whenever they have money to spend, instead of putting in an order for an item to be imported into Barbados, that they first look locally for that

product so that they can generate more money in Barbados, so that the Government could have some more money to give them some more subsidies.

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His Excellency D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, instead of that, what do we get? We get a situation that instead of spending the taxpayers and the poor of Barbados's money in Barbados, some of them believe that the first call is to import. I am saying that your industry, the BMA would do well with some of that money that has been given to the tourism industry, instead of outsiders getting all of it.

I am saying that if this country is to go forward, we have to learn how to network locally first. When the item cannot be supplied, then you look outside. There is a belief in this country that if something is \$5 more expensive in Barbados, that it should not be used, utter foolishness. The \$5 more in Barbados, that is local dollars, but when the item is imported, is foreign exchange we have to look for. I am telling people that they need to look at the opportunity cost, as it relates to foreign exchange before they look at their pockets. Sir, there is also a multiplier effect on that. There is a belief that when something has a cost of BDS\$5 more, it is more expensive. That is not true. This is if you look at it from the revenue side of the local dollar, but when you look at it from the foreign exchange side, the imported item is more damaging to this economy.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St. E. KELLMAN: You would not understand this.

Sir, you have to understand that you must look for the measurement. I can look in the mirror when I am speaking because I understand exactly what I am speaking.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am saying we have to understand that in these crucial times, we have to measure everything by the cost of foreign exchange to the country. Once we use that measurement, nothing made in Barbados can be expensive. Once it is made in Barbados the impact on the foreign exchange cannot be as great as if it is imported.

Sir, we speak about the current account deficit when it is convenient to us, but we do not understand that if we really want to discuss the current account deficit, we have to look at the impact of the foreign exchange outflows versus the foreign exchange inflows. That is why I will always say that if we can get our productive sector ...

Asides.

His Excellency D. St. E. KELLMAN: I did not tell you which one.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please address the Chair. Thank you very much.

His Excellency D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am saying...

Asides.

His Excellency D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, you know what is interesting? People who do not know the difference between current expense and capital expense want to explain to me about deficits, and they do not understand revenue expenditure either.

Sir, we have to understand that the productive sectors in Barbados must have a marriage and they must be able to work with each other. I think that instead of one sector having a monthly meeting, there must be monthly meetings for all of them to interact among themselves. It cannot be about tourism, then the manufacturers have one, and then the people in agriculture having one. We need all of them to come together and have their bellyache meeting so that they can get up and tell each other, look, you just sent out a contract for \$20 million, I could have helped with that contract.

Sir, instead of this piecemeal approach, what is needed is a consolidated approach where all of them can come together and deal with the national issue of Barbados, that is how to save foreign exchange. The greatest cost to this country is how to save foreign exchange, not how to make revenue.

Sir, tomorrow, if the Prime Minister of Barbados wants to have revenue he can come in here and get revenue by one statement, but if he wants foreign exchange that is a different matter. That is what I keep saying in this Honourable House, that the problem we have is not a revenue problem, the problem we have is a foreign exchange problem.

Sir, they can laugh all they want to when you talk about cassava, but the thing about it is, we can do so many things with cassava that a lot of them over there do not even understand. If we were to plant large acreages of cassava, we can easily save a lot of foreign exchange in this country, because we can eat some, feed some to the animals, make flour and we can even get some cassava cou cou and cassava hats, but they do not know anything about those things because those are supposed to be poor people's food.

Sir, I am not surprised the Community Tourism is a priority programme for this Government. For 14 years we have been trying to get them to understand what is Community Tourism. All we were hearing was, we do not want \$20 tourists, because they felt that the \$20 tourists could only put money in poor people's pockets. They wanted to keep the money at the higher level.

I am saying that we understand as a Party how to impact on the engines of the economy by ensuring that you put money where the multiplier effect is really generating in the economy of Barbados. I am saying that if you want to know what I am speaking about, just get a dollar bill from a tourist, let them spend it in St. Lucy, and tell me if you do not find that same dollar bill in Bridgetown the next day.

I thank you.

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

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

SUSPENSION

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 2.00 p.m. on Thursday, March 18, 2010.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until Thursday, Marh 18, 2010 at 2.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

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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. The source opens without the convening sentence (Pursuant to the adjournment ... met at ...). The date is taken from the heading of the source.

Q3. Order No. 5, reply of the Prime Minister, take-slips about 12.20-12.30 p.m.. The source file carries two reporters' versions of the same passage of Hon. D. J. H. Thompson's reply, from his remarks on exchange controls and foreign investment, condominium concessions and Ilaro Court to Miss C. Y. Forde's point of order (take-slips House A60C, Sequences 17 and 18). The more complete first version, which includes Mr. Speaker's ruling on the point of order, is printed here and the second version (about 1,080 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q4. Order No. 5, reply of the Prime Minister. One sentence is broken across two paragraphs in the source: 'Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be arbitrarily permitting the unsightly' / 'development of the coastlines in this country ...'. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 5, speech of Hon. R. D. Jones. One part of Hon. R. D. Jones's speech carries the label 'Hon. R.C. JONES', and one of Mr. Speaker's interventions just before it is labelled 'MRr. SPEAKER'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Take-slips. Several take-slips read '13.40 p.m.' and '19.00 p.m.', and the last is numbered 'HA60B' while the others in the file are A60C. Printed as in the source.

Q7. End of Sitting. The record ends with the Sitting suspended, not adjourned, until 2.00 p.m. on Thursday, 18th March, 2010 (the procedural note spells it 'Marh'), with the Committee of Supply on Head 55 still in progress. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on Wednesday, 17th March, 2010 at about 9.30 a.m., Mr. Speaker presiding, for the continued second reading debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2010 (Order No. 5), the debate on the

2010/2011 Estimates. Dr. the Hon. E. R. Byer-Suckoo spoke of productivity, a retraining fund to be financed from the National Insurance Scheme through the National Employment Bureau, and her concern that women, the disabled and young people should not be marginalised during the recovery. Hon. E. G. Hutson, as Minister responsible for International Business, answered the Opposition on the projected current account deficit of \$894 million for 2009/2010 and described work on double taxation agreements and an International Institute of Financial Risks and Regulation with the University of the West Indies.

Mr. Speaker then welcomed teachers and pupils of the Christ Church Girls' School to the Public Gallery and explained the arrangement of the Chamber to them. Hon. R. D. Jones quoted Scripture against what he called the Opposition's exploitation of fear, defended the National Camps and the Constituency Councils, and urged young people to take their heroes from their own culture. Hon. F. J. Stuart said the Estimates had to be seen against the world recession and the Barbados Labour Party's record, recalling its approach to the International Monetary Fund after the 1981 recession.

Replying, the Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, rejected the suggestion by the Honourable Member for St. Peter that one person alone had been responsible for the economy's transformation, denied that exchange controls would be reintroduced, defended the use of Ilaro Court and the Government's guarantee for the Four Seasons project, and spoke of CLICO's Executive Flexible Premium Annuity and of \$5 million paid for five pavilions that could not be found. The reply produced a long series of points of order from Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, Miss C. Y. Forde and Mr. G. A. Clarke. Mr. Speaker declined to strike out a remark about Miss Forde, ruled several times that there was no point of order, told Miss Mottley that there was no 'point of privilege' but that she might bring a matter of privilege under the Standing Orders, and had another remark struck out, which the Prime Minister withdrew. The Bill was read a second time without division.

After the suspension the House went into Committee of Supply with Mr. J. D. Paul, the recently appointed Chairman of Committees, in the Chair. The Minister of Tourism, Hon. R. L. Sealy, moving Head 55, said only \$90 million had been allocated to tourism the year before, described airlift arrangements with JetBlue and GOL Airlines and efforts on the United Kingdom airline passenger duty, and explained that there was no 2010 Tourism Industry Relief Fund. Mr. R. St.C. Toppin said the industry was in serious trouble, pressed the Minister to

disclose the terms of the JetBlue arrangement and withdrew the word ‘maliciously’. His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman supported the Head and urged pursuit of the Canadian market.

Hon. R. L. Sealy replied that commercial details could not be disclosed and named the consultants restructuring the Barbados Tourism Authority. Mr. H. F. Lashley proposed a Community Contact Day and greater use of Queen’s Park; Miss C. Y. Forde spoke of heritage sites in St. Thomas and the destroyed slave hut replica at

Rock Hall; Hon. P. M. T. Todd supported community tourism; Hon. S. D. Blackett said the Government invested \$1.7 million a year in Crop Over, which generated over \$85 million, and announced a Festival Agency; and Hon. J. D. E. Boyce spoke of the Oistins Fish Festival. After a further suspension, Mr. G. A. Clarke, Mr. A. D. Brathwaite, Hon. D. O’N. Inniss and His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman continued the debate, Mr. Brathwaite noting that Jamaica had 1 767 000 visitors in 2008 against Barbados’s 568 000. Progress was reported, and the Sitting was suspended until 2.00 p.m. on Thursday, 18th March, 2010.