
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 15, 2015.

PRESENT

The full list of Members present is to be inserted from the Votes and Proceedings. Members identified from the record of this Sitting:

His Honour M. A. CARRINGTON, Q.C. (Speaker)

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART, Q.C. (Prime Minister, Minister of National Security, the Public Service and Urban Development)

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C. (Leader of the Opposition)

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER (Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs)

Lt. Col. J. D. BOSTIC

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE (Minister of Health) (Leader of the House)

Hon. R. D. JONES (Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation)

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE (Minister of Environment and Drainage)

Mr. G. A. CLARKE, J.P.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND

Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS (Minister of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development)

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN (Minister of Housing and Lands)

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning, Honourable Members. This House is now in session. Members, I have with me the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 17th November and Tuesday 24th November respectively.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the minutes referred to be taken as read.

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

PAPERS

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am commanded to lay the Duties, Taxes and Other Payments Exemption (Barbados Port Inc.) Order 2015 and the Duties, Taxes and Other Payments Exemption (Republic Finance and Trust (Barbados) Corporation) Order 2015.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the West Barbados Agricultural Management Co. Ltd. 19th Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended June 30, 2012; 20th Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended June 30, 2013; and the 21st Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended June 30, 2014.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Report on the Unemployment Fund for the years 2010 to 2011.

FIRST READINGS OF BILLS

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Holidays with Pay Bill, 2015 be read the first time.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Labour Department Amendment Bill, 2015 be read a first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42, 43 and 44 for the remainder of today's sitting.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. CLERK: Government Business is the order of the day. Order Number 16, Sir. In the name of the Honourable Leader of the House, to move that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the grant of sums of money for the service of this island.

ORDER NO. 16 – RESOLUTION – COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY – SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 4, 2015–2016

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg that your Honour do now leave the chair and the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the grant of sums of money for the service of this island.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. J. D. PAUL, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Good morning. Members, the House is now in Committee.

HEAD 15 - CABINET OFFICE

IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2 040 000

Mr. CLERK: In the name of the Honourable Leader of the House, to move the passing of a resolution to grant the sum of \$2 040 000 from the Consolidated Fund and to place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 2015 to 2016 as shown in the Supplementary Estimates Number 4 for 2015 to 2016 which form the

schedule to the resolution. Head 15 - Cabinet Office - in the amount of two million and forty thousand dollars.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Chairman. For some, I guess so. On the 27th of August this year, the CARICOM country Dominica suffered a serious climate event in the form of Tropical Storm Erika which devastated the country and according to the Prime Minister and commentators subsequent to the Prime Minister has set back that country's development by about 20 years. The purpose of the resolution before the House is to ask for a grant of the sum mentioned to assist the Commonwealth of Dominica in its recovery efforts.

Immediately, of course, that the climate event happened, the Government of Barbados became active and began to engage immediately with the Commonwealth of Dominica, sending assistance through the Barbados Defence Force to assist in the rescue and recovery efforts in the country, the relocation of persons who were cut off from other communities in that country. We worked closely with the Regional Security System and with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, CDEMA, and other persons of goodwill - the French Government, the Government of the Netherlands and others - to try to stabilise the situation in Dominica. The houses were destroyed, roads destroyed, bridges washed away, vehicles washed away. It was a terrible sight which I viewed eerily, thanks to the benefaction of the French who provided a helicopter, and which I viewed by touring communities with the distinguished Prime Minister of Dominica. As I said, the assessment is that the development of Dominica has been set back by about 20 years.

And as a sister CARICOM country, we believe here in Barbados that we should make some contribution in addition to the contribution in kind that we have already made to the recovery efforts of Dominica. We do not know who will be next, because if history is supposed to be any guide - and it is a guide - hurricanes and other climate events happen in this region and have been happening in this region from the time its history began to be recorded. And we have all, at some time or another, suffered the impact of a climate event. Barbados' last serious hurricane was in the year 1955, in the month of September, when Hurricane Janet devastated this country. But since then we have had floods and other events that have tested the resilience of Barbados. And of course, as recently as the year 2010, Tropical Storm Tomas tested our resilience as well, as well as having tested the resilience of other countries in the region. And therefore we are all vulnerable in that regard. So the Government is of the view that we have to assist in these circumstances.

I am aware that Honourable Members on the other side of the House staged a public event at Kensington Oval

and that funds were raised to assist Dominica. I suppose in the course of this debate we will hear how much money was paid over to the Government of Dominica in that regard. But this was proper form. I think that Barbados should respond in the way in which it has responded to the challenge faced by the people of Dominica.

But it makes a very important point, Mr. Chairman. For some time now, CARICOM States, which belong to that family of islands called Small Island Developing States, have been trying to impress upon the international community the importance of taking note of the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States like the states in CARICOM. We have had to do this, of course, because as far as we are concerned, Small Island Developing States enjoy a special status amongst the family of nations across the world. Their vulnerabilities are quite different from the vulnerabilities of larger and better resourced states, and because of their status as islands - and the definition of an island, of course, speaks for itself: a parcel of land surrounded entirely by water - because of their status as islands, they have a vested interest in ensuring that they take all the necessary precautions to protect themselves from the vulnerabilities that status necessarily engenders.

Barbados, of course, has been a leader in this area because as long ago as 1994, we hosted Small Island Developing States here for the first Small Island Developing States Conference, the first SIDS conference to be held anywhere in the world. And out of that conference came a document which still partakes of the historic - the Barbados Programme of Action. And it is still the foundation document for any discussions on matters related to Small Island Developing States. It is true that in the year 2004 there was the second SIDS conference at Mauritius. And out of that conference came an outcome document called the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation. But that Mauritius Strategy for Implementation was for implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. And more recently, last year 2014, there was the third SIDS conference in Samoa. And out of that conference came the outcome document, the Samoa Pathway, which still harked back to the Barbados Programme of Action of the year 1994. So we have been in the forefront of the struggle for Small Island Developing States and we have provided leadership on issues related to Small Island Developing States.

As I have had to point out recently in Malta and in Paris, there can be no dilution of the whole concept of Small Island Developing States. SIDS have now become a brand and we are not about to give up that brand and to have it absorbed into any other form of classification or categorisation. SIDS have special interests which have to be addressed whenever the family of nations sits down to discuss the future of the planet. But we here in the

Caribbean have done reasonably well for ourselves - better than Small Island Developing States in the Indian Ocean or in the Pacific or elsewhere. And for all of our sins for being as efficient as we have been, we have been reclassified as middle income countries and therefore disqualified from access to concessional financing.

The measure that has been used by those who have classified us is the measure of GDP per capita. And it is very well known that the GDP per capita of a country like Barbados is about US\$13 500 - a GDP per capita that, marvellous to relate, is larger than that of the People's Republic of China. But we are far more vulnerable than the People's Republic of China. So although we have a larger GDP per capita, we are still more vulnerable than the People's Republic of China. So we say that rather than limiting the classification of countries to GDP per capita, the index of vulnerability is more relevant to our situation. Because the evidence shows that no matter how well, as Small Island Developing States, we are doing economically and socially and even environmentally, it only takes a few hours of unseasonable rainfall to wipe out all of our developmental gains and to put us back to start from scratch. And that is precisely what has happened to Dominica. We have seen it happen to Grenada here in the Caribbean, where its entire GDP was wiped out by a hurricane. We have seen it happen in Jamaica, we have seen it happen in Antigua and Barbuda. We say that we are vulnerable states and therefore using GDP per capita is attractive for what it reveals, but it is deceptive for what it conceals.

Because of our vulnerability and how easily our fortunes can be made to change as a result of climate events, that argument has been taking some time to get traction. But mercifully, there are some countries, some of the more powerful countries, that have been taking note of the argument and have been identifying with the cause of Small Island Developing States on that issue. I myself, Mr. Chairman, wherever I have gone and discussed Small Island Developing States, I have put this issue on the table. And I made it very clear in Samoa last year when I addressed the United Nations on the Sustainable Development Goals. In September, I put it back on the table again. Wherever we go, I put it on the table - in Paris, wherever we go, we make this point and we try to get our CARICOM colleagues to make the point as well. Because quite frankly, we are vulnerable states in spite of the fact that we have done very well for ourselves, or relatively well for ourselves, economically, socially and environmentally.

Now, in the context of the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States, and of course in the context of the sustainable development of countries generally, the issue that has posed the greatest threat to the development of Small Island Developing States in recent

times has been the issue of climate change. Now, Mr. Chairman, I know that when this issue was first broached, there were scientists who said it was a fiction. There were others who said it was a reality. Mercifully, the climate change sceptics have been getting fewer and fewer in number as the planet itself has been speaking to the world in language unmistakable, that changes have been taking place.

Now, I have always argued - I have said it wherever I have gone - that when men argue with one another, or when men and women argue with one another, it is open to you to agree or disagree. It is open to you to listen or not to listen. You can contradict or you can support, because this is a discussion, a discussion between human beings. But when the planet begins to speak to you, when the planet puts an argument on the table, there is no scope for disagreement. As Hurricane Sandy proved in the United States of America, as the floods in northern England just proved - bridges hundreds of years old and reinforced were just washed away, and people's lives were thrown into chaos, all their treasured possessions washed away by rainfall that had not been seen in the United Kingdom for hundreds of years. And we have seen this happen in Europe, we have seen it happen in North America, we have seen it happen in Asia, and here in the Caribbean as well. Just two years ago, 17 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product of St. Vincent and the Grenadines was wiped out by three hours of rainfall. And in that same situation, at the same time, the economy of Dominica was affected and the economy of St. Lucia was also affected. So climate change is a reality. And the scientists are now reaching a consensus that something has changed and that we need to adapt to this new reality.

What is it that the scientists are saying has caused these changes in the climate? They say it all has to do with global warming and the carbonisation of the global environment. Now, the argument has been that before the Industrial Revolution, which had its genesis around the end of the 18th century, global temperatures were normal and made living on the planet sustainable. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution - and by the Industrial Revolution, Mr. Chairman, I just mean that great transformation that took place in the Western world that resulted in a change from the use of muscle power to the use of machine power, that great transition that resulted in a move from production at the level of guilds and of cottages and of homes to production at the level of the factory, with all the consequences, of course, for large numbers of people being employed in factories; that great transition that took place that changed the relationship between human beings from a relationship based on status to a relationship based on contract. Now, students of history know that during the feudal period that preceded the Industrial Revolution, most relationships were based on

status - the lord and his serfs, and that kind of thing. But once -

the Industrial Revolution happened, that transition from status to contract took effect. And interpersonal relations were based on, or put on completely different footing. The role played by agricultural land, or land on the whole in the period before the Industrial Revolution became diminished as capital replaced land as a form of wealth. And of course, production was no longer targeted just at a local market. Production was aimed at a world market. So the Industrial Revolution introduced vast cataclysmic changes in the way the Western world was doing business. And because of these changes, because the focus now was on production, large scale production for world market, and because capital had replaced land as a form of wealth. And because men were interested in getting as wealthy as possible as quickly as possible, some horrible things happened. Of course, we know about six year old children working in the coal mines in the United Kingdom and so on, and horrible exploitations of labour taking place. We also know that the poet William Blake wrote his famous poem Jerusalem, which is now, I think, one of the hymns sung in the Church of England where he talked about the dark satanic mills. A comment on what was happening in the British countryside as the Industrial Revolution and its effects took root.

But in order to sustain all of this, Mr. Chairman, new forms of energy were required. What was required at the gill level or the cottage level could not suffice for large scale production. And therefore coal as a source of energy and later oil as a source of energy had to replace these old fairly backward forms of production. It took coal and oil and other carbon based sources of energy to motor the Industrial Revolution and to make it the spectacular success that it has been. So the planet became warmer and warmer as factory life became more and more entrenched. And here we are today.

Now, the scientists say we measure carbon concentrations in the environment by parts per million. And for about 800 000 years, according to the historians, carbon concentration in the environment never reached 300 parts per million. But all of a sudden the concentration has not only gone beyond 300 parts per million, but it is going dangerously close to 400 parts per million. Evidence of how much warmer the global environment has become. Evidence of how temperatures have increased and made the environment a less comfortable place in which to live.

Now, for small island developing States, global warming has to be an issue because the science says that global warming can lead to sea level rise. And since islands are surrounded by the sea, their very existence can be put at risk. There are islands in the world, Mr. Chairman, that own more sea, based on the United Nations Convention on

the Law of the Sea and the 200 mile economic zone and so on, that own more sea than their own land. And therefore it has to be a matter of concern for small island developing States when global temperatures rise. And that is what COP 21 and the COPs that preceded it were really about.

The larger and better resourced and more developed countries in the world purchased their development by polluting the environment because they were the ones responsible for the greenhouse gas emissions that have made the world the very uncomfortable place it is now. And that puts the planet's very existence at risk. And the truth is, to be fair to those countries, they have publicly proclaimed their guilty pleas. I heard some of them - embarrassed myself recently. They say, we know that we are responsible, but the stage is now reached where we have to do something about it. Of course that has led to a philosophical divide because those countries that are still trying to become more developed and deal with issues of poverty and horrible poverty are saying, well, who are you to look us in the face and tell us now that we must conform to some new standard because the planet is at risk? When you earned your own development by polluting the place, why should there be one law for you so that you can become developed, but another law for us to retard our development? And that caused great argument not only in Malta recently at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, but it was also a divisive issue in Paris where we were trying to hammer out the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Mercifully, common sense has prevailed and we have an agreement that from the sound of it has made everybody happy. Even those countries that were taking up truculent and confrontational postures have now accepted that compromises have to be made in order to ensure the sustainable development of countries across the world. 195 countries acceded to the Paris Agreement on climate change at the recent COP meeting.

CARICOM States, of course - CARICOM States have been fighting for a number of issues and as leaders in the small island developing states fora we have had to push to ensure that certain issues appeared in the agreement in Paris. We insisted that countries should commit themselves to ensuring that global temperatures did not increase by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. That was one sticking point. We said we could brook no disagreement on that because to agree to anything else would amount to agreeing that small island developing States should be wiped off the planet. So we said that in any outcome document, any agreement, 1.5 degrees Celsius must appear. That took some doing, but we said that is where we were as small island developing States - Caribbean, from the Pacific, from the Indian Ocean, and small island developing States scattered in a few other places, Africa for example.

We said that we were not going to have developed countries come to the conference and make promises which they were not prepared to keep. And therefore that every five years we wanted these commitments that are given at Paris to come up for review and verification so that we could be satisfied that countries that committed themselves to certain targets were keeping those commitments, and that the process of verification should be as transparent as possible. That was the second issue on which we insisted.

The third issue on which we insisted was that the agreement should say specifically that small island developing States are a special category of states deserving of highly specialised treatment. We said that the agreement would not meet with our concurrence if it did not acknowledge and recognise the special status of small island developing States.

We also said that even as we were speaking in Paris, small island developing States were suffering loss and damage. And while it is true that there may be difficulties of quantification of the loss and damage and there may be difficulties of determining where liability rests, we wanted the fact of loss and damage accounted for in the agreement and we wanted it kept separate from the issue of any funds that were being made available for adaptation to climate change. So yes, you wanted adaptation there, but we also wanted loss and damage - by which of course we meant damage that could not easily be repaired as a result of climate change - we wanted that accounted for in any outcome document.

And of course, so far as financing is concerned, developed countries had said that they were going to make available \$100 billion per year to deal with climate change funding. And then all of a sudden we heard the language changing, that this \$100 billion was only to be a one-off thing. We insisted that is not what you said in the beginning and that \$100 billion per year should be raised. Of course they began to say that they didn't only mean that they should raise it, that the private sector should get involved as well. But we said that commitment should be kept. And that is what we argued in Paris, at the Commonwealth Heads meeting and elsewhere.

And I really want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Dr. James Fletcher of St. Lucia who was leading our negotiators from day one until COP21 - a very dedicated public servant and well regarded minister in the government of St. Lucia. He mastered the issues and kept the forces together in CARICOM and outside of CARICOM, because let us be very frank on this. There were some countries that were vulnerable to being picked off and they had to be kept together. And of course there were other countries that in normal circumstances claimed that they were friends of ours and friends of small island developing States who were all of a sudden saying that

small island developing States were not special, that everybody has problems and that you should really get rid of this small island developing States thing. And Dr. Fletcher and the negotiators had to make sure that these issues remained on the table.

I am pleased to say, Mr. Chairman, that the outcome document in Paris reflects all of the issues for which CARICOM fought. All. And therefore it goes to show how when countries proceed on the basis of conviction and are prepared to fight for what is important to them, there is no stopping them, as it were. I think CARICOM states can feel proud when they read that Paris Agreement, that all of the issues for which they fought, all on which they insisted, are reflected in the way in which they wanted them reflected in the Paris outcome document. Although along the way we were being told that it was not possible.

So I thought I would make this point, Mr. Chairman, because it all connects with what this resolution is about. The vulnerability of small island developing States, our proneness to natural disasters, the threat posed to us by sea level rise and by global warming, and the fact that our existence is intimately bound up with a decarbonised future. And that is what our sustainable development is based on. So whether speaking economically, socially or environmentally, which are the three pillars of sustainable development, we have to be very concerned that we do not allow our prospects as small island developing States to be compromised. We must keep an eagle eye out and make sure that countries better resourced than ours do the right thing to ensure that we continue to make the contribution we make to the global discourse.

So I am asking this committee, Mr. Chairman, to support this resolution which seeks to make this contribution to the Government of Dominica to assist in the recovery efforts following the impact of Tropical Storm Erika on August 27th this year. As I said, we don't know whose turn is next. We don't know what perils we are likely to face because we are in that zone. And at one time or another, every CARICOM country has been affected by a climate event. And therefore it is proper that Barbados should do what it is doing now to show some consistency in its philosophy of sustainable development. So I commend this resolution to this committee. I am obliged to you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too would want to support this resolution and ask that Head 15 stand.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Our Member for St. Michael North East. Thank you.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I first of all want to

thank the Prime Minister for a very comprehensive briefing in relation to the CARICOM position as it relates to climate change. And it is, as he correctly stated, appropriate to use this vote for the people of Barbados - assistance to the people of Dominica - to let us know what really all of the discussion that members of the population may have been seeing on the news, on TV, reading about in relation to COP21, what it really means for us as citizens of small island states. In the case of Dominica, most people would not have appreciated that a mere tropical storm, which for us may not be anything significant because we still think in terms of hurricanes, that a mere tropical storm could wreak the level of damage to that country, wiping out 90 per cent of its GDP. And perhaps the older members of our population may have a better sense because they lived at a time when we didn't get the kind of timely warnings to prepare ourselves for hurricanes as we do today. The people of Dominica would have been surprised to learn that a storm in fact was hitting them because none of the major meteorological institutes had in fact provided any warning to them. But their curious and particular circumstances of having over 365 rivers, with the onslaught of water for hours upon hours, in fact was a worse fate for them than had they faced a hurricane with gale force winds. So that our reality in this region is one that we need to underscore because this is about the capacity of our civilisations to survive, our countries to survive, our people to fare well.

I well remember just before we left government, a delegation of U.S. congressmen and senators coming to Barbados and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided a lunch for them at the Tides Restaurant. The head of the U.S. delegation, a Congressman, was almost boasting in a very funny way that he had never left the United States of America before. That his vacations were these boys club programmes that you have all over the Midwest of the U.S. And I'm not talking about someone who had just come to wealth or to some sense of understanding of the world. This was a man who boasted that he was third generation of lawyers and judges. And he then proceeded to try to justify why the United States of America could with impunity seek to ignore the Kyoto Protocol and that for them this was nothing of major significance. I then turned to him and I said, sir, where you are sitting? Because he was sitting at the back of the table which was literally next to the shoreline. I said, you know, for you, you can make those judgements glibly. For us, where you are in fact sitting within 20 to 30 or 40 years may not even exist. And that's what climate change means to us.

I well remember stories from my grandmother in terms of how this coastline used to look 50, 60, 70 years ago. There are those people who will tell you that the water - what we take for granted now as Accra beach - the water came right up to almost where Shepherd Rockley is. I well remember as a child there was no Bronze Beach with the vastness of beach that we see now. And while that in and of

itself may not be as a result of what we are particularly concerned about today, it shows the vagaries of what a coastline can look like. I grew up bathing on the west coast down Lower Carlton, and I knew what it was as a child to step on cobblers and have this soft candle be applied to take out the cobblers. You walk those beaches now, you don't see any cobblers. We see eggs - we all know have been at risk of extinction in this country for well over 20 years. And there are a series of other phenomena that ordinary Barbadians can speak to.

And I speak in this way this morning, Mr. Chairman, because I believe that we who occupy this chamber have now to bridge the gap in allowing our people to understand that this is not the effort of a government or an opposition, but that this must be the effort of a people. And that Barbados as a nation has distinguished itself thus far for 25 years roughly, with governments consistently, heads of government consistently taking strong positions in relation to the vulnerability of small island developing states. We have been at the centre of the international discussion. But it is for our people now. And in particular, I want to say this morning, because I've taken the position that young people - people under 40, people under 30 in particular - need to adopt this agenda as their own. Because they are the ones who are going to face the consequences of global warming in a way that those of us who are past that stage may not be around. I have urged young socialists, for example, to treat this issue and the international telecommunications and technological developments as theirs, because they have a vested interest in learning as much about these issues and popularising the concerns that we ought to have as a people, not just in the context of this 166 square miles, but the very same social media gives them the opportunity to become global advocates.

And I believe very strongly that in the same way the leadership of our government has consistently been in the vanguard of the need for the world to protect itself, our young people must become the strongest advocates among the strongest advocates in the world for a change of behaviour, a change of attitude, and ultimately, if necessary, a change of governance to protect the world in which we live. I watch my nieces and sometimes I wonder what kind of world will they live in respect of the type of climate and the type of difficulties that they would face. It came home to us in a real way. As the Prime Minister indicated, it was three Christmases ago when the rest of us were preparing to share fellowship with our families. There were those in this region who were losing members of their families - and why? Not because there was a hurricane in December to defy the age-old reason, but because there was an onslaught of rain. I happened to be in Miami last week and for the first time there were five straight days of rain. There was no easing up of the rain and therefore not on my parade - it rained on everyone's. And the bottom line is that as we seek to manage the day-to-day affairs of

our nation, I am concerned that there are few higher order issues that we need to focus on.

And for those who dismiss the nature of politics as being adversarial and a Westminster divide, which it is, there is still a role for them to play in the governance of this nation. The Prime Minister and I have already spoken about issues pertaining to children that remains uppermost in my mind. This issue in relation to the advocacy for climate change, the advocacy for taking the action to prevent the deleterious consequences of climate change is another one in which I believe our people can speak as one and speak as one in a way

that is not detached. I deliberately spoke about the changes on the west coast of Barbados in relation to the ocean because every summer, every vacation, where do the children go? Into the sea. And they themselves would see it. And if not they, their parents would tell them, I couldn't walk across that point as a child without getting a cobbler in my foot. Now they can walk with ease. They can go across there by St. Albans with ease. And we have to find ways of making this issue a real and live issue, while we, as those practised in the field of governance, continue to advocate the policy framework that is critical.

I believe that the study done by CARICOM some seven, eight years ago that spoke to the consequences of what would happen should there not be at least a commitment to a 1.5 degree change is one that needs to be simplified and popularised for the intake of all of our people. Barbadians are too literate and too bright, so we must assume that they can understand the issues. But they can only understand them if we help sensitise them and if we help in a unified way make the call for our young people in particular to take this up and to go in the vanguard globally - not regionally, globally - with the social media, to let the world know that there are persons who are not prepared to accept the kind of lip service that some may want to give and who recognise that as much as governments may commit to treaties and as much as we may seek to ratify them, ultimately it is the behaviour of citizens that determines compliance.

So we support this supplementary. But more importantly, I want to associate myself with the words of the Prime Minister as it relates to the country and the region's efforts in being able to hold the rest of the world to account for their behaviour in relation to the kind of environmental degradation and the unrestrained use of fossil fuels and the consequences that it has brought to people like us. I believe that the 2007 budget of the Barbados Labour Party brought by the member for St. Peter would have suggested very clearly that on these issues there is a clear understanding that we have to move to greater levels of renewable energy. We have to do our part. You know, there's an old Barbadian saying that is perhaps

apt and that the rest of the world could perhaps use - I'm sure others have their own. But one blow is kill all cow. And the consequence of one blow is that literally, literally, the actions of each citizen and each state, however small, however large, can lead to a non-retrievable set of circumstances that will place the race to which we belong at serious peril.

And in those circumstances, Mr. Chairman, I therefore want to associate this side with these remarks. I'm not sure that it needs a lengthy debate. But believe you me, we wonder when our turn might come as well. And if you look at the pattern historically - I had a geography teacher called Flora Jordan who taught me in first and third form at Queens College. She was from Tobago, a very tall, striking lady. And she used to tell us, girls, girls, you wonder why Barbados is not hit by hurricanes more regularly. But Barbados is located in the Atlantic Ocean. It is not in the Caribbean Sea. And she used to contend that that really was the fundamental reason why we don't face the onslaught of hurricanes as our neighbours do every year. Now, whether that is the case or not, we are not fully insulated from it. And as you look back through our history, you look back as the cathedral finishes its refurbishment - that cathedral was destroyed in the 19th century by a hurricane. And we tend not to see them other than every 50 to 75 years. So it would suggest that we are in that zone at this point in time.

In the same way that we were not accustomed to having earthquakes - there was a whole generation of Barbadians who never believed that Barbados was liable to be subject to earthquakes. But if you speak to Tony Gibbs and other engineers, they will tell you that the tectonic shifts that are taking place with the Caribbean plates put us in a particularly vulnerable situation. And the truth is that our engineers now need to build not just to specifications that can withstand category 3, 4, 5 hurricanes, but also to withstand earthquakes. And that it is not only Trinidad or the very same Dominica and others that are subject. I must tell you that I then went to a site that literally lists for you every single earth tremor and earthquake. And we would be amazed that there are on average five to ten every day in the Caribbean basin, but there are 10 to 15 kilometres deep into the ocean floor. The problem is, of course, when it comes higher up. So we live in difficult times. And our greatest responsibility, I believe, is to sensitise our citizens and let them join this fight. And let it not be simply the action of technocrats and political leaders, but the actions of a population in order to ensure that we can best preserve that which we value most - our country and, by extension, the lives of our families and our people. I am obliged.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, honourable member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I too rise to speak in this debate and to make the point as I am about to speak to you. There is a conference going on in Barbados at the present moment of which I have the privilege and honour to host to the Cabinet of Barbados dealing with housing and sustainable development. And I can assure you that the issues that we are discussing here today is very relevant to what is being discussed at this present moment at the location at Marriott in Christ Church. Because we cannot discuss sustainable development, we cannot discuss climate change, we cannot discuss things like rising sea levels before understanding the impact that it will have on our housing situation in Barbados. When we have a situation that over 54 per cent or more of our housing stock is 1.5 kilometres away from the seashore. When one considers that from [Inaudible.] in St. Lucy to Christ Church, that those areas are regarded as the low-lying areas and that can easily be affected by any tsunami that we have in this country. So we as a country and a small island development state cannot ignore that.

We have a case to put. And I was glad that the Prime Minister reminded this House that it was Barbados who recognised that they had to put it on the agenda and that in 1994 that we were bold enough to stand and tell the world that we can be counted and should be counted. I want to tell this House that the same way that has been said as far back as 1994 that we have been able to tell the world also as it relates to housing and as it relates to the urbanisation of the world. We have been able to tell the world that they have been wrong in their approach. And that the focus on urbanisation and seeing ruralism as a negative, that they were wrong. And instead of dealing with that, that what they needed to do is to understand how rural can complement urban. And not that the people of the rural areas needed to move to the urban areas. Because as I have been saying to this Parliament and I have been saying across Barbados, if one looks at the statistics, one will recognise that as much as we may criticise Barbados, we have a lot to be happy about. We are probably the only country in the world, when you look at the statistics, where urbanisation is not dominating, but the rural areas are. The areas that people are moving from the urban area and moving towards the rural area. So as much as we talk, we have to recognise that. That as a small island development state, that we have done so much as a country, especially to our educational system, that we have been able to make change in the world.

When I went to Nairobi, I was able to tell [Inaudible.] that he was wrong. But he advocated that people should move from the rural areas to the urban areas. And I was happy at that time that I was able to get the support of the African nations. By the time I got to Ecuador, I was able to get the support of the South Americans. And today at the conference at [Inaudible.], I can tell you that what is being discussed is not the

movement from the rural areas to urban, but the understanding that if we are to clarify the masses of people in the country, that we must move some of the resources into the rural areas. Because that is where the productivity is. And the reason why I can boldly state that the statistics will show that when Barbados was developing the urban area, it was at the time when the port was employing 1 000 people. And all the merchant class people were in the urban area. We know that the development of Barbados has been such that we now see the port not employing those numbers. And also that group of merchant class people that they have now moved out from the urban area and created problems for the masses of people living in the area.

What do we see in Barbados? What we see in Barbados is a country where the urban area is now the area of services. Which means that the level of jobs that we normally used to offer to the mass-based people are not there anymore. So when you hear people advocating that we should keep these people within those areas, one can only ask the question, are we only interested in a vote or are we interested in the development of the people? And I say, as Minister of Housing, I have to recognise that my job as Minister of Housing is also about sustainable development. And once it is about sustainable development, I cannot keep people in oppressed conditions. I have to ensure that the development is done in such a way that the people have an opportunity to move towards where the opportunities are and to lift their lives. People who do not have foresight will grumble and they will make all sorts of comments. But anybody who recognises and has foresight will recognise that Barbados has a model and that the world is now prepared to accept the model of Barbados. And we have been able to discuss it and explain it. And now the world has accepted that instead of focusing on the movement towards urbanisation, they are now talking about the climate change impact, the crime levels, the impact of transportation, the lack of resources and things like that, open spaces, all of that. And it is because of their policies that they have pressured the urban areas and have not allowed the rural areas to grow at the pace they should grow.

So Mr. Chairman, I am happy that Barbados is not and will not continue to be merely a player, but will be a leading player wherever they go in the world. And I am happy to see that the Prime Minister of the country has been able to use the taxpayers' money not to go to [Inaudible.], but wherever he goes in the world they want to hear what he has to say on environmental matters and also as it relates to climate change, et cetera. And we have been able to tell the world, especially those countries that have large areas of desert land, that maybe one day, seeing how we have been able to use renewable energy, that they understand that there is a linkage and a conversion that can occur when one looks at desalination, when one looks at the problem of water scarcity and when one looks at the

renewable energy levels, that there is a relationship between those and that desalination and renewable energy can help solve rising sea levels and also help with the water scarcity problem that countries are having. Because you cannot have rising sea levels and then sit idly by - we have desalination and renewable energy - and not recognise that you can use the conversion of salt water to fresh water to solve your water scarcity. And I want to say that I am happy to see how Barbados, as a small island development state, has been able to proffer these things. And you know, it is not today that this has been proffered - as far back as a conference in Trinidad and Tobago when the owner of Virgin Airlines offered to pay millions of dollars for a renewable energy solution. And I proffered that at that time; the scientists accepted it, but they did not want to do it - as usual, it came from a non-scientist. So they could not accept it. But I am telling you it is now being accepted because there is a recognition that we have to stop bellyaching about things and look for sensible alternatives.

And I must tell you, Mr. Chairman, it hurts me to see the level of negativity in this country being thrown across the airwaves and being printed in this country after we have been able to boast of having over 50 years of secondary education. The question must be asked - after 50 years of secondary education, what? Because we seem to be more focused on the negatives than on the positives. And when you find a few of us who are prepared to go there and to proffer something that makes sense, those persons who do not want to open up their knowledge call it ignorance and foolishness, not recognising that, like them, there are people who are interested in country Barbados and always thinking. And I have always said I will continue to make the point - in this country we have to stop focusing so much on the negative and recognise that with our educational ability, et cetera, that we need to convert what the country of Barbados has given us to something sellable so that we can not only offer it to ourselves, but we can offer it to the world.

Mr. Chairman, when South America cannot ignore rising sea levels, they cannot ignore climate change because Mexico has always been affected by tsunamis, Chile by earthquakes, Dominica earlier this year - while we were in Jamaica with Minerva, the representative, Mr. Blackmore, was reporting to us and showing us videos of the damage that was occurring in his country, Dominica. Today he is at the conference and he has acknowledged the contribution of Barbados to their plight. And I want to say, you know, it is not only the financial gains that Barbados can give, but it is a contribution that continues to give way across the world. Whether it is on climate change, environmental matters, whether on housing or whether on the rural-urban relationship. And how you can manage that. And I have been able to get Mr. [Inaudible.] to acknowledge that Barbados will be used as a model on how to deal with your rural-urban relationship. And you know,

the conference is not about urbanisation anymore. The conference now, as we go through towards Quito 2016, is how you can build the rural-urban relationship. Because urban is not a standalone. The impact and how we deal with the rural areas is the important thing - because the more people that we can keep in the rural areas, the more we can do for the people living in the urban areas and the more we can push our productivity. But if you crowd all the people in one location, you will stifle your productivity and you will not be able to deliver the goods. So Barbados is carrying a flag in the world and the flag it is carrying is one that everybody would want to line up behind.

So those people who continue to badmouth - and another thing: on the floor of this House, this is my last time I will be speaking on this issue. I have spoken to it on two occasions before and some people are still getting it wrong. I never said that the report going to Quito - our draft report, which will be combined going to Quito - that the people who prepared the report said that they have over 15 000 government units unoccupied. I corrected that on two occasions. So I know, I correct things three times. I will correct it three times. I am like Tom Sawyer, sir, in case you do not know your literature - I am like Tom Sawyer. I will correct it the third time. But one thing I can assure you, after correcting it the third time, I remember that for a while nobody can push a mic in my face and ask me about it because, you know, I can be very stubborn when I want to. But I want you also to understand that it is not 15 000 unoccupied government units. It is 15 000 according to the report prepared by the consultants - abandoned houses or houses that people are not living in - and they are not government houses. It is across Barbados.

And I also want to say that the Town Planner has never told anybody - and this Minister has never told anybody in the Ministry of Housing and Lands - that we will not be acquiring any more lands. Furthermore, we are standing firm in the process of acquiring more lands. And nowhere in that report, where you look to see what the Town Planner said, could he have told anybody that the Government is not acquiring any more land, or that he is against high-rise. Because the Town Planner in the report said that the high-rise policy fits into the Government's green policies and it allows the Government to maximise the space in the urban area. So those persons who have either misquoted or misprinted - I want to say that that is not Government policy.

And Mr. Chairman, with those few remarks I want to say that Barbados' environmental policy is very strong and its housing policy is very strong and the focus on selling the available units is the right policy because in order to complete a plan you must have the necessary cash to deal with it. I thank you, sir.

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

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Chairman. I would have hoped, Mr. Chairman, that we could have heard from the honourable member from St. Lucy perhaps in this debate an update on the situation of the persons who were affected by Hurricane Thomas. Because for a minister who is holding the portfolio for the Ministry of Housing this would have been a pertinent time to perhaps update the citizens of Barbados who would have been affected in 2010 by the devastation caused by Hurricane Thomas in this country. But it has become par for the course for us to sit in this chamber and have the Hon. Member for St. Lucy avoid the issue of housing which is relevant to average Barbadians.

Mr. Chairman, I rise to lend support to this particular supplemental. I support the comments made by the Honourable Prime Minister and also by the leader of the Barbados Labour Party Opposition and the sentiments that have been expressed regarding the vulnerability of Barbadians and certainly the entire Caribbean. This supplemental is a reminder to Barbadians about the vulnerability of this island. It is a reminder to us of how fragile we are as small islands. But it is also a reminder, I believe, to those in government that we cannot wait until something happens to take action or to have precautionary measures in place which may result in us having to work harder when we are faced with devastation in our respective islands. Because sometimes we think that things cannot happen, sir, and sometimes the unthinkable happens to small islands and in particular to Barbados and Dominica. I am sure that the persons who woke up on the morning of 27th August did not go to sleep believing that what faced them on the morning of the 27th would have become a reality.

Certainly, I believe it was on the Friday when we came to this chamber - we were meeting on the Friday in this Parliament - and I remember walking into the Leader of the Opposition's office and she remarked to me, she asked me whether I had heard what had happened in Dominica. And I, like her, and I believe several others in this chamber, would have been privy to several posts on Facebook and social media indicating what had happened in Dominica. And immediately, sir, the leader of the Barbados Labour Party Opposition spoke to me about convening a committee, a non-partisan committee that would be able to raise funds to assist the relief efforts in the island of Dominica.

Sir, I did not hesitate at the time because several years ago when Hurricane Ivan would have struck Grenada, I, at the time, was managing the artiste, the soca artiste, Tal Pre. And I remember having gone to Grenada on several occasions, being impressed with the lush

tropical fruits and the landscape of the country - which is obviously quite different to Barbados. But I had the opportunity to go to Grenada immediately after Hurricane Ivan to witness not just the look on the faces of the persons who were affected, but to see a country completely transformed by a natural disaster. And for those who have not experienced it - because I certainly, up until that time, sir, would not have experienced that; I would obviously have been too young to have experienced Hurricane Janet and several of the other hurricanes and storms that would have affected Barbados - I would have had the opportunity to see a country within the few days after the devastation and to realise the impact that it has not only on the country financially, but also on the social welfare of the people. There were houses and landmarks that I could no longer recognise. There were people who had no toiletries. There were persons whose houses did not resemble the houses that they once lived in. There was obviously the issue of running water for many of the citizens, no electricity.

And so when I was approached by the leader of the opposition to assist with the relief efforts, I cast my mind back to what I had seen back then with Hurricane Ivan. And I believe I, like many others who responded to the call to work on the committee, would have felt that we had a responsibility not only to the people of Dominica, but certainly to all Barbadians, to respond as quickly as we could to assist with the relief efforts.

Sir, I want to take the opportunity to thank all of the people who would have worked with us with the Dominica Children Relief Fund. In particular, I will start with the Honourable Prime Minister and also the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Tourism, who would have responded to our request to work with us on that committee, drawing on persons in the private sector and private citizens across Barbados and also in the region, because we had some persons

who, like us, felt very passionately about giving back to the people of Dominica. And one company in Antigua, Lava Entertainment, would have provided us with the LED screens, flown them, sent them by cargo to Barbados to be able to have those LED screens as part of the backdrop for the One Caribbean concert that was hosted here. I think it speaks volumes to what can happen not just in a disaster. But I certainly witnessed several of the entertainers across the Caribbean coming together for a common cause, at no cost, to be able to assist their brothers and sisters in Dominica.

And for that, sir, I believe that we have to recognise that it should not only take disaster to bring us together as a Caribbean people. Sometimes again, we wait until something happens to act. And I think that event, more than anything, for all of the persons who were involved, showed us that more can be achieved if we sometimes put aside not

only the personal differences, but also our political differences, to be able to do good for our island and also for our neighbours.

Sir, I would want to thank the people who would have attended the event as well. We had a very short opportunity to put together the concert. I certainly, despite giving the best of advice that I felt that we needed more time - sometimes, when it comes to a crisis such as what would have taken place in Dominica, we have to put all resources that are available to us together to be able to assist those who are in need at that point in time. The fact that it is going to take Dominica over a billion dollars to begin the relief efforts and to get the country back to where it was, the fact that it has set the country back over 20 years, I think is significant for all of us - to be able to not only respond when we are called upon within the first couple of months after, but for us to continue to assist our neighbours with their relief efforts.

I know that the Honourable Prime Minister would have indicated in the early stages that there was a donation of \$100 000, and I am glad that this has now been topped up, in a sense, to the \$2.4 million. And I think he had the benefit of actually seeing firsthand the level of the devastation in Dominica. When you can appreciate that people lost their lives - over a dozen people lost their lives, several families, there were persons who were missing, I believe probably over 30 by now - I think that unless you have been affected by it, it is difficult to fully appreciate the magnitude of what the people of Dominica would have experienced.

I know in the early stages the Dominica Children Relief Fund would have sent some solar lights into Dominica, thanks to some of the sponsors here in Barbados as well. And we were able to see photographs of young children having these solar lights - again, because there was no electricity. So those are things that I think, for all of us who were involved in the relief effort, really meant something - to see us being able to transform the lives of a number of the people in the various communities. We would have sent in diapers, hygiene items, bottled water, and food. And while the Dominica Children Relief Fund would have done its part, I think it is also important to mention the fact that other service organisations would have come on board to assist these efforts.

For me, the devastation in Dominica certainly showed that Barbadians are very caring people. We respond often to causes. I remember one of the entertainers said to me, find the cause and let us come together again, because they too were taken aback by the interest that was put to the whole effort to be able to have something like this done for a common objective. And so I, Mr. Chairman, would certainly sincerely want to thank all of those publicly who would have played a part in assisting in the

efforts. The Dominica Children Relief Fund will be donating the funds to the Prime Minister, sir, to help with the relief efforts. Unlike others, there are persons who would have pledged continued support and we want to be in a position to be able to make a financial donation to the country in the fullness of time.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I cannot sit without perhaps touching on our vulnerability in Barbados and speaking to the fact that the Prime Minister would have mentioned the issue of climate change, which we are all impacted by. But we are also impacted by the fact that we need to do more as a country to ensure that we educate not only our young people, but our older people, in relation to things like the separation of garbage - things that will impact, as happens in the first world countries, on the safety and the beauty of our own island. And I believe that in the schools we need to see more of the separation of our garbage. We have seen over the last few days concerns expressed by several persons across Barbados regarding illegal dumping. It is something that needs to be addressed. We have heard the issues raised in relation to the reduction in the number of sanitation trucks. Again, we have a situation where I drive through my constituency, I drive through other constituencies, and I see people, particularly at this time of year, dumping their garbage on the street corners, throwing out things from their houses.

And you know, Mr. Chairman, it is something that I believe our vulnerability has to be put in context, because the garbage will only create additional health problems for our citizens as well. And these are things that we have to address. We cannot speak about only the international countries taking steps as it relates to climate change, because we have to also play our part to ensure that our citizens are educated - that by their actions, they too have a role to play in ensuring that we do not become a dirty Barbados, that certain plastics and other items do not seep into our water supply. We need to teach our people about proper disposal of items if we are going to protect our environment. This is not just a debate on natural disasters, but it is also a wider debate on the environment as well.

And I do believe that more can be done across communities. We have a lot of communities that have open spaces. We need to ensure that there is dialogue as it relates to separation of garbage, particularly in communities where there are large housing areas. We have a situation where, as you know, the truck sometimes cannot get into the small roads. So we need to look again at the physical layout of our communities and see, perhaps working with environmental groups, if there is a way to have separation bins in a central area that persons know they can bring their garbage to, to have those things removed. It is a concern for me, sir, in St. Michael South East, because you have a lot of narrow roads that the truck sometimes cannot go through. And if sometimes the trucks are not working, it

makes it even more difficult because it means that the garbage is going to be there for several days and several weeks. And I know that this is something that happens in all of the communities.

I do believe that this supplemental is important. I commend the Prime Minister and the government for finding the resources to be able to assist our neighbours. And again, I applaud the efforts of all Barbadians. I would hope that members on the other side would reflect on the fact that if we were able to have a bipartisan committee to be able to work together on this, perhaps it is time that we apply our minds to ensuring that the committees of this House that by law are there to allow us to work together - not just on issues of climate change, but other social and financial issues - are also given the relevant support and weight and given effect, so that we can have both opinions being shared from either side, having persons come from across the communities to be able to lend their opinions to proposed legislation in this chamber. I thank you, sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. [Inaudible.]

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Chairman, sir, I wanted to just make a very quick intervention in this matter regarding the supplementary provision for our contribution as a country to our sisters and brothers in Dominica. I want to, of course, register my own appreciation to the Right Honourable Prime Minister for the alacrity with which the Prime Minister and his team in the Division of Defence and Security on the one hand, and of course that part of the Prime Minister's Office responsible for the single market and economy and CARICOM matters. Since the Prime Minister is currently the Chair of CARICOM and would have had to respond both at that level and also at the level of Prime Minister of Barbados to the challenges which our sister country Dominica would have suffered because of the very devastating floods that they would have encountered.

Of course, this is not the first time that Barbados has put itself in a position, even with our challenges, to assist our fellow CARICOM citizens with issues pertaining to the ill effects of natural disasters. One will recall, Mr. Chairman, only a couple of years ago we came and also appropriated an amount through this House of Assembly to Haiti, as we have done in other circumstances. Of course we all lament the fact - and I think the Right Honourable Prime Minister said it - we are having to do it all too often, not so much because we don't want to help as Barbados, because that is our nature, but we are having to do it all too often because these events are occurring all too often and with a degree of rapidity and devastation that is becoming extremely worrisome.

The Prime Minister would have made the appropriate linkages in his analysis between what is happening with climate change, the sea level rise, the issues that we have in terms of our environment and the increasing intensity of these disasters and the impact they are having on societies and economies and of course on the individuals who have to inhabit the spaces that we call our own. And therefore it behoves us as CARICOM citizens to look after each other. And we do this, I think, admirably. The responses of course of various countries across the region and even beyond, extra-regionally, to the issues affecting Dominica - most recently, I think a year before, we had St. Vincent with the torrential rainfall that they had, which it is said affected 16 to 70 per cent of their own GDP the year before. So these are becoming annual events and therefore we have to step up our planning in terms of disaster adaptation measures. We have to step up our planning and our response in terms of the mitigation after the events have taken place.

And we have overall to be cognisant of the fact that our vulnerability is now becoming so extreme that even the best laid economic plans, even the best laid social plans, even the best laid developmental plans can be so easily evaporated by one of these events that we have to write into the totality of our socio-economic and development planning the potential for impacts of this nature. We may never be able to properly account in our planning for these events because we do not know how intense an event will be and what damage it will cause. But we can, however, in our forward planning, as we look at the whole question of mitigation and adaptation, begin the process of preparing ourselves for the negative impacts of these events.

And I think that the concluded discussions which we had in Paris that looked at a lot of these issues - and before Paris as well, and of course after Paris in terms of COP21 - put squarely on the table by Caribbean countries, so ably led in terms of coordination by St. Lucia and Barbados and the others, would have raised these fundamental issues in terms of how resources for adaptation and mitigation projects should be disbursed, how quickly that disbursing mechanism should work and where we should go in terms of those investments to ensure that we insulate ourselves as much as possible from fallout.

I have every confidence in our negotiators and our people, whether it is in the Ministry of the Environment, led ably by the Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, whether it is in Energy, whether it is in the Home Affairs Ministry, ably led by the learned Attorney General in relation to our responses. In fact, only recently we had a presentation from a team out of Home Affairs - the emergency specialists - on all aspects of what is taking place in relation to these issues. And I must say that it is pleasantly surprising to see the extremely high level of work and organisation and of

course the forward planning that the department has devoted to these issues.

I do want to say, though, Mr. Chairman, sir, that there are a couple of points. The first is that when this issue of Dominica first arose, I think we had an unfortunate set of circumstances that perhaps we should not repeat in the future. And that is, I think at the level of national coordination of these responses, in the context of doing what we have to do and across our own political divide, it has always been the practice in Barbados, as it has been in many mature and maturing democracies, that the contribution of the government, the lead in responding as a country to issues affecting fellow countries in CARICOM or otherwise, that lead should appropriately be provided by the government of the day. In fact, it is even more so if the chairmanship of CARICOM sits in the lap of the Prime Minister of the country at the given point in time.

And I make this point very seriously because even on a general level, on matters pertaining to foreign policy, there has always been an unwritten code between parties operating in and out of government that we have one foreign policy and when things like disasters strike, we have one government and we have one leader. And we must be very careful when circumstances lead us to believe that we should engage in a situation where we try to create an unnecessary divide in that leadership. It does not look good in the country and it does not look good overseas. And I think there are lessons to be learned from what took place with this Dominica situation. And I am not making this as a critical point, just making it as a point of understanding of how we should comport ourselves not only to the country but to the rest of the world, the region and the rest of the world, as to how we conduct our business here in Barbados.

It is not who jumps out first or who wants to get a little promotion for whatever reason. We have to be extremely careful because trying to put the government on trial for whatever deeds it does or does not do in relation to its domestic affairs and the management of economy and society and ministries and so forth - that is par for the course. That is what is expected in a mature democracy such as ours that operates on an adversarial principle. But when it comes to a stage where, in the context of something such as a natural disaster affecting one of our member states in CARICOM, we need to have this one-upmanship in a frenzied response to give the impression that the government is slow or the Prime Minister is slow and this body is fast - I think it is a little unseemly in that particular regard. And to then have inveigled people in the media or who operate around the media to be promoting that kind of thing does not do us any good, frankly. It just scores brownie points, if it scores any points at all. And at the end of the day, in these things, it is only the government that

has the apparatus to respond in the way in which it responds.

And we saw that because when people were out promoting how slow the reaction was from the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Prime Minister of Barbados had already activated the relevant forces in the Defence Force and the emergency mechanism who were well on their way to preparing to offer the relief. And I am just making the point that we are not in a competition to see who can give more or who can give faster. That is not the remit of governments operating at that level. But perhaps, Mr. Chairman, sir, political immaturity, or a desire to be what you are not yet, may lead you into these circumstances, but it does not do good. It does not do good.

On a broader point, Mr. Chairman, I also believe - and as a former NGO person I can appreciate why this is so - that we also have to have, and I have spoken about this, I believe we need to pursue, as my colleague the Minister responsible for these affairs has said, that I think the time has come for a national commission on non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations in the country. Quite a few of them receive subsidies from the government, quite a few of them get tax relief from the government, quite a few of them operate within the space where they have to raise resources from the public. And I think a level of transparency and accountability, just as we ask for it in government, has to obtain both in terms of how government interacts with them and how they interact with the community as well.

And so, when I was in civil society, I know that it was a popular thing where disasters were concerned for NGOs to pop up whenever there was a disaster. It was like a market - a disaster hits and people form these groups all over the place saying that they are doing this and they are doing that and they receive good resources. At the end of the day, time passes on, the frenzy created with the disaster passes on, and no accounting is given for what was received and what was delivered. And I am not saying that in relation to anybody here, even though it may be applicable, but the point I am making is that disaster relief and intervention in these kinds of circumstances is almost like an industry. There are people who make a living off a disaster, and they go around to different disasters around the world creating their own little things to say that they are helping.

But I think that is a point that we need to think about, and Barbados can provide leadership in this regard by having our civil society commission established where we can begin to outline guidelines and set some guideposts as to how these things should operate in relation to the various activities which have been undertaken. So with those few words, as I said, Mr. Chairman, I want to support this particular resolution.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. George South. So thank -

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I rise to support the supplementary that we are here discussing - the relief efforts given to Dominica. And I wish to support the sentiments shared by both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

But Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member who just sat, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, he started on a very good note with respect to mitigation measures, because what we recognise is that what happened in Dominica was what we call a disaster. It can be termed a disaster. And it is from that standpoint that I wish to make my contribution, because disaster management embodies a more holistic approach than just response. And I know the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, who I think is the Chairman of CDEMA, will share some of these points as well, because it involves not just mitigating measures - it involves prevention, it involves preparedness, recovery and rehabilitation, because when we have disasters, these are some of the things that a country has to focus on, not just going out there and lending support, which we did. And I said in my preamble that I support those sentiments shared by both the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader.

But we must emphasise disaster risk reduction strategies in this country, and we must focus in this area if we are to build the capabilities, the capacity and to become a very resilient nation, because risk reduction strategies will involve things such as reviewing our building codes. And I heard the Leader of the Opposition speak about looking at our building codes not just from a standpoint of withstanding hurricanes and storms, but from a standpoint of looking at earthquakes. So these are some of the strategies that we need to focus on - looking at our watercourses and enforcing legislation when people ignore the laws, because when we have hurricanes, we too do not want to find ourselves like Dominica. So every focus in that area in terms of our legislation and enforcing our legislation to make sure that our people, with respect to watercourses, do not build in watercourses, adhere to the law, and do not dump in watercourses.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South mentioning looking at our land use policy, town and country planning - that is where they are coming from. And of course our environment, marine included, our runoff water into our marine environment, what we can do on land that affects our coral reef.

But I want to read some statistics, Mr. Chairman, from a UNESCO/UNICEF report from 2012 which looked at disasters, and it said human risk from disaster is on the

global rise. And we have to take this very seriously in this country because it said over the decade of the 2000s, the average annual frequency of disasters was 384 per annum. And this represented a drastic increase from the 1970s and the 1980s. And we looked at hazards such as cyclones and floods and geoseismic hazards, and they looked at tsunamis - and these are some of the statistics that paint a very devastating picture as it relates to disasters.

On an average, the report said, UNICEF report 2012 said, on an average of 322 million people worldwide, they are affected by disasters between 2001 and 2010, the figures of 2012 being calculated at 244.7 million. So when we look at disasters worldwide, we understand why we as a nation, we have to focus on disaster risk reduction strategies, not just mitigating measures, but we have to use the holistic report, the holistic approach to disaster management in that prevention is critical. So we have to get to our DOs, we have to go into our schools. So when we speak about building capabilities and the necessary resilience, we have to look at our DOs and to see whether our DOs are not just responding to disasters or if they are prepared to deal with the mitigation measures, examine our risk factors. Like the member for St. Michael North West said, these are some of the things we have to go into our schools. What is wrong with us introducing disaster risk reduction in our primary schools? Because I think it will sound some young person who caught the tsunami years ago - I'm not sure which year it was - but who was able to tell his seniors and his parents, hey, look, something is changing as it relates to climate change. And there you have a tsunami. So we as a country, we have to be prepared to address these issues, whether in our schools, whether do we have to throw more support behind SEDIMA. And I'm happy to see that SEDIMA is now SEDIMA and not SEDIRA, because they moved from a response agency to a management agency. So they have totally encapsulated that whole holistic approach with respect to disaster management. So I want to share those two words with this chamber.

But I also want to end on a note because I heard the Honourable Member, the Right Honourable Prime Minister, speaking a lot on sustainable development. And I say to this Honourable Chamber that poverty reduction and sustainable development, they go hand in hand because if you don't deal with the issues as a result of disasters. And again, I support what was done. I support what was done by this government in providing that support to Dominica. But I cannot come to this chamber and not mention the whole aspect of Hurricane Tomas. I know people will frown on it and they will laugh at it. Because the same support that we give to Dominica, we should have given to those many persons who would have suffered the effects of the storm, Hurricane Tomas, back in 2010. And I heard the Honourable Member for St. Lucy - he said that he fixed

only two houses as a result of the damage that was sustained from Hurricane Tomas.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Just a moment. I remember for the member for St. Lucy -

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I never said I only fixed two houses, but I would like the honourable member to tell me why he has done nothing with the money that he raised for Dominica.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please proceed.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Chairman, to leave this Honourable House and not discuss Hurricane Tomas - the persons will be ignoring the whole reason why we are having this debate. And I allow that comment from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy to pass over my head. That is a bouncer. That is not threatening at all. In cricketering terms, that is a bouncer. That is not threatening. So I will move on.

We must understand the same way that we have focused our efforts. And I continue to say that I support the efforts by the government and their true support behind Dominica. And I must compliment - I haven't heard anyone compliment the Barbados Defence Force. Sorry, I was going to say the Royal Barbados Police Force, but the Barbados Defence Force. And also the Barbados Fire Service. We must compliment those public servants who went in to Dominica, those highly trained personnel. Because that is the job of the government. We have challenges with our neighbours, with our sister countries. We provide the necessary support and nothing is wrong with that. Successive governments would have done that. So I want to compliment the Barbados Defence Force, as well as the Barbados Fire Service and the churches also, because we had the support of the churches in this effort.

I keep hearing about the Honourable Member for St. Lucy asking about how much money was made with the concert. I too must compliment those persons who supported the Dominica Relief Fund by raising those funds through the concert, and I understand it was a success despite the weather. So we cannot come into this Honourable Chamber to compliment the government for doing such a wonderful job for Dominica and ignore the efforts by the bipartisan approach that had Democratic Labour Party supporters and also Barbados Labour Party supporters, in addition to the churches. So we cannot come in here and deal with this debate one-sided. That is not fair to our citizens. We must let our citizens know who are the persons that supported the Dominican relief effort and we must compliment all of them - the churches, the NGOs, the government, the opposition. We must compliment every one of them.

But Mr. Chairman, like I said, Hurricane Tomas - we still have houses in St. George. And I know because my efforts, along with some members of the team, we got together back in 2011 and we fixed this old man's house who suffered damage, severe damage from Hurricane Tomas. We used our funds, we would have gone around and solicited support from the Barbados Lumber Company - and I thank them too - and we also solicited support from other companies with respect to toilet bowls and pipe fittings and these things. And whereas we did that, we still have - even though this government would have spent \$2.4 million to Dominica, and I support you, I compliment you - but we still have people in this country who are suffering from the effects of Hurricane Tomas.

And I say to this Honourable Chamber that poverty reduction and sustainable development go hand in hand. And it came at a time when people were suffering from massive unemployment, increasing taxation, so they were unable to address these matters themselves. And that is what governments are there for - to address the welfare issues, to ensure that our citizens live a basic standard of life in this country with water, shelter. And when we look at the disaster from Hurricane Tomas, water was affected, shelter was affected, and also lighting was affected. These basic Maslow hierarchy needs - the basic needs - these are things that we ought to ensure that our citizens have. And this whole aspect of disaster management and disaster risk reduction will ensure, when we put the necessary systems in place, that we as a country, as a government and as an opposition, deal with our issues in addition to the support that we would have given to Dominica.

And in closing, I still believe that we have time and we can find the resources to address these issues and the disaster that was caused from the storm Tomas back in 2010, and address these people who are still living in these drastic and harsh environmental conditions as a result of the storm Tomas. So Mr. Chairman, with those few words, I am obliged to you.

On the motion of Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, 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.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the sitting be suspended for lunch until 2 o'clock.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the House be suspended until 2.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. Good afternoon members. This sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken we were in committee of supply and to that we shall return.

Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. J. D. PAUL, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in committee. Honourable Member.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to make a small contribution to this debate on Head 15, Cabinet Office, which has been explained earlier to be seeking Parliament's approval for spending of some \$2 040 000 on relief assistance - Barbados' contribution to the rebuilding effort in Dominica as a consequence of course of the catastrophic events around the Tropical Storm Erika which would have passed through this region towards the end of August 2015. It would have indeed delivered a very severe pounding on Dominica, the details of which have already been covered by numerous contributors so far.

I think the point has been made too that Barbados is a member of CARICOM and of course Barbados now holding the chairmanship of CARICOM, and the Honourable Prime Minister being the Chairman of CARICOM, would have had even greater responsibility in ensuring that the efforts to provide some relief to the Commonwealth of Dominica was properly coordinated and efficiently and effectively executed. And as has been hinted, we can never really prepare fully for disasters, but as a region we certainly have to practise the art of survival in the face of these natural disasters - natural and man-made. And I say that deliberately because again, as has been featured in some of the presentations, certainly the Right Honourable Prime Minister's linkage between our habits as a people, as developing or developed nations throughout the world, and what is happening in respect to global warming are very closely related.

And the House has been brought abreast of the developments at the recently concluded conference in Paris titled COP21, which would have now arrived at what we would have to refer to as a compromise - almost an agreement to restrict temperature rise to something like 2 degrees. It was 1.5, but I think there has been some agreement at 2 degrees Celsius. And even then we recognise that this is a situation which is not sustainable. But we obviously have to wean our people off of the practices of the past. And the debate of course reminds me too, as the Minister responsible for health in Barbados, of our debate to try to encourage Barbadians to move to much healthier lifestyles in respect to what we eat, how we exercise, how we play and indeed all of our habits. So this is an awakening that has come.

And really I was thrilled to hear the support of the Honourable Members on the other side so far. I don't know what else is coming later, but certainly up until now there has been a level of consistency in that they have agreed and supported the resolution almost without reservation. Of course, there are still little snide remarks about Thomas and Lilly. And I think someone mentioned Jeannette - houses that were damaged during Jeannette which have not yet been repaired. But we can take ourselves back as far as we want in that regard.

It was almost this morning, sir, Mr. Chairman, like Christmas had come, in truth. And the Honourable Members on the other side bore sachets of bouquets and gifts for the Government of Barbados. I thank them. I thank them. But I still wonder, given the practices even during this period of hardship in Dominica - because I cannot separate the events of that period like how they have tried to separate them today - and I certainly recall the amount of almost burn that was cast on this administration and the Right Honourable Prime Minister as leader of this Government as we sought to carry out and assist in delivering this rescue effort.

So I want to join the Prime Minister, sir, in asking the Honourable Members on the other side to tell this House of Assembly and to tell Barbados what funds were raised at their effort at Kensington Oval, and what is the state of affairs of handing that money to the Government of Dominica. That is a simple question. It is a very reasonable question. To hear "in the fullness of time, in the fullness of time, in the fullness of time" is all that I have heard. No - a simple question that deserves a very simple answer. So I will keep my ears to the ground.

But it is no different to so many other problems. Look, Mr. Chairman, I remember around Easter - it was the time of the Estimates - the Honourable Leader of the Opposition came in here and the last thing she promised us on the last sitting before Easter was that in two weeks she would deliver a debt restructuring programme to the House of Assembly. We have not got that. No one - I remember the Member for St. Peter is so upset. He is quoted as saying that he was asked to put on his finest wear on Sunday evening to go and sign a petition and to rub shoulders. And nothing, nothing comes of these wild fantasies. These wild fantasies which are cultured in the bosom of the Barbados Labour Party - born in inequity and designed to try to destabilise a focused Democratic Labour Party Government who work in tough economic times and ask the people of Barbados to walk with us as we deliver a recovery programme in this country. And every step of the way, Mr. Chairman, the Members on that side are seeking to try to derail our programmes.

There is a when and where, sir. Just as there is a when and where for the assistance programme in

Dominica, there is a when and where for what we say here. So that when we are debating a 170 million US dollar loan with the Chinese Government in the presence of the Ambassador from China, to get the kind of mouthings about deal breakers - the kind of insensitive language, Mr. Chairman, sir - that is associated with the Members on that side. But you know, sir, Barbados is now fully savvy of the level of desperateness to which the Barbados Labour Party in opposition today are prepared to stoop. And the Honourable Member for Christ Church West is their latest victim. Is their latest victim. But I wish her well in court. I wish her well in court. Because we have to defend Members of Parliament even if we have to defend them from their own leaders.

I recall that at that meeting of the NEC she turned when she saw the Member for St. Thomas sign the document. She turned and she said in words attributed to Caesar: "Et tu, Brute." Et tu, Brute. Mr. Chairman, this is the level - this is the level to which the Barbados Labour Party in opposition is prepared to go. They start to try to derail the programme of the Government of Barbados, the Honourable Prime Minister, in setting up assistance for the people of Dominica. And they carry right through to today where they have expelled her. Imagine that, sir - expelling a Member of your party. Again, the Member for St. Peter said he does not understand how you could even start to contemplate such an action. How do you start to contemplate that for another Member of Parliament? Unbelievable, unheard of, unspoken, unreal. It is a frenzied, crazy response almost, sir.

And I really think, sir, it sends the message of what we could expect if any time at all the reins of government were to land by some chance in the hands of a group that is totally unprepared for leadership. Leadership requires steadfastness. It requires resolve. It requires high personal standards, first of all, and then shared high personal standards among the members of that leadership team. And the members of the Barbados Labour Party probably have to hold their heads up to the people of Barbados and say: are they ready or not? The answer now is no, they are not.

And I got there because I was talking about the way they responded in August, along with their media friends, in trying to create some embarrassment to the Government of Barbados. A poor attempt. A poor attempt. Because even as they were publishing their articles in the daily newspaper, the Barbados Trident was making maybe its third trip to Dominica laden with supplies for the people of Dominica under a properly coordinated CARICOM programme to help these people. And that programme continues. In the Ministry of Health alone, we took the Cabinet decision which allowed some 20 nurses to make themselves available to service the needs of the people of Dominica on the first trip of the Trident, along with the Pan American Health Organization in Barbados and their team.

The Chief Medical Officer of Barbados, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and the entire team made sure that supplies were loaded onto the Trident to deal with the devastation in Dominica - death, some 20 persons; injury, hundreds of persons; dislocation; electricity; road damage - the entire lot.

And if by fate, the then Minister of Health in Dominica - it was actually his village that bore the brunt of that deluge. And we were very fortunate in Washington later to hear from him directly about the pain and anguish and about the thankfulness of the people of Dominica for the intervention that was made not only by Barbados, but we are dealing with Barbados today to make sure that spirit of CARICOM continues and that we understand what responsible leadership is about.

And I know that the people of Barbados - I was going to say hope, but I am sure that the people of Barbados are listening and watching very carefully at the two styles of leadership that are being presented to them. One of absolute standards, high personal standards, and high standards for the members of the Cabinet. And the other one, sir, on that side - of complete and utter chaos. Hurt and pain to each other. Hurt and pain, I said, to each other. And so it continues. So we will have a lot of time to look at these situations in the future and to help Barbadians to decide as we build on our programmes.

And I said, when we roll out the economic solutions in here, we hardly get any support. When we get support, it is accompanied by the kind of criticism which I referred to earlier in the case of the Chinese loan. But we work as a Government with a government-to-government relationship. So we meet with the people involved and make sure and reassure them that out of the mouths of babes will come any kind of sounds, but please listen to the mouths of the leaders of the country because those are the mouths that matter for the time being. And I think that we need to respect these realities.

I have observed it. I think that we, sir, have a responsibility in here to make sure whatever we say can be fully supported out there. We also have a responsibility as younger Members - no matter what age you are when you come, but as younger Members in terms of time - to spend some time learning what the proper procedures are. Read some of the old debates of the old masters, read the present masters and the intervening period. Let us learn first before we jump up and make these irresponsible mouthings either in the media or here in the House of Assembly from time to time, just to gain cheap political mileage. It is not about that. It has to be a sustainable programme.

So again, sir, I want to certainly associate myself with the presentations that were made, especially in light of the climate change and the threat to small island

developing states like Barbados. Last week I had the opportunity to work on behalf of the Minister of the Environment. And I took the opportunity to make a deliberate tour of the west coast - the work being done between Church Point and Holetown. And I really want to embrace that work again, to thank those public servants and indeed those agencies - the IADB, the World Bank and all those other institutions, the United Nations and the Caribbean Development Bank - who would have worked with us in creating these buttresses. And I want to say how pleased I was to see the vendors and the visitors and the residents, some of them overseas residents who now make their homes in Barbados. And discussing with the CZMU team - the Coastal Zone Management Unit team - I was able to get a picture of what we want to do in the future, how we want to make sure that we brace up the shorelines of Barbados. We prepare Barbados for the same ravages to which we refer - the ravages of nature, be it storms, be it the appearance of sargassum weed, be it the damage to our reefs, which either occur naturally or can be as a result of our actions here on our island as surface waters run into our sea waters. But we need to get the funds sorted out. We need to get the funds made available so that kind of development can occur.

And indeed, even on our land surfaces, we look at a place like the Scotland area. And again, you know, we have heard in here and the Honourable Member for St. Peter has made the point many times that we need to do some constant repair work in that Scotland area. I have always contended there are not many other routes, other roadways, that you can create in that area. So we may as well commit ourselves to a programme which sees the Ministry of Transport and Road Works and other agencies regularly repairing these roads - either in St. Thomas, in St. Joseph, in St. John or St. Andrew - where they frequently occur. It is something which I think, sir, we have to live with as part of Barbados. And we have to try to develop a maintenance programme so that funds and resources are available from time to time to regularly keep this network of roads in good repair. It is a source of great relief for Barbadians and visitors alike to visit this Scotland area. It is a very important part of our landscape. The scenery is absolutely breathtaking and it is actually prime land for agricultural production. And these are unexplored resources which we must turn to in the very near future as we continue our development programme.

So, sir, mindful of the reality that we are never out of the woods ourselves, I want to unequivocally support this resolution today and to assure the people of Dominica of Barbados' continued vigilance and help in their recovery effort. And may the works that are intended for this money go a long way to relieving some of the pain and destruction that would have been wrought by Tropical Storm Erika around the end of August this year. I am obliged to you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I remain concerned at some of the comments made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South. But my real purpose here today, sir, is to speak to this resolution for the \$2 040 000 towards the Dominica effort. The Honourable Member seems to have got a short memory, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, when he refers to challenges and to criticisms of this Government. When the Honourable Member knows fully well that this Government came in 2008 and spoke about good governance, integrity, accountability, equity, fairness and matters of that nature. And somehow we are seeing very little of that being translated in our various communities in the last eight years. The Honourable Member spoke about being focused and asking the people to walk with them. And Barbadians have walked with the Democratic Labour Party not once but twice in elections. And they were promised that no one will go home as a result of the adjustments. And we know today, sir, more than 3 500 people have gone home. And today, at Christmas time, half of them cannot eat a plate of food. Many of them have got to pay high taxes, no salary increases. There are tremendous challenges and the Honourable Minister of Health above anybody else refers to quite a bit.

I think the Honourable Members should visit the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and other agencies, sir, and see what is happening in those institutions. The deterioration of the health standards are appalling and I am glad he got the opportunity to follow the Honourable Minister of Environment's portfolio and actually see what is happening on the West Coast. But I want to stick to the script that I started on because he speaks about leadership. The Honourable Member forgets that four Christmases ago, the eager eleven was in the limelight. And since then, people have been demoted, will never act again as a Deputy Prime Minister - all kinds of challenges. And I believe that in every family, whether it be the household or working environment or wherever, there will be challenges, but we have to tackle challenges. And therefore, whether expulsion or not, when you are demoted, you are demoted.

But I want to stick to this resolution, which is a very important one. And I believe that as CARICOM brothers and sisters, we should always play our part to assist those who are in need. And I watch with dismay as I saw the devastation unfold in Dominica. And the loss of life was tremendous. A lot of pain, a lot of grief, even to mention the destruction of properties and so on. And I am happy about the collaborative efforts from locally, meaning in Barbados, and indeed in the region and internationally, because these are the times when we rely on others more than any other time for persons to come on board and provide measures of comfort and relief so that citizens can

live again - a life not necessarily normal, because we know the constraints, but indeed to know that we are our brothers' and our sisters' keeper. And that is why I believe CARICOM has served an important purpose. And I believe that we are at the stage now where we should even go further with this whole exercise of CARICOM to make sure that all of our people are well looked after.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy said he would not want to see people live under suppression. And I cannot help, sir, but interject on that point, because the people of Rockhampton Road, Jackson, St. Michael, and those of Cainwood Road in the constituency of St. Michael North East, still live in suppression, sir, over two roads that were started and were only ready for paving in 2008 - puddles of water, poor drainage and suffering is taking place there in those communities. And the Honourable Minister who is responsible for rural matters speaks as though it is just one of those things, because they are living in rural Barbados and they have not been - there have not been constituencies that have supported the Democratic Labour Party at the polls - where then anything goes and there is no equity. And we all know what is happening in rural Barbados.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I think I owe some latitude as well, but I hope that you would tie that back into the resolution because I am trying to see where you are going. And I really want you to take it back into the resolution, please.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: So, Mr. Chairman, I will tie it back in. Because that kind of devastation is happening in Rockhampton Road and Cainwood Road because of the heavy rainfall in St. Thomas and in that section of St. Michael where the people cannot even step out right. And the mosquitoes and the vermin in there are impacting on their lives. And that is one of the points I wish to make, sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: But we are on the resolution, though, so please go back to the resolution.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: We also witnessed the devastation that unfolded in Haiti in 2010 with the earthquake and the destruction that took place there. As a matter of fact, I had the privilege to visit, sir, with some principals of some secondary and primary schools here. And we actually saw how lives and the country were devastated. And I am happy that many Barbadians at that time also came on board and assisted Haiti, as well as the other regional and international agencies to help to bring back their lives to normalcy.

Indeed, sir, in 2010, Tropical Storm Tomas devastated a lot of rural Barbados. An amount of \$17 million Barbados dollars were allocated from the catastrophe fund to help with the repairs and the rehabilitation of those parishes and communities that were

seriously impacted upon. And I want to say, sir, categorically that rural Barbados received limited resources from that \$17 million. As a matter of fact, as we speak, Mr. Chairman, sir, there are houses in St. Thomas and St. Joseph and St. Andrew - perhaps there are some in St. Peter and St. James - that the roofs are still off. But when I heard the initial statement coming from the then Honourable Minister, who is now the Minister of Transport and Works but was then the Minister of Housing, when he said to the public of Barbados in his first interview after the devastation that he will start with St. Philip and Christ Church and then go to the others, when we know full well as a people that rural Barbados in particular suffered most of the loss. And that is why I am saying something about equity. We must make people feel comfortable and offer to them the services that are necessary to help them to bring back their lives in order.

I can speak of more than 50 houses, sir, that were damaged and the majority of them had roofs off. And therefore I know from what I speak, the background from which I speak and the challenges that develop. And those people are still suffering. As early as October just gone, there is a woman in St. Joseph whose report was sent in and who is now still living in a makeshift hut, full of diabetes, no resources, including water. And that is the kind of outcome when we had \$17 million that did not trickle down in the way it should. But we know that houses in Christ Church and St. Philip - and I am not envying them because people need help - they were repaired but they were not touched by the impact of that tropical storm.

Mr. Chairman, sir, I also want to speak to the challenges that we experience in this very serious economic crisis and the pressure that is being put on Barbadians. I am disillusioned. I am disappointed that in Barbados, especially now in the constituency of St. Thomas, there is still a lot of illegal construction going on in water courses, in gullies and in different areas.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Let me stop you there. We are discussing the resolution in relation to the donation of a sum of money to Dominica. And you must refer directly to that. I have to establish relevance in debate. I am not hearing the relevance. That is the problem. I am not hearing the relevance.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: You have me at a loss, Mr. Chairman. I am referring to sustainable development and climate change and the challenges we are experiencing not only in Barbados, but in other small island states and the rest of the world.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Climate change caused by man - and that is what I am -

Miss C. Y. FORDE: - referring to, because I am talking now about communities where there is heavy rainfall. Construction is taking place in the gullies and in the water courses and people are suffering downwind from where this construction is happening, that leads to flooding and storms that will cause disasters.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Am I correct in assuming that you are not referring to the resolution? I beg your pardon, sir. Am I correct in assuming then that you are not referring to the resolution? By speaking on climate change, you are talking about the resolution? I have not heard in that discourse any mention of the resolution.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, sir, I did at the outset indicate that I support the contribution from the Government of Barbados for the \$2 040 000 to the people of Dominica. I said that at the inception.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I remember. But that is not sufficient - the arguments must go to the resolution. If you are not speaking on the resolution, I have then to determine relevance. I do not hear the relevance. And you must be able to tell me what in your discourse makes it relevant to the resolution. I have not heard that.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I shall come to a conclusion. Because I heard the Honourable Prime Minister speak about climate change and the devastation that takes place as a result. I heard other Honourable Members speak and I am tying in what has happened with natural disasters that impacted on Barbados and other countries. I spoke of Haiti, I spoke of Dominica. I wanted even to touch on what happened in 2005 in St. James where the calypsonian Kuru lost his life because of what transpired, whether it was a natural disaster or not - the rains washed away Kuru. And that is what I am trying to say.

I shall conclude, sir, and I will respect you highly, sir, because you are the Chairman in the chair. I accept your ruling. I will conclude, sir, to say that I laud the volunteerism of persons in Barbados, as I had seen with Tropical Storm Tomas and in other situations where we have had flooding and so on, as the people of Dominica would have. And I promote the togetherness of persons coming to the aid of others to help to thatch up roofs and help to make sure that life continues again and that there is a habitable situation to be able to assist them.

I will close by saying, though, that I would like to encourage not only Barbadians but people in the region to be able to work towards putting aside a little something for insurance of their properties, because we know that the people in Dominica did have a lot of challenges as a result of not having their properties properly insured. And to encourage Barbados - I agreed with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, who spoke about a

commission that would be separate and distinct from the Government, that would be able to meet and deliberate and come up with ideas and so on, but show a measure of accountability whenever the task is afforded for them to be able to put together programmes and for funding to take place to make sure that it trickles down to the individuals and the groups of persons who should really benefit as a result of that kind of situation.

And so I believe that the Social Care Ministry, with Urban and Rural and Housing coming together in case it happens in Barbados again - where we have not had that kind of devastation in quite a few years - I know that there are challenges in White Hill as well. And I trust that nothing worse will happen there to impact on their lives. Because we know at the end of the day, it calls for funding. It calls for relocation of persons. It calls for a whole total change of life for persons who are impacted upon.

I support the Government on this initiative. Despite our economic situation, the Government has been able to source the funding. And I laud that because at the end of the day, we are to be our brother's keepers. And if Dominica is within the region, I laud the Government for finding that funding to assist Dominica in its time of need. And I want to close by saying thanks to the soldiers and the mariners and the various departments and civil society who came on board in the effort of sending in resources - not only resources meaning food and blankets and so, but indeed human resources. The Honourable Minister of Health spoke about the nurses going in. And I am happy to know that we were able to assist them despite whatever our economic challenges are. And all it says to me is that in every sphere of life, whether it be in Barbados, in the region or the world, we must make sure that we follow that motto that the scouts have always had for centuries: Be prepared. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Member for St. George North.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Chairman, I rise to support this money resolution for a relief fund for the Republic of Dominica. I must say, sir, from the outset, I want to applaud the government for finding the funds and for sending these funds to this island in order to provide some relief for the people of Dominica at this time. I heard members talk today about a timely intervention. I think it is timely because I understand - and I spoke some time ago when an exercise was carried on at Kensington - to the Prime Minister of Dominica, who came here for that concert and who indicated that it was indeed a trying time for his country. And he really applauded the efforts that have been made by Barbados, by the other CARICOM countries, and, of course, by the international community.

Now, natural disasters, Mr. Chairman, are in my mind something that we have to live with constantly. Whether it is earthquakes, hurricanes, or simple landslides, we are vulnerable to these things. And I believe that as Barbados is currently the chairman of CARICOM, I hope that the current chairman of CARICOM has a programme to help to inform the people of CARICOM that this is indeed the position that we have to live with. Natural disasters are part of our history, part of the record - they will happen from time to time when we least expect. And we recognise that today earthquakes happen quite frequently around the region. And therefore, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the CARICOM community needs to meet urgently to discuss how we can get through these phenomena and what help can be done.

I understand that we will be providing funds for the people. And I want to ask the question: how will these funds be distributed? Will they be distributed in one tranche? Will they be sent directly to the people of Dominica through foreign service, or would they just be given? And we need to know this because I believe one of the things we have learned over time is that many times people who really need the help do not get this help. And I am aware that there are several communities in Dominica in the rural areas that are really in need of help. And I was in contact with a few people in the Dominican area who said to me that so far they have not received, or have received very little help from the international community. And they know that the international community has given help, but sometimes the persons that need the help most do not get it.

I believe a mechanism must be set up - not only in Dominica's case, but throughout the CARICOM community as well - that we need to provide a system of fairness, equity, if you call it, and to help those persons who are in need. And the Prime Minister of Dominica assured me then that he is doing his best to ensure the people in the rural districts that suffered loss in terms of life, suffered loss in terms of housing washed away. And there are still a number of persons who were in hospital up to recently who are still suffering. And I hope that these funds could be distributed to the various agencies of government either to provide housing - because the Prime Minister did not say when he introduced this whether the funds would be provided to Dominica for housing or whether it would be left to the Government of Dominica to do their own thing in certain cases. I know that agencies will provide water, provide clothing, they provide first aid and so on. But these funds will be given to the Dominican government to do their thing. And I want to find out from the Prime Minister if the funds will be earmarked for a special purpose.

I know that the Prime Minister did speak and he was very right. He was one of the first out of the block when he

sent the Coast Guard. And the Coast Guard and the army did a wonderful job in Dominica. They did a good job. And they were applauded not only by the Dominicans, but across the region as being one of the forces that helped and that was doing specific relief work. And they were able to execute that task with aplomb and with certainty. There was a time - and I know that some years ago in 1995, when Montserrat had a similar exercise, they had a volcano - the Government of India sent a team to build houses. A specific task: your job was to provide housing for those persons within a particular community. And that was executed. And from time to time, the government of Barbados and indeed the governments across the region help one another. And I must say that the CARICOM community came out very strongly in support of Dominica.

There are also other countries, islands from time to time with natural disasters, who we do not pay sufficient attention to. Haiti is always - there are always problems with Haiti. Now, Haiti is also a member of the CARICOM community. And that is why I believe that the present chairman of CARICOM should look at the catastrophe fund that was established some years ago and find out where it is. I do not know, because I have not heard about it recently. But a fund should be established because every time there is a natural disaster, we have to put our hand to find resources where we may not even have the resources. But if there is a fund - whether it is an insurance fund or not, because insurance came out of a fund, a fund was established to establish the very first insurance policy, and we are pooling resources - I believe at this time we need to establish the catastrophe fund.

Now, you know that we had one in Barbados a couple of years ago that I do not understand - it came to an end. I do not know if it had money, where the money went, and where it is. And I believe that the fund was absorbed into - I think the Prime Minister or the Minister of Housing can tell us what happened to that fund. If it has money, if this money is coming - and I understand this money is coming from the catastrophe fund, or is it coming from the Consolidated Fund? I believe in this case the money is directed from the Consolidated Fund in order to help the people of Dominica. But if a fund is established in the CARICOM community to help, I believe this will help in the very near future, because as I said, we have to live with the reality that these things will come from time to time when we least expect them. And I believe the CARICOM community needs to meet on this and see how they can help.

The other point is communication. I believe that the people of Dominica were not prepared for this disaster at all. And I am wondering what mechanism, what systems can be put in place to warn people. I understand from the Prime Minister of Dominica that persons were warned previously to move away from certain locations, but they

did not. And this is a very serious thing, because in Barbados we have similar cases where people are warned that if they live in certain vicinities, certain areas, it is a danger. And I can speak about perhaps the White Hill people that were relocated some years ago and farmers that have gone back there. And we have to look at those persons who were asked to relocate themselves. There are some people in St. Lucia, for example, in the Soufrière area, that may be in a position of danger but do not move. Now, when the danger comes, what happens?

I think the government needs to not only communicate to these people, but they must set up a system to protect people from themselves. But how do you protect people from themselves? It is a serious thing because the government does not have the resources, really, Mr. Chairman, to stop persons who will come overnight and squat in some areas. They squat, they live in dangerous areas, and people will go back to those dangerous areas all the time if they are not policed. And then the government has to find the resources to relocate them or to rebuild homes that were rebuilt before. Because I am sure that those persons who move back into these vulnerable areas in Dominica, if they are not properly moved, the rivers will burst their banks again after many years. Because I understand that there is a one-in-twenty flood - that means it may happen one out of every twenty years, but it will happen. And the government of Dominica must find the resources in order to protect these people. And I wonder if we can put in place the whole question of communication and policing and what funds can be put in place to help these communities when these events happen from time to time.

Now, today I heard the Prime Minister talking about the Paris Agreement, which has to be an important agreement for the people - not only of Barbados, but the people of the world - in terms of the environment and in terms of small island developing states. Now, I believe when the government goes to these conferences and so on, that these various agreements should be laid in Parliament. I believe that we should have an idea, because I do not know what it is. The Prime Minister spoke gloriously about a CARICOM national who helped to prepare the Paris Agreement. But we do not see it on the website. I do not see the Paris Agreement that the Prime Minister went to on the website. So I would ask the Prime Minister to lay these things in Parliament so that we, the Opposition, can have an idea of what agreement we have put the country into.

Now the member for Christ Church South is saying to me that the government has no right to lay this agreement - they have no intention of laying these agreements in Parliament. But how can the government sign an agreement on behalf of the people of Barbados and the people of Barbados not know anything about them?

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: The government has not signed any agreement anywhere. An agreement was reached in Paris and this signing is not going to take place until next year, around the month of April.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Prime Minister, an agreement has been reached. An agreement has been reached. There is an agreement. But if you need to tell me the difference - if you say to me, Mr. Chairman, that they entered into an agreement on behalf of the people of Barbados, then the Opposition needs to know what it is that the Prime Minister is saying. We need to know. It is a serious thing. It is very serious, Mr. Chairman, because we do not know. I have not seen it. We have not seen it. No member of Parliament has seen this, has not heard a word - until today I heard you talk about James Fletcher, a solution, who helped to draft this agreement. And I am very glad that the member is recognising the CARICOM community, because it was the Democratic Labour Party that did not recognise the community.

Anyway, we hope that we can see it within the naked eye very soon - before the Prime Minister even sends it next year. But before he signs it, I hope that members of Cabinet and this side will have an idea of what the government is getting themselves into. I believe it is a good agreement because the Prime Minister does not sign anything that he does not agree to. So we hope that we can see it.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we do support these funds. But I believe we have to learn from our bigger brothers and our bigger states, because when the Chinese give funds, when the United States give funds, they give it for a specific reason, a specific purpose. When the Chinese give you things, you must employ some of their people, you must take their goods. When the United States give you funds, you must do the same thing. I want to find out how the money that we are giving Dominica will be spent. I am not saying do not give it to them, but we need to know - are you going to spend it on Barbadian goods? Are you going to send some of our goods down there in terms of value, because we produce things here and that will also help local business people? How are you going to send it? So tell us these things. Mr. Chairman, I am obliged to you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just want to add a few words in support of this resolution which seeks to place at the disposal of the government and people of the Commonwealth of Dominica a sum of essentially US\$1 000 000 - 2 040 000 Barbadian dollars. It is important for us as sisters and brothers in the Caribbean that when pain is felt by any citizen of this region, that the others should respond with some alacrity to

help ease that pain. Particularly in circumstances where the devastation is as it is in Dominica.

It of course was an act unprepared for. I do not believe that nature is a respecter of place or persons. In fact, I believe one writer - I think it is Leo Buscaglia - stated that nature wages war against its enemies. And of course he went on to say that on the surface touch lies treacherous clause. But as for another, that part is for another time and place. I am more interested in nature raging war against its enemies. Not that the people of Dominica are its enemies. Or if you had, as you had in Haiti or in Jamaica or Cuba or Cayman or Bahamas or Bermuda or Barbados for that matter, or Antigua or St. Vincent - that have felt the fury of either too large a deluge of water in a very short period of time on their land space, or tropical storms or hurricanes devastating the built infrastructure, the natural landscape, destroying the economic framework of any one of these countries - one cannot be prepared for nature. Nature has its way of just dealing death blows. And in the Caribbean, the West Indies particularly, but in the Caribbean generally, we have felt the force of nature over and over.

Barbadians have tended to respond to these acts of nature, especially when the hurricanes are out in the Atlantic and the meteorologists would be saying Barbados is in its path. And when there is a movement to the north or wherever, we refer to Barbados as God's land - that Barbados is somehow protected by God. Of course that creates in itself a certain vanity, because when it moves from here and goes and lashes somebody else, it means that they are not God's chosen or not God's people. And in fact all people really are God's people.

Dominica is a place that I have travelled to on numerous occasions. Its landscape in many places is already a difficult landscape. In fact, being of volcanic nature and much as it is, one has to traverse from the airport to Roseau. And as you look down, particularly as you are moving in this direction onto your left shoulder - and as you are a Barbadian, the only time you might encounter a little height is when you go into parts of the Scotland District in St. Andrew and in St. Joseph. So we are really unaware of the kind of landscape and the kind of natural environment which exists in places such as Dominica.

The damage caused to Dominica happened in a short period of time. And water - water was what caused the greatest level of damage. The photographs and the pictures are really a sight to behold. And therefore the initial response of Barbados was a sensible response - rescue as well as the provision of certain basic needs, because it makes no sense rescuing an individual and then allowing them to starve for three, four or five days. And I am pleased to note the response of the Barbados Defence Force

and its Coast Guard arm. Those seafarers have of course our total respect, because the waters were still choppy, were still dangerous, but the boats that were paid for by the taxpayers of Barbados ventured into those waters to provide rescue. So we must give thanks to all of those persons.

We must give thanks also to Barbadians who - there were a few mean ones, because as you look at the social media, there were some mean, vile-spirited individuals who said they do not know why the Government of Barbados, when we talk first about the hundred thousand US dollars, did not spend that money in Barbados rather than spend it in Dominica. I could not understand it. Where did these people come from? They cannot be genuine Barbadians - people who reach out when people they know are suffering harm and pain. I really could not understand it. But by and large the majority of Barbadians empathise and sympathise with the people of Dominica. And where they could, they have sought to make available some level of assistance.

There were a few unsavoury instances. I had to comment in another place that Barbados has one government and that government is continuous. It might have different political parties, but it has one government - the government of the people of Barbados. And there must never ever again be any effort which seems or seeks to undermine the efforts of the government. I heard persons at political meetings criticising the government. And then lo and behold, as they were criticising, Barbadian goods and human resources and all of it were landing in Dominica to provide help. And we looked foolish, really. We looked divided - for the first time in the history of Barbados. One of the things that I was very proud of when I came into this House in 2003 is that even though we might have division on left and right of this House, that when it came to critical issues, national issues, we united and we locked arms. And that must continue. Not the kind of petty foolishness I saw emerging when Dominicans were in their anger and suffering and their pain.

Now I am not going to join those, Mr. Chairman, who have been asking for the declaration of funds of a concert. I am not going to join them. But one wants to know at the end of the day what was brought in. Sometimes there is an overkill in certain activities - where you need to bring 80 performers to Barbados, if you had 10 and 10 Bajans you had 20 Bajans who would have gone, you could have moved and told the rest to move to Antigua next. But that date has passed. All of that was announced at Kensington Oval. So it looks as though somebody has thrown eggs in their own faces. I could well understand the desire to help, but sometimes raw naked enthusiasm cannot be used to replace common sense, good judgement, organisational ability, and to define something as the output of all of those efforts. One looks forward to seeing the presentation of the cheque - that is right - to the people

of Dominica. Do not do it if you did not make any money; say you did not. If you made \$2 million but your expenses were \$2.3 million, say that. At least we can settle down and move on with this process. Or maybe we can return to the populace of Barbados and say we need three or four or five hundred thousand dollars, because as I believe the Prime Minister of Dominica said, Dominica has moved back almost 20 years. I mean, can you understand somebody telling you that their country and economy has moved back almost 20 years? No, no, no - that is mind-boggling.

If something ever had to happen to Barbados, we would be in, as they say colloquially, duck guts. Because somehow, Mr. Chairman, I am trying to link what I am talking about in relation to this resolution to our own condition here. Our people do not take hazards seriously. The Met Office - it is not an exact science - might say a storm is heading in this direction. You might only end up there with some rain and a little strong wind. And Barbadians accuse the Met Office of being in cahoots with the merchants - quarrelling and saying, well, you joined up with this company and that company so that people go and buy extra goods. In fact, at the start of the hurricane season, every home should have the basic needs, including their lanterns, their canned goods, their plastic bags to wrap baby foods and milk in to secure them from water and things like that. But we do not. So that is why we have to rush out at the last minute, clogging up the streets of Barbados, clogging up the supermarkets and other convenience stores in order to meet the needs, because we are unprepared. Barbados is a danger looking to happen, especially when one looks at how we are still very careless and depositing everything onto the streets of Barbados - every snow-corn cob, every KFC and Chefette box, every box you can find from fast food stores, every plastic bag and bottle, every corn husk and cob, every piece of tree or grass or wood that you take down from your house or your backyard is thrown into the streets of this country.

Of course, and I say this to the Minister of Transport and Works - I cannot understand why, when these goodly men and women go out onto the highways and roads and tracks and wield or cut the grass, that it remains there almost forever, blocking the pathways of water along the edge of the roads, washing the same debris. And our member for Christ Church - [Inaudible.] - was once the minister and I asked him that question every year. Why is this possible? I remember the good old days - those things that were considered good - where the donkey cart or the mule cart worked in consonance with the people as they did the road. And as they cut and weeded, persons put loose their trowels or shovels and placed that weeded stuff into the carts. But today you have 18-wheelers, you have stronger men and women. But yet we are cutting the grass and leaving it right on the streets. And therefore all of that blockage causes flooding, causes persons who are walking on sidewalks to watch you with hostile eyes as you drive

by, because they are saying: you better not let any of that water off those tiles come on me or you will see. And that is because that debris pushes the water right into the centre of the road. We have to be a more sensible people. We have to be a more conscious people.

Because one day we are going to feel the lash - not of Thomas. Thomas for us was just a little tailwind passing through. But it caused tremendous damage on vulnerable houses and palings, as we call them. Trees were blown down in many places of Barbados. Thankfully the citizens - conscious citizens - responded well. But we do not have enough money in this country to rise to every single occasion when there are these tragedies. Yes, we have the CCRIF and that responded well. We have the - what is it called? - the catastrophe fund. But that has its challenges that we have to work through so that the citizens can benefit from it. I am not aware that one cent of that money was spent in Thomas. Not one cent. We survived off of the CCRIF to help mobilise these houses.

The other thing is that we have to be sensible. We have to insure our houses. We have been talking this in Barbados for decades and there are still some who do not hear. If you have a \$100 000 house, it might cost you \$1.50 per thousand, 80 cents per thousand, according to the insurance company, to insure that house - two cigarettes per day or a snapshot of rum. Surely that costs you less than a spliff. So we need to insure our homes so that the tremendous burden is not placed on those taxpayers who would have insured their houses, and funds then have to be sought through government action. So all of these things must be looked at holistically.

But I am glad that the Government of Barbados, the people of Barbados, have responded to the people of Dominica this way. They are our brothers and our sisters. They journeyed with us across the Atlantic. And they already have a difficult living terrain. Yes, there are pockets of flat land, but most of the land is mountainous. But they have survived because they are strong people. And we must encourage them to build back up the economy and society by giving this tangible contribution, this tangible donation to the government and people of Dominica. Long may they continue to be resilient. Long may they continue to work as good sons and daughters of this earth. And long may they continue to bring their country back to prosperity. I thank you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown. Thank you, Mr. [Inaudible.]

Lt. Col. J. D. BOSTIC: Chairman. I rise to support this resolution. A supplementary for \$2.040 million to assist the government and people of Dominica in the aftermath of the passage of Tropical Storm Erika. I strongly believe that all of the members who spoke on this side in

support of this resolution do so in all sincerity. And I believe that because this is a matter - the whole question of responding to emergencies in this region is something that successive Barbados governments have consistently been at the forefront of in the region. In fact, I dare say that this is one of the things that make me, as an individual, very, very proud to be a Barbadian, based on the effort that is expended on behalf of the government and people of Barbados in terms of assisting our regional brothers and sisters. So I don't think there can be any divide at all on this matter.

However, Mr. Chairman, I also would like to say that there are some things, in my view, that perhaps political considerations and even political machinations sometimes tend to take us away from dealing with issues that I consider to be fundamentally important to the safety, to the security and even the sustainability of our country. And I believe that this whole matter of disaster management and the nexus with climate change is something that we really need to treat very, very seriously in Barbados.

There is another side, of course, of this coin in terms of this particular resolution - the contribution made by the government and the people of Barbados, obviously, towards the people of Dominica. That is all well and good, and I am really happy that it happened, but I would like also to point out the fact that Barbados happens to be one of four focal points, or operational units for CDEMA. And that is an important responsibility which Barbados has. As fate would have it, the Commonwealth of Dominica is one of the three countries that Barbados has responsibility for within this operational unit or focal point, the others being St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So it is indeed very, very important for Barbados to step up to the plate and to perform that leadership role within the focal point. And I am glad that we indeed have been able to do that.

But in order for us to execute our responsibilities as a focal point, it also means that Barbados itself has to be prepared in all forms and fashions through the Department of Emergency Management and all of its elements. And this is an area, Mr. Chairman, which I believe that we ought to pay special attention to. As a professional in this area, it is something that concerns me greatly, and I am urging the authorities to really look at our management - the way we are managing, or supposed to manage, disasters - our structures, how we organise. Because I want to say that we have some issues which I am not prepared to go into in this chamber. I would not do that. But I have spoken to members of this chamber and some of the authorities on the outside on this matter, because I have some serious, serious concerns.

Now, Mr. Chairman, Barbados does not have 365 rivers like the Commonwealth of Dominica. However, we can easily suffer the same fate as the people of Dominica, because we have some serious vulnerabilities in terms of storm surge, intensified hurricanes, and sea level rise. These are three components of climate change that should concern us as a small island developing state. And they certainly concern me as a Member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown, because the City of Bridgetown is one of the most vulnerable coastal developments in this country. A large portion of our capital city, Mr. Chairman, lies below sea level. And it does not take much for the people living in these areas to suffer the same fate as those in Dominica, if we should have issues relating to climate change - intensified hurricanes and so on. Flooding is a very, very serious problem within the nation's capital.

And I do believe that this is an area - I don't have the answers, I honestly don't - but I believe that we ought to spend some time and, if necessary, some money to try to alleviate the problem of flooding within the nation's capital. Because if we have flooding in normal circumstances, then if you add to that sea level rise, if you add to that storm surge, then you know that you are really dealing with a potentially catastrophic situation.

This morning, when I heard the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and the Honourable Minister of Housing speaking about cities and urbanisation and ruralisation, as he put it, I sat here wondering if the Honourable Member really intends, at least in his mind, conceptualising getting rid of the City of Bridgetown. And I say that, Mr. Chairman, because as long as the City of Bridgetown remains the capital city, as long as people continue to inhabit the City of Bridgetown, then things must be put in place. Because the creation of safe cities such as Bridgetown is one of the most significant things in terms of dealing with climate change. I am talking, for example, about the same flooding that I just mentioned, the rejuvenation of the housing stock, the need for an evacuation policy, and the proper testing of that policy. That is what I am talking about. And unless we do something about this, then I think that we are going to find ourselves in a very precarious situation should Barbados be hit.

So I want to contend, Mr. Chairman, that whenever we are looking at sustainable development - and that came across in this Honourable Chamber today - we should seek to integrate disaster management with sustainable development as a means of addressing the effects of climate change. We need to see evidence of this, Mr. Chairman. And so I have no problems at all when it comes to Barbados lending support. That is something that we need to do, and I hope that we will continue to do so. But at the same time, I think we need to look inwardly as well in order to make that support as effective and as efficient as

possible. Then we have to do some work on strengthening the internal organs of the Barbados National Disaster Management Plan.

I was having a chat recently with my daughter, who recently graduated from the University of Glasgow, and her dissertation was actually based on climate change - building the bridge between climate change adaptation and sustainable development in Barbados. And when I read that paper, in all honesty, I recognised that we really need to get a lot more serious about the impact of climate change in our country and certainly build up our disaster management capacity to the extent that would allow us to really manage disasters in this country with the limited resources that we have.

And so in conclusion, I would like sincerely to thank all those members of the Barbados Defence Force, the Barbados Fire Service, wiremen, nurses, and all those persons - entertainers, everyone - who came together and worked relentlessly on behalf of the government and the people of Barbados to help our brothers and sisters in the Commonwealth of Dominica during a dark night in the development of that country. I would like publicly to say thank you. Very well done. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I am very glad for the speech delivered by the Honourable Member for the City, and I am very glad that he has recognised that there is a role for CDEMA and how important that role is. But I would like to tell the Honourable Member for the City that we have taken it so seriously that in our meeting in Minerva in September we requested, and got them to accept, CDEMA to be part of the Minerva housing meeting. And not only did we ask them to accept CDEMA, but we also asked them to accept the CDB, because it cannot be just talk - there must also be funding for disaster management and things like that. And as I speak, CDEMA is sitting at the table at the meeting that we have at Marriott Habitat 3. So if the Honourable Member wants these things to happen, I would like him to know that they are happening already, because we are far past his thinking.

As he relates to safe cities, I support the topic and I support that we must address it. And that is why we are not only looking at safe cities, we are looking at public places and how we use them. That is why his concept of housing for the city differs from the concept of this government. Because we do not see housing as a political issue, but we see housing as sustainable development where you find solutions to solve a problem - not just talk about it in order to keep a problem. And that is why what the Honourable Member might have proffered for two locations in his constituency, we cannot do, because we have no intention

of keeping people in a poor state and under conditions that are not suitable for them to live in.

And that is why when I went to Mexico about two weeks ago, the officials from the IDB were there waiting for me. Mr. Chairman, the officials from the IDB were there waiting for me, and I did not have to seek them out to discuss issues like what the Honourable Member is speaking about, because they understand that this Minister is not about political gathering of votes, but this Minister is serious about dealing with the issues as they relate to housing, and that this Minister is not going to be rushed into any ad hoc programmes just to look good.

For example, the members are always saying to this Minister that he has not built a house. Yes, they are always saying that. But I know that no sensible business person who has good stock in a store goes and overstocks before he sells the stock he has in the store first, especially at times when he has a cash flow problem. So it is clear that the Honourable Members on the other side do not understand the seriousness of what we are doing.

The Honourable Member for St. James North must understand, sir, that contributions like these should not be interrupted.

by persons like him who had no interest, who had no intention of making a sensible contribution in this Parliament. So when we are dealing with the city, Sir, we have to ensure, Sir, that we look at the demographics, we look at what is needed today and not continue to look at what was needed. What occurred previously cannot be the same. And the one thing is that we also have to look, if we want to look at sustainable and safe cities, we also have to look at how we use the road structure of the city. We must ask ourselves if we can continue to have all roads towards the city, whether we must have more waterways into the city, whether the public places - whether we could continue to build public places and do not encourage people to use the public places to create work to help themselves.

Because if we want the public places to be meaningful, we must not allow them to be standalones. We must add things, allow vending, allow people with craft and so on to come into the public places and vend what they have, especially the manufactured product of others, to create sustainable jobs for themselves and ease the pressure of the Government. But for some reason, we tend to believe that all vendors are the same. And that is why I am happy that this Government is very proactive on it. And we recognise that the vendors have a contribution. But at the same time, even though we recognise that the vendors have a contribution, we are not going to allow them to be disorderly because we know that the training that they have been given in this country does not allow them to be disorderly. And we will do everything to ensure that they

are able to vend and they are able to create jobs for themselves.

The Government of Barbados cannot create all jobs for everyone. The Government of Barbados has the capacity to build the foundation. And once we build out the foundation, then we must, must allow the creativity of the people of Barbados to create some work for themselves and to create sustainability for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt that a lot of money has been spent in Bridgetown. And if a lot of money has been spent in Bridgetown by the Government and the people of Barbados, then we cannot be using the money spent as a showpiece. We have to utilise those areas and create economic activity to create sustainability for the people. And that is why, as I speak, we have recognised that there is a particular problem as it relates to Pelican. And that is why something that has been proffered now for years - that Trafalgar Bay cannot only be a public space, but Trafalgar Bay must be a public space where people can use the public space in a productive way. And as we pass Trafalgar Bay, you will see that there is a plan now to put tents on the Trafalgar Bayside so that when the massive influx of tourists come to Barbados, they will be able to utilise that space and they can make a living.

So, Mr. Chairman, it is no doubt that this Government is not only looking after the needs of Dominicans, but we are ensuring that at the same time as we look after the needs of Dominicans, we are also looking after the needs of the people of Barbados. As has been said in this House - why are we giving \$2 million to Dominica?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Wrap up, please.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: We are giving \$2 million to Dominica because we are part of CARICOM and we understand the contribution of our CARICOM neighbours to Barbados. And we must be able to ensure that we deliver those goods to our neighbours. They are like brothers and sisters. So anyone who had an opportunity to make a contribution and did not make a contribution and feels that they should criticise this Government, I am very sorry. This Government is proactive and is looking after the needs not only of Barbadians, but all brothers and sisters within the Caribbean region. I thank you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: St. Michael South.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I rise to end the debate on this Head and I should like to thank all those Honourable Members who contributed to the debate on this non-controversial Head. It is conceded, Mr. Chairman, that the topography of a country like Dominica is very, very challenging. Very, very difficult. The lie of the land is sometimes forbidding. And

therefore when infrastructure is put in place, it is put in place at great cost and at great sacrifice and sometimes great inconvenience. And when that infrastructure is destroyed, then the damage done to the country is untold. And that is precisely what happened when Tropical Storm Erica hit Dominica. What will happen now is that jobs will be created and money will circulate trying to get all the damage that was done repaired. But when that damage is repaired, Dominica will be just where it was before the damage took place. And that is what is meant by countries like ours being vulnerable - that we are constantly having to fight the same battles over and over again because of our peculiar status as small island developing States.

The goal of sustainable development, of course, must not be forsaken. For those reasons, we have to make sure that at the economic, the social and at the environmental level, we put our countries on as sound a footing as possible because of the very vulnerabilities which our special circumstances highlight. And I know that the Government of Barbados has tried to take cognizance of some of these challenges. The previous administration in Barbados was foresightful enough to create the Catastrophe Fund and put it in place, put legislation in place recognising that when catastrophes strike, we should have some resources on which we can draw to at least embark immediately on the whole process of mitigation.

When I served as Minister of Home Affairs, there were some applications before the Catastrophe Fund for resources to deal with challenges resulting, I believe in one case from an earth tremor in 2007 and a few other situations of that kind. And what we found then - what the Solicitor General's office found and what officials in the Ministry of Home Affairs found - was that it is very difficult to get money out of the Catastrophe Fund because the qualifying criteria are so high and the guidelines so rigid that even though you can look at the distress and see it, you still have to come to the conclusion that the applicant does not qualify based on the guidelines laid down for the Catastrophe Fund's disbursement. We had the same problem when Tropical Storm Tomas struck. And the Government is at present looking at the Catastrophe Fund with a view to getting it made more user-friendly.

But I don't want to delay this Committee, Mr. Chairman. On this issue I think that we have heard a multiplicity of views on the issue of our vulnerability. And I think it is generally recognised on both sides of the House that governments, whether of this side or of that side, have to be constantly alert to the prospect of having to deal with climate events. So having said that, Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 15 stand part.

The question that Head 15 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 13 - PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1 316 658

Mr. CLERK: Mr. Chairman, Head 13 - Prime Minister's Office - in the amount of \$1 316 658.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Chairman, I rise to move the passage of Head 13 which calls for an appropriation of \$1.3 million to support the activities of the Secretariat of the 50th Anniversary Committee. On the 1st of December this year, Barbados embarked on a journey - a journey which will end on November 30, 2016 - of completing 50 years as a sovereign independent state. And wherever Golden Jubilees occur, it is always appropriate to celebrate those milestones, because traditionally Golden Jubilees are seen in that way.

In the case of Barbados, of course, we feel very strongly that the achievement of 50 years of independence, 50 years as a sovereign independent state, is an achievement of which this country can feel proud. I know that in the context of a supplementary resolution the House may not have a full enough chance to discuss our journey as a sovereign independent state, given the time constraints imposed by the Standing Orders of the House. And it is the Government's intention to bring to Parliament a resolution calling on the House to take note of Barbados' attainment of 50 years of independence and to congratulate the country in that connection, in which case the entire House will have a chance to express itself on the whole issue of our journey as a sovereign independent nation.

But as we prepare to celebrate 50 years of nationhood, the Government has thought it fit to establish a Secretariat which is now to be found at Cheapside in Bridgetown in the Old Town Hall building. That Secretariat is being led by a Special Assignments Permanent Secretary who was attached to the Ministry of Defence and Security and has a staff. And the whole purpose of that Secretariat, of course, is to coordinate as far as possible the execution of projects related to the celebration of Barbados' 50th anniversary of independence.

Before the Secretariat was established, of course, we had put a coordinating committee in place chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. And the Minister of Labour and Social Security is the deputy chair of that fairly broad coordinating committee. It is very representative of interest groups in the society. The whole purpose of the 50th anniversary celebrations is to make the celebrations as inclusive as possible. We want all of our school children sensitised to what being a sovereign independent nation means. We want all of our communities mobilised around this achievement. And of course we have put the requisite coordinating committee in place so that the disabled community is represented, the Barbados Christian Council,

the Defence Force, the Police, Parliament, the Government Information Service, the National Cultural Foundation, the Barbados Youth Development Council, the Indian community, the Private Sector Association, CCSAB, the University of the West Indies Cave Hill, the Civil Service, the tourism sector, the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture. It is a broad-based representative committee and I am aware that a lot of groundwork has already been done. A number of subcommittees have been set up to facilitate the work of the overall coordinating committee.

And there will be, as was the case in 1966, publications. There was a very well-known publication in 1966, Barbados Independence, done by the New World Quarterly, which is still a classic. And for the 50th anniversary we are going to have publications on Barbados' journey as an independent state over the last 50 years. Cultural activities, a whole miscellany of events will take place to make this country sensitive to the importance of this milestone. And we thought that the Secretariat should be in place to receive suggestions from members of the public as to how best we can make this 50th anniversary period a success - to receive ideas as to what events the public would be interested in, and of course for volunteers to make themselves available to assist in any way they think they can to make the 50th anniversary celebrations the success we expect it to be and the sensitising, reflective period that we also want it to be.

As I have said elsewhere, Mr. Chairman, I do not think that we should just be celebrating 50 years of independence by one full year of jollification. I think that it is also a time for reflection, because the world in which Barbados is functioning at age 50 is a world fundamentally different from the one in which it had to function in 1966. And many things have happened in Barbados between 1966 and now that are a cause for reflection. And I have put three questions before the country in this regard because I think that we have to have some questions to guide us as we go through this period. What are those features of Barbadian life that we have lost over the last 50 years that we need to try to reclaim? What are those features of Barbadian life that we have not lost and we need to discard as quickly as possible? And what are those features of Barbadian life that we have not lost, that we have to try to retain at all possible costs? I think those three questions put us in a position where we can do some serious introspection as a nation and determine what our next 50 years as a sovereign, independent state should be like.

Therefore, I want to call not only on Members of the House, but on members of the community, the people of the country, to throw their full weight, their full support behind the celebration of Barbados' 50 years as a nation, and to try to contribute in whatever way they can to the

success of this period. Clearly, there have been particular personalities whose contribution to Barbados over the last 50 years has been sufficiently stellar and critical as would justify special recognition during this 50-year celebration. And that will be done. We are in the process of deciding whether we will have special insignia and so on to make this period a memorable one.

Fifty years ago, Mr. Chairman, the atmosphere was not nearly as calm as it is now. There were many doubts and many doubters as to whether we should embark on this whole independence journey alone, or whether we should embark on it in association with other people from other parts of the Caribbean. And when votes were taken in this House, the House divided on those issues. But the Government of the day felt that since Barbados, from 1639 until the time of independence, had demonstrated a certain level of maturity in the context of the management of its own affairs - had never been a Crown Colony, and therefore never been the direct responsibility of its colonial masters; had never been a grant-aided territory, and therefore was never looking for handouts from the colonial power - but by our own efforts and pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps, we had come to the stage where we thought we could manage our own affairs. And I think that on any objective evaluation of the last 50 years, it has to be conceded that those who said we could manage it and manage it alone were right. And it is that which we want to celebrate.

We could not have got to where we are without the support and cooperation, the faith and the courage of every man, woman and child in Barbados, of whatever station in life. So this is not a celebration that focuses on any core of individuals. The people of Barbados made this possible. The Government of the day had faith in them and they had faith in themselves. And here we are 50 years later as an independent nation. So I want to urge the people of Barbados to join us in this effort - to make contact with the Secretariat at Cheapside in the Old Town Hall building, to indicate how they want to contribute to the celebration of our 50th anniversary of independence and to, wherever possible, volunteer their services.

The Government does not have an inexhaustible reservoir of money for all of these purposes, although the Secretariat has been given permission to seek donations. And of course, there is a provision made for accountability when these donations are sought. And there are well-wishers in Barbados who want to see this come to pass. There are people, there are visitors who have indicated that Barbados has been good to them coming here as often as they have come, and they want to contribute to the success of this effort. And therefore, we want all of our school children, our communities, our churches, all of our educational institutions, our families, every man, woman and child in Barbados to understand the importance of this

and commit himself or herself to the success of this 50th anniversary event.

There is a logo for the 50th anniversary. There is documentation explaining the logo and all this can be obtained from the Secretariat. The Government Information Service has been doing an excellent job of publicising the 50th anniversary celebrations and giving the explanations as to the logo - what it means, how it can be used, how it cannot be used - and of some iconic events that are going to be taking place in the new year. And I therefore want to urge all Honourable Members and, of course, members of the public to stay tuned as this information makes its way into the public domain.

Obviously, as a monarchy still, we have had communication with the Palace on this issue. And of course, as happened in 1966, the Palace is going to be represented in Barbados for our 50th anniversary of independence. And we are therefore putting all of the mechanisms and the machinery in place for a successful period of celebration of 50 years of independence. But of course the Secretariat needs to be financed. And that is the occasion for our coming to the House for this appropriation. And I think, Mr. Chairman, that this request is quite justified. And in those circumstances, I beg to move that Head 13 stand part.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, I beg to second that and reserve my right to speak in support of this resolution.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, sir, I just want to say a few words in support of the resolution. Of course, the members on the other side have indicated that they support the resolution and there is no need for - yes. And the Prime Minister has made it clear in his presentation that there will be a resolution brought to the House in the early new year to discuss the finer details of the celebration. And that is the time - every - we will use that occasion, sir, to sort of build on ideas and to put the perspective, the proper perspective of the 50th anniversary celebrations.

I cannot, of course, though, not mention that certainly for us as a government and a Democratic Labour Party government - of course, who were the champions of this independence march in 1966 - to be in office on the occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary is special. We look forward to the cooperation of the people of Barbados. As the Prime Minister indicated, in this very important celebration year of the 50th anniversary.

As indicated, the money being sought in this resolution is specifically to establish the office at the old

Town Hall. But again, this is an iconic site in the heritage city of Bridgetown, of course, and part of the features of Bridgetown that has been built up over so many years as a colony and now as an independent nation.

So again, in supporting the resolution, I want to join with the Prime Minister in urging Barbadians to make

full use of the broadcast of the Government Information Service, of the facility at the Town Hall which has been set up specifically for the sharing of ideas and the generation of details of the celebration, so that we can join hands in this very important celebration. So with those few words, sir, I want to support this resolution fully.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Our member make the move that Head 13 stand part.

The question that Head 13 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 21 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

IN THE AMOUNT OF \$9 433 485

Mr. CLERK: Mr. Chairman, we now turn to Order No. 23 and Head 21 - Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs - in the amount of \$9 433 485.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, sir. This is a very simple matter. Of course it has implications, even though it is simple. As you would recall, the Government had announced its intention to transition the Customs and Excise Department into the Barbados Revenue Authority during this year. And in passing the annual estimates of revenue and expenditure, a very small amount was provided in the Ministry's budget under the regular head to pay the salaries and the statutory obligations on behalf of the staff of that department.

In anticipation of those staff persons who had agreed to move over to the Barbados Revenue Authority going into the Authority, the provision would have been made elsewhere in terms of the fullness of the salaries and wages in a separate head as a transfer - a statutory transfer - on the grants to public institutions for the Barbados Revenue Authority to pay those persons when they come under. As you would know, of course, around mid-year we ran into some challenges, some difficulties in relation to that, in terms of issues pertaining to appointments, clarifications on the status of workers in Customs and Excise in the transition, and therefore the transition has had to be delayed whilst we go through the process of addressing the issues and concerns raised by the workers and the workers' representatives.

I could say by way of update that that process is ongoing. The process of appointments is fully entrained. They have, of course, had to go through the process as prescribed by the Public Service Act, involving receiving and advertising positions - which was done - receiving applications, shortlisting, interviews. I think they are at the interviewing process. And so our anticipation is that within another few months or so they will be able to reconvene with the workers' representatives to see how that process has been executed, and providing that there are no more major issues in relation to that, that transition will happen. But it is unlikely that it will be completed by March, the end of the current financial year.

And so because of the gap that we will have between that time, it is necessary for us to have that continue on the current arrangement as a government department. And so the Ministry has had to come here to get the balance of the resources to cover for the salaries, wages and other things in relation to expenditures for that department. So the amount that is listed here in relation to that particular issue - at \$7 633 485 - is specifically for the purposes as I have outlined them.

Secondly, there is another small amount to go to the Treasury under sub-programme 0131 to top up the Treasury's account in relation to payment of fees and commissions charged for the service of having credit cards used for payment - online payments by members of the public. As you know, as we move into the stage of getting electronic payments in the system, there is a clearinghouse between the commercial financial institutions and the Treasury who process those payments. There is a small fee that has to be paid. For this year, we have noticed an increase in the amount of transactions being done on this basis, and the Treasury has therefore asked for that small amount that we had set aside to be increased by \$1.8 million to allow for the payment of those commissions and fees in the use of those credit carriers.

And we are hoping - as you would see recently from the Civil Service - there is an intention for an expansion of the VITAS system of payment for land tax and other services being provided. And therefore, we anticipate even in the next financial year that as technology improves and people get more comfortable with paying online and through using credit cards and so forth and so on, that you will get an increase in those fees. Of course, we continue to negotiate with the banks to negotiate the fees down, because we want to - in terms of the volume - if you are going to deliver a volume product, we feel that they should also give us ease on the rates that are being charged. And as we progress further into the usage of this particular method of payment, our anticipation and hope is certainly that we could reduce those costs. But for the time being, we have to meet that particular commitment.

So that is really what this supplementary is. I can tell you with some degree of satisfaction, sir, that the Ministry has identified commensurate savings in its budget and therefore this supplementary will not result in an additional amount of money being spent by the Government, since we would have made adjustments elsewhere to keep within our spending limits for the Ministry of Finance in this particular regard. So with those few words, Mr. Chairman, sir, I beg to move that Head 21 stand part.

The question that Head 21 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Next head, please.

HEAD 79 - MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS, COMMERCE AND SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Mr. CLERK: Order No. 23 - Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development - in the sum of two hundred and twenty thousand, five hundred and forty-five dollars.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Yes. The Honourable Member for St. James South.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This, under Head 79, is where the Ministry of International Business and Commerce is seeking an additional sum of \$220 745 to meet expenses associated with the hosting recently of the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes. Mr. Chairman, upon assuming the office or the position of Vice Chair of the Global Forum, Barbados offered to host this very important conference - not just on the automatic exchange of tax information, but the general business of the Global Forum. And the decision to allow Barbados to be the host was not made until we were well advanced in this current financial year. So hence it was not budgeted for in this year. But they certainly felt that given the importance of the Global Forum to our efforts in Barbados' International Business and Financial Services sector, that we ought to forge ahead and host this conference. Just by way of a little bit of background information, Mr. Chairman, you know the Government has a position that Barbados cannot sit here and just complain about what is happening in the global arena, particularly on matters that impact upon this small economy and society. But rather we are duly bound to get up and be where it matters most and let our voices be heard as a voice of reason and a champion for small open economies in particular. Henceforth one will reflect that over the years Barbados has had to do battle - for want of a better term - with those international bodies and agencies that affix labels to jurisdictions like ours, that deliberate over and

decide upon international tax policy matters that have a very real and very direct impact upon our economy. And therefore we ought to engage with those entities wherever possible.

These are not new issues. Certainly the Member of Parliament for St. Peter led a very valiant charge many years ago in his capacity then as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, to take on the OECD and others who certainly were applying immense and very unfortunate and unnecessary pressure to a jurisdiction like Barbados when it came to international financial management and transactions. The battle continues to the point where today it is a lot about the automatic exchange of information and moving towards increasing the level of transparency on financial transactions globally, and certainly that has a direct impact on small domiciles like Barbados who are actively engaged in that particular business. And certainly through the work of the OECD - the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - we have marched towards the point where now we have a grouping of some 128 countries known as the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes and related therein, a subgroup on the automatic exchange of information. This is a process involving countries, and hitherto Barbados would have had to do, like many other countries, and sign on to tax information exchange agreements, which meant that we would have had to negotiate bilaterally with several countries around the world. But instead, now, today, with the automatic exchange of information, we have an opportunity through the Global Forum and its 128 or so member states to have a common understanding and agreement on the automatic exchange of information across borders, and hence negating the need for bilateral agreements to be signed.

This conference was a resounding success as defined by the number of countries that participated. We had almost 100 countries and international organisations represented at this conference. The topics discussed were very relevant, not just to the developed countries, but certainly to the developing states as well, particularly here in the Caribbean, where we got the chance - and this is the second time that the conference is being held in the Caribbean; the last time in this part of the world was Bermuda. I should say that Barbados was up against Georgia - the country, Georgia - as the host, and we were able to win that one. But having this conference in the Caribbean region certainly provided us an opportunity, perhaps that would not have existed elsewhere, to let the voices of small open economies be heard. And certainly I can assure you that they were heard. We were led off in the conference by a very sterling presentation and opening comments by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Prime Minister, which was well received by all who attended and certainly was used as the basis for much of

the conversations that flowed in the days following that opening.

We certainly would have been able to reach some agreement on not just the language being used, but also the fact that there are other agencies - the European Union, for example - and some of the things that are emerging out of the US administration that certainly would conflict with positions taken by larger groupings like those of us who are members of the Global Forum, and the need for us to have better working relations. We of course are very mindful, as we deliberate on these issues at the conference and of course before and since then, about the fact that we must all be very vigilant as we seek to police what is going on around the world in terms of financing and the flow of finances across borders. It is nothing that any of us can rest on our laurels. And the beauty about Barbados as a jurisdiction is that all evidence is there that we are an active participant not just in facilitating global trade, international business, and finance, but also in policing these transactions and ensuring that we are able to guard against the usual risks associated with illicit activities. Needless to say, there are many multinational corporations that are dependent upon the policies that emanate from groupings like the Global Forum and the OECD to determine their domicile of choice for international business, and a jurisdiction like Barbados that continues to be active in the work of this international body and this International Forum certainly is marching upwards in terms of its reputation and its ability to attract and retain businesses here in our jurisdiction.

Mr. Chairman, I can certainly say that the success was also measured in terms of the active participation of a diverse grouping of countries. Certainly we were able in the Caribbean to not only talk among ourselves about the issues and strategise on the way forward, such as the creation of an Institute for Financial Services for the Caribbean Region and the need for us to have our own Secretariat for Financial Services located here in Barbados, or perhaps as part of the wider CARICOM arrangement. We certainly were afforded the opportunity to engage with our brothers and sisters from the African countries that were here, because certainly there is the view that there must be continuing dialogue and strengthening of relations on the South-South axis. And certainly we grabbed hold of the opportunity to engage in conversations on matters of mutual interest with the African countries present, including stronger representation in their jurisdictions, how we can assist in their economic and social development through the international financial business that would take place through the Caribbean, and certainly how we can improve upon their own regulatory compliance and the administration of matters pertinent to financial services in Africa. And certainly we have the commitment that there will be a greater, stronger working relationship between Africa as a continent and us in the Caribbean.

Mr. Chairman, we would have recognised as well the importance of institutional strengthening in the Caribbean around the area of international business and financial services, and to have that commitment from the OECD, the EU and others to work closely with us in building the capacity that we need - legislatively as well as in terms of human resources - to get to the point where there is a higher level of satisfaction around our regulatory compliance. Here in all of this, of course, is the realisation that Barbados is a well-regulated and well-administered jurisdiction for financial services and certainly can be an example for many to follow. As would be customary in hosting conferences like these, we of course displayed the best that Barbados has to offer. And certainly the social events were well received. And the reports are that when you combine our social activities with the depth of intellectual work that would emerge from the conference, the agreement across all sides was that it was one of the best conferences that the Global Forum would have hosted over the last eight years that they have been hosting them around the world.

So Mr. Chairman, as we invite Parliament here today to give full support to this request for supplementary, rest assured that this is an investment - a small investment - that has been made in strengthening and promoting the international business and financial services sector in Barbados that will undoubtedly redound to the economic and financial benefit of Barbados on the whole. With these words, Mr. Chairman, I beg that Head 79 stand part.

The question that Head 79 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 16 - MINISTRY OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

IN THE AMOUNT OF \$776 800

Mr. CLERK: Head 16 - Ministry of the Civil Service - in the amount of \$776 800.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Chairman, this sum is being sought to meet the costs associated with the payment to Digicel Barbados Limited for the implementation of a government-wide area network during the financial year 2015–2016. The whole purpose of this wide area network of course is to make Government's use of information and communication technology more efficient and less expensive. The wide area network was conceptualised to serve as a key infrastructure element and as a catalyst to aggressively pursue and implement Government's e-government programmes. Given the fact that Government is the single largest consumer of services, Government should be able to enjoy economies of scale regarding costs. But the current situation does not allow that, and separate entities in Government go off on their own and of course the advantages of economies of scale are not realised. So

Government decided to invite bids for the implementation of this wide area network for the public service of Barbados, and vendors were given the option - or bidders were given the option - to provide a proposal where the infrastructure and the equipment would be fully owned by the Government of Barbados as one option, or a managed services solution where the infrastructure and the equipment would be owned and managed by the vendor or the bidder, commonly known as the technology-as-a-service solution.

Digicel turned out to be the company that made the more attractive proposal and, following negotiations between Digicel and the Government of Barbados, it was agreed that a managed services wide area network solution at a cost of \$2.4 million inclusive for the first three years would be implemented. The implication of all this of course is that Government will expend minimum capital on this project. Instead it will be making a number of payments to the supplier under the non-statutory recurrent expenditure. Now, during the Estimates discussions relative to the present financial year, the sum of \$696 800 had been approved under non-statutory capital expenditure. That sum is being frozen to facilitate the appropriation now of this \$776 800. So the frozen sum represents a saving. So this is not just Government on a wild expenditure binge, but the principle that we have put in place where supplementaries are concerned is that where supplementaries are going to be approved, the applying Ministry has to find savings, and that requirement is satisfied in this case - as indeed it was satisfied to the extent of 50 per cent in an earlier appropriation which I introduced today. That principle is being fairly strictly pursued now.

It is projected that as a result of the implementation of a government-wide, centrally maintained network system, savings would be observed. One of the first or primary services being implemented would be in the area of telephony - the Ministry of the Civil Service and the Personnel Administration Department, the Ministry of Energy, the Telecoms Unit, and the Civil Aviation Department. By way of example, the current accumulated phone cost for the Ministry of the Civil Service and the Personnel Administration Department is \$180 000 annually. During the first year of this project - December 2015 to November 2016 - of the new telephony installation, Government will pay nothing for the phone system. However, from the second year and onward - that is from December 2016 and onward - the cost of phones will be reduced to \$90 000, down from \$180 000 annually to \$90 000 annually. And this relates only to the Ministry of the Civil Service and the Personnel Administration Department. As other departments become connected, the solution will observe savings of up to 53 per cent. So this was not an option that Government could frown on. We are concerned about the chaotic use of information and

communication technology in the public service. The e-government solution is still a front-burner agenda item for the Government, and this is a giant step in that direction. So, Mr. Chairman, against that background, I beg to move that Head 16 stand part.

The question that Head 16 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the SPEAKER, the passing of three Resolutions in Committee of Supply and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, the Resolutions were read a first and second time and agreed to.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the sitting be suspended until 5.00 this evening.

The question that the House be suspended until 5.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the sitting of the House is resumed.

Mr. CLERK: Order Number 17, Sir. In the name of the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs to move the second reading of the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill 2015.

ORDER NO. 17 – VALUE ADDED TAX AMENDMENT BILL, 2015

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Minister.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I want to begin this particular intervention by highlighting the fact that, as you would have heard only a few weeks ago from myself and others who would have spoken from the Government side in relation to changes to the Excise Tax Act, to effect some modernisations to that particular piece of legislation, that the adjustments which we seek to do to the Value Added Tax Act are indeed in keeping with the course of action of an upgrade and renewal of various pieces of financial and tax-related legislation existing within Government's plethora of financial instruments across various activities.

I would have noted then, as I repeat now, that the system of tax administration, tax collection and tax judgment *ex post facto*, whether it is post-clearance auditing or whatever the case may be, has been a matter that has engaged the attention and support of both sides of the House dating back from the period of 2006. In fact, it dates back even previous to that, say, to 2002, when the last administration was in office and had determined that there should be some restructuring and overhaul of the financial system in Barbados, including the taxes and the tax system, incrementally over time.

It took greater shape in 2006, as I would have identified, when the modernisation of the Barbados Customs and Excise Department, including the Value Added Tax Department division, was contemplated and set in train by the last administration on assuming office. The new Government of Barbados in 2008 reviewed those plans and agreed that those changes should be effected with certain minor adjustments because they were intended to bring the financial and tax system of Barbados into modernity, where we could utilise modern tax planning methodologies to bring greater levels of efficiency to our tax administration, our tax policy overall, and of course, the impact which that has on our economy and society as a whole.

And so, over time, you will notice that we would have come to make changes to the Customs Act - I think we did early this year - in relation to post-clearance audits and so forth and so on. We would have come a few weeks ago to do changes to the Excise Tax Act to put it on a completely new and modern platform for how excises are dealt with and charged and collected and assessed in the system. And today we come now to make changes - some changes, because these are not all; there are a plethora of other recommendations that were made - but there are one or two changes that we felt it was appropriate to make given the circumstances of how they impact on trade and commerce in the country and general business activity and daily life. And so we come today to make these amendments to the Value Added Tax Act.

Now, in June of this year, I believe when I did the financial statement and budgetary proposals, I would have announced an intended measure by the Government of Barbados to impose a \$0.03 imposition - so then called an excise - on cell phone mobile airtime, what we call a cell phone tax, on the mobile airtime of cell phone usage in Barbados. At the time, the contemplation was that, as had been earlier done by the previous Minister of Finance back in 2009, I believe it was, he had then contemplated that a small tax be put on cell phones as well. The intention was to collect resources to assist with educational pursuits and expenditures by the Government on behalf of the citizens of the country.

At that time, and since that time, for various reasons and arguments, some of which I myself did not quite understand or was convinced by, the tax was never executed for some strange reason or the other. And indeed we watched while other countries in the region had gone ahead - either had been or had gone ahead since we had done so, or since it was announced in 2009 - and imposed a similar imposition on cell phones in those countries. Of particular mention or note would have been Jamaica, where such an imposition was done and successfully executed and still is very much in practice in Jamaica in terms of their tax policy. And we know that across many countries in the world similar impositions have been done either as excises or through the existing impositions, such as the value added tax.

Indeed, in Europe, where of course there is a vast and expansive business of mobile technology and mobile uses, I believe that the average imposition across those areas in relation to cell phone impositions in terms of taxation can go as high as the then existing VAT rate of about an average of 22 per cent. So it is not an unusual circumstance for this to have happened.

When we had the adjustments that were made to the review that was done of the tax policy system in Barbados by the International Monetary Fund, they had identified a number of areas which they felt and that they saw as areas where, if the Government so desired, potential revenue could be garnered to assist with social development issues, interests or areas in which we might be concerned about, similar to the one that would have been proposed by the then Minister of Finance, the late Minister of Finance, for Education.

I recall as well that during the period of 2013, when we had our most challenging period fiscally, even then the unions of Barbados, quite interestingly enough, in a submission made to me - certainly the Barbados Workers' Union and the National Union of Public Workers in their Ten Point Plan - had lamented the fact that Barbados did not follow through on the imposition of that tax in 2009, and they saw no reason why it should not have been done, since they thought it was a useful idea and said that they would very much support the Government in that particular regard. They were even more - I believe the then General Secretary and the President, both of them now moved on - they had both indicated that they felt that the usefulness of it in relation to setting aside these resources to help with educational pursuits of our young citizens was a laudable idea and an objective.

We subsequently, on taking in all of these considerations, sat with our colleagues at the Ministry of Education - certainly the Minister and myself - and spoke about the possibility of introducing, or reintroducing as it were, the measure which would have been looked at in

2009 but was not followed through on. And we came to the conclusion that given the nature of the business, given the volume of the business, that it was still very much a useful objective to pursue.

And we did so from the perspective, Sir, not that we wanted to find additional ways to tax people or tax services, as has been promoted and promulgated - that this Government, certainly me as Minister of Finance, likes to engage in - but we examined the objectives: what it is that you would want to do this for, can this area of business sustain that level of imposition, and what will be the outcomes of such an initiative? And we looked at it from the perspective that we had always indicated when we came to this House and had - let me say, unfortunately, because it was not something that we did lightly or easily - but when we had to make some adjustments to our tertiary level education provisioning in relation to tuition costs at the university, that we should try to identify - and I know the Opposition, of course, did not support that particular measure and had always called, through the Leader of the Opposition, for us to find ways in which we could finance that particular cost.

We made the point that if it came to it, that we did not want a situation to exist where any student in Barbados who is so qualified to meet the matriculation requirements, who is clearly on a trajectory of improved education through the educational opportunities available, but who, because of family circumstances economically, may not be able to meet the requirement to pay that small part of the cost of the education at tertiary level - that child, boy or girl, young man or young woman, should not be deprived of the opportunity to go. It is from that perspective that we first came, in the first year of the full implementation of that policy, and we did what is called a bursary system. But we always knew that the bursary system or proposal was a temporary one at best and that we would have to find a more permanent replacement for that by identifying a pocket of resources that we could utilise to assist in those circumstances.

And so we looked back both at the proposal that we had originally from the then late Minister of Finance. We looked at what the tax review and policy review people said, both the external people and the internal committee which we established. We looked at what our objectives were, we looked at what we could possibly do, and we decided that we would revisit that tax and find the best possible way in which to have it implemented.

Now, having done that, the original proposal was for a \$0.03 imposition - a 0.03 per cent imposition - on the mobile airtime. There was some discourse afterwards, I think largely driven by the newspapers and the media in Barbados, that we were just doing a so-called cell phone tax in the sense of it being a misunderstanding of mobile

airtime to mean only when people make calls using the cell phone. That of course is one form of mobile airtime. But in the definitions that were provided, mobile airtime was taken to mean all services conducted across the bandwidth on the usage of a cellular phone.

And of course cell phones are now not just phones. The smart technology has now increased and is now really having an expanse of capabilities that go just beyond calling and sending the average text message to somebody. There is also the Internet that you can download on there. There is also the MMS - messages in terms of email messages, MMS I think that is what it is called. There is also the new things of WhatsApp and so forth and so on, and other things you can do on it - there is Skype and such - even though those things are not necessarily within our structure in terms of the regulation to levy on. So the phones have now moved beyond that and have gone into a whole new world really of technological intervention. And using the World Telecommunications Union definitions, mobile airtime refers to all activities conducted across the network system utilising the phone. And so it encompasses all of those activities rather than just only a telephone call using the cell phone technology.

So that seemed to have been the first misunderstanding about what was intended. And then we had requests from the service providers, as they are called in the technical language, to look at the proposal which we had. And they did indicate that the proposal was doable, but that it had some challenges for them in the execution that may have caused us: one, not to achieve what we were trying to achieve fully; and two, would put an additional cost on them that perhaps could be avoided utilising a slightly different approach. So we had a series of meetings with the cell phone companies and their technical people. I participated in one or two of those meetings and chaired one or two of those meetings in which we examined issues pertaining to it.

And they did raise legitimate concerns about, again, as I said, in terms of the billing, in terms of using a real number and the cost that may be incurred in having to change all of their systems to ensure that they would have to have a separate billing structure to accommodate that - when they already paid VAT, and that is listed on the bill and so forth and so on - and whether or not it represented an increase in the licence fee which the Government imposed and which, of course, by virtue of agreement from the time back with the last Government, there is some bar in terms of increasing that licence fee. We were able to clarify a lot of those things in the process by indicating that this is really not an increase in the licence fee. It is a separate imposition that we were speaking about.

Additional to what was happening, we did take cognisance of the exhortation that we relook the issue of

using a real number rather than a percentage of the bill, and that we look at whether we could possibly utilise an existing imposition rather than going with an entirely new one to achieve the same results. We also had discussions and discourse about issues pertaining to the amount of minutes that are being used to determine the yield from the tax. The fact that, of course, there are - and I think we would have factored those into our considerations as well - what they call free minutes in the system that allow for emergency calls and network updates and notifications and so forth and so on, that would not normally be captured in the calculations for determining how much you would yield from a particular imposition on these services.

So once we settled, Mr. Speaker, Sir, on knowing what exactly we were dealing with - and we were all agreed in terms of the mobile airtime and what that represented - we then had to look at those issues which were raised by the cell phone companies and others as well. And the Ministry established a small committee to examine it, including members from the Division of Telecommunications in the Prime Minister's Office, and they sat down with a team of other persons and technocrats. And we examined it and we accepted the argument that we should look at a percentage; that we should look, one, at an existing imposition that is there and seek to utilise that method; and two, that it would preferably be better executed if it were a percentage of the amount of time that is used in terms of the value that has to be expended on the mobile airtime that is used.

And that committee then reported to me with those particular recommendations and indicated that since the value added tax was already being utilised as the instrument principally preferred for collection of tax revenues on mobile cell phone services, that we should heed that particular recommendation that we utilise the value added tax. And that is where we come. That is how we come to have utilised this, as opposed to imposing a new excise for which a whole new system would have to be put in place - billing system, collection and so forth and so on. The BRA, of course, did indicate as members of that committee that it would make their life a lot easier because it would just mean having to make changes for them in terms of the submissions - you would then just add the thing.

Now, having done that, we had to look at the rates. What were the rates that would be indicated? Now, we had two things. The original imposition we had anticipated - or by basic global calculations, what we call the gross calculations, and we do this every time we have the imposition of a measure or so forth to give guidance to the House as to how much in terms of an estimate we might likely get. Of course, you do not always get everything that you want, or it does not always work out exactly as you want it. But more by and large, more likely than not, it does

come in very close within the ballpark. We did indicate that I believe the measure would have raised about \$32 million. And that was looking at the entire gamut, using a three-cent imposition on the services.

Having examined that, and having had some discussion as well on where we really want to intercept or desire to raise revenue to deal with a particular social concern - the rate and capability and capacity of the public to bear the particular imposition, which you always have to bear in mind - and then latterly to determine, in the course of economic and social development of Barbados, where mobile services were going, mobile cell services and mobile technology services were going, in terms of the development of the Barbados economy, we had to try to find an appropriate balance between those particular objectives we wanted to achieve.

In other words: one, we did not want to be overly burdensome on the population. So whatever we decided had to either match what we had originally announced or be of less burden - certainly not more. Secondly, we had to look at what was available in terms of where the imposition would go. And we determined that from the definition of what we consider to be mobile airtime services. But then we also had to look at how the Barbados economy has been developing and will develop over time.

And we know that modern economies, not just here in Barbados but otherwise, have been utilising mobile technologies now in such a vast expanse of human endeavours. And it is intended, it is anticipated and it is forecast that over the next 10, 15, 20, 30 years, several significant amounts of the actions and interactions and reactions in economies across the world are going to be really done on this modern technology as it advances. You can now do almost anything with these - they are very dangerous things to have; you have to be very careful with them. I say that for the Member for St. Peter. Remember, St. Peter, very careful with these things. But you can sit on your phone now, you can have a virtual office, conduct business virtually without physically going into your office from a remote location, respond to emails, give instructions, receive instructions. You can pay your bills online. I mean, you can do almost anything with these phones. And I am speaking about productive things - watch videos, you can do anything with this technology.

And it is anticipated, as it becomes even more sophisticated, that very everyday, ordinary business activities and interactions are going to be conducted on the phone. So it means that in the context of that, Government has to be very mindful of not acting in a manner as to put a brake on the advance - let me put it that way - the productive advance of cell phone and technology and mobile technology generally in our economy, because it is such an important part of doing business. It is an important

part of making business more efficient, making business more accessible in terms of the various areas and activities that may be conducted.

And so all of these things were in the back of the minds of the administrators and policymakers and certainly in the back of my mind when we were thinking about the imposition of this particular tax. Because you do not want to have a situation where the imposition is of such a nature - even to achieve its global altruistic objectives - as to put a brake on the levels of investment which the mobile companies will put into the economy and into the development of the technology and bringing that modern cutting-edge technology to our economy. And we have to be mindful of that also because we are a tourism-driven economy, an economy and international business and financial services jurisdiction where cutting-edge technology and infrastructure is absolutely critical to our success in terms of our product offerings but also in terms of our capacity to engage the rest of the world. This is what really drives us.

And so I would not want it to go out into the community to be set abroad that light or flippant thinking and thought would have gone into an imposition of this nature. And that is certainly not the case in this particular regard. But as I said, we had certain objectives to assist. And even if only on a temporary basis, we believe that utilising this particular method gives us the opportunity to be able to meet those specific objectives which I do not think anybody would necessarily object to, given the basis - even if they may object to the tax itself.

So in doing so we had to look at what we had, and in re-examining it I came to the conclusion, along with my advisors and staff, that we could adumbrate what we would have proposed in the financial statement and budgetary proposals to reduce the amount of revenue that we were seeking to get from this particular imposition so as to lessen any burden which may have been imposed on citizens. Now I do not want - and I saw some article; I did not read it but I saw the first couple of lines of it - to give the impression that the Minister of Finance is trying to claim that he is doing somebody a favour and not doing anybody any favour.

The intention of the government is to impose this - to increase this amount, impose this particular tax for the specific purposes of getting revenue to send to the Ministry of Education. And I know what the Minister of Education made it publicly known that he is expected to receive every single cent of it. Nothing wrong with that. For the purposes of doing the new scholarship programme. I think the Minister will make some fuller announcements about that new scholarship programme for tertiary education for the more vulnerable in our society very shortly. In the rules governing - I believe Cabinet has approved the rules and

conditions governing under which those scholarships would be granted. And we did say in the budget that we wanted to do this and we are - it is our intention to do it. So we are not stepping back from that at all. We feel it is a useful thing to have to do in the circumstances.

And truthfully, when we met with the cell companies, the leadership of them, they all were of course not enthused about having to have an imposition placed on the taxpayers - because it really goes on the taxpayers of Barbados and not on the companies themselves - but they all lauded the objective of utilising such resources for the educational development of the citizens of Barbados. And so, in looking at all of those criteria, we determined that an increase of the rate, the standard rate of VAT of 17.5 per cent to 22 per cent on the supply of mobile services, of voice, data and text messaging and so forth and so on, would be an applicable rate, a useful rate to impose.

Our expectation, by way of our analysis, is that unlike the other measure - which would have been perhaps a little harder, not perhaps, it would have been a little harsher - to raise around \$32 million, we believe that this measure will raise just over \$14 million. Just under \$14 million. Basically about half the amount. As opposed to the \$33 million - just under half the amount of the original imposition that we were thinking about. And I thought in the circumstances, even though it would mean that we would have to make some minor adjustments in our policy in relation to our revenue to be raised over the course of a year - of course, we are almost to start this in June, so therefore we have lost quite a bit of time - but in the course of a year, over year, because it is calculated on a per annum basis, that it was not unreasonable to ask the Ministry to find other ways to raise that amount from the community.

But based on the calculations which we have received from the Barbados Revenue Authority and the Finance Division, the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance, we are expecting just around \$14 million from this particular increase. It is to be noted that this increase does not extend to landlines. We are not going there. We did not think that was necessary. And it is only limited to that which is mentioned. No internet in the specific services. There are some adjustments which the companies have to do to the billing because I think they lump most of those things together now. So they will have to disaggregate it out to ensure that it does not creep into things which it should not be in. And the technical people are working on that. But we are satisfied that we should be able to get it done for that purpose.

And we have given instructions that the resources, once they come in, should be parlayed. And of course, with the Ministry of Education making these various submissions for the scholarships, those funds will be made available spontaneously, or certainly in an efficient

manner, to the Ministry, so that the students who are in the university currently and those who will be coming over the next few years will be able to have a little degree of comfort that if they matriculate at the appropriate level and if, on an income basis, it can be shown that they definitely require such assistance, that assistance is efficiently provided.

In the context of what we are discussing, of course, Mr. Speaker, sir, nobody likes to have additional impositions, and we know that it could be hard, but we believe that given the purpose and objective of it, the vast majority of Barbadians would support us in this particular regard. Of course, cell phone use in Barbados has extended to such an incredible extent. I believe the last time I saw it, there were almost double the amount of cell phone handsets registered in Barbados ahead of population. It is not unusual to see some people with two and three different phones - they use them for different purposes. Of course, people may have one for business, one for personal use, one for other. I only have one. But they do have them, and from perhaps the smallest child who is able to get one to the oldest adult, they utilise them because they are an efficient form of technology and communications. So the usage in terms of the minutes and time used is vast. We are talking about tens of millions of minutes being used on an annual basis. And therefore, we believe that this relatively small imposition, for the purposes for which it was intended, would be given. And so with that, we decided that we would bring an amendment to the VAT Act to permit for that particular purpose. And that is why we are here, in addition to that, Mr. Speaker.

So, as I said - and I should make this point before I go on to the other points here - the stated objective of the government in terms of its tax policy is that over the next year, certainly as we come to the close of this current fiscal period in March, it is the intention of the government to remove, if not all, certainly the vast majority, of the temporary positions which we would have extended and imposed in 2013 and extended for an additional year. And as those come to an end and we make the adjustments in our budget cycle in terms of the amount of revenue we anticipated to get, our intention is to make sure that once we do that, we do not fall back into the same circumstances which we found ourselves. That is a commitment of the government and it is a commitment which we intend to keep, so that the \$85 million odd of additional revenue that would have come from those impositions on an annualised basis - we are expecting that as we remove those, certainly in the short term, as economic activity takes a little while to pick up, we would have to make adjustments for the absence of that particular revenue.

I could even say, for example, Mr. Speaker, sir, how things go in the context of economic and financial planning and tax planning - that as you see the reduction in oil prices

that everybody seems excited about, except the oil producing countries, of course - we have seen a reduction in our revenue because this is what happens. So you get a benefit on the balance of payments side because you have to pay out less in exchange. But on the VAT side you see a reduction - VAT particularly. And that has begun to show up in our numbers. Luckily, from the last figures I saw last Friday, some of the other categories are holding and above the projection. So on an overall basis our revenue is performing as expected and according to plan. But it could have been even better if we had received those things. In fact, I believe that we have probably been losing anywhere between \$30 to \$45 million in VAT on fuel alone because of the dramatic decline in oil prices, which are now at \$35 a barrel.

And with the new agreement with Iran, if they stick to the programme and are fully allowed back as a global supplier to the rest of the world, they have stated their intention to flood the place with as much fuel as they can to make as much money for the lost ground which they would have had because of the sanctions that were against them. And if that happens, the price of oil could go down into the twenties - \$20-something a barrel, or probably even further. The analysts are certainly anticipating it is definitely not going to come up in the short term, certainly not for the course of next year. And most analysts, both in terms of the futures and in terms of what is currently happening, are saying that oil per barrel is going to go down even further - as far as \$20 a barrel. So we are now entering serious territory because we now have to do - I have asked my staff to go and do projections and redo all of the projected revenue figures to accommodate for these eventualities as they are happening. So as you can see, as you gain on one side, you lose on the other side and then you have to go and make adjustments again.

So as we go forward into 2016, when it is oriented to pull back those temporary taxes that we have had to impose to help us through this tight fiscal period - and from what I have seen, in terms of our team meeting on this, the latest figures show we are reasonably on track with a few adjustments here or there to meet our target of between 4 and 4.5 per cent of GDP as a percentage of deficit for this year, and we want to stay that course. I will of course give fuller figures in another few weeks. As we come into the new year, we come back to the House and we bring some of those supplementaries that we have to bring. But when we take those into consideration - those supplementaries and what we are expecting for revenue and so forth - we look as though we are going to be able to meet our target. It behoves us to make sure that we put things in place to ensure that the bottom does not fall out of the thing when we have to remove these impositions as we seek to then ratchet up the level of economic growth and free the economy a little bit more to do some things as we are bound to do and are intended to achieve. So I think it was

important to say that because I think people need to understand fully the context within which we are doing our planning in this particular regard.

But in addition to that, as I said, because this project began really back in 2006, a lot of the adjustments which we are seeing here in this particular amendment - this bill to amend the VAT Act - some of these things were around for a considerable period of time. And there are measures which seek really to tighten the VAT, because the VAT of course came into existence back in the late 1990s, just beyond the mid part of the 1990s, and it has been around for a little while. And it was always the intention of the previous government and the current one, as we came in, to relook some aspects of the VAT to bring it up to date with what we could consider to be now new modern practice in the application of value added tax. And so whilst I would not go through every particular adjustment which has been recommended, there are one or two that I think are important for us to have a look at and have a say on in this particular regard.

One of these things - again a collision, if you want to call it that, with time and with technology - is the issue of electronic transactions. When the VAT would have been passed in 1996 or thereabouts, it did not anticipate - because at the time it was not there - that technology would be as advanced as it is in 2015, and therefore it did not provide completely for certain types of electronic transactions to take place within the business activities and interactions within the Barbados economy. So for example, in the whole issue of electronic ticketing - and this is one of the things that you will see, Mr. Speaker, sir, in relation to Clause 4 of the amendments, under the amendment of Section 13 - to provide that electronic services are considered to be a supply of services under the Act, because previously there were no such services so classified. Because at the time we were still doing things in the usual way rather than on electronic platforms as we are doing now.

So, for example, the amendments that we are doing at Clause 5 to Section 15 of the principal Act, to clarify the circumstances under which a supply of international travel or international package tours can be considered, is one such thing. We run into difficulty - the tax administrators - relative to this situation where if a ticket was bought, because when this was done, tickets were done manually. You would go to a ticketing counter or you would go to a travel agent, they would write up a ticket for you, they would print it out on a printer and give you a nice little package with bon voyage or whatever it is they had put on it, and you would go to the airport, present your ticket and your passport, they would process you and give you a boarding pass and you would go on. Technology has become so advanced now that you do not even need to have the piece of paper anymore. You just go over your

passport. The electronic ticket is in the system, they pull it up, they can see it, they issue you the boarding pass and you are free to go and do the necessary security checks and so forth and so on. The VAT Act could not in the 1990s anticipate or provide for such an occurrence.

And we also had the situation where, for example, on Section 15 where we are amending today through Clause 5, that international tour companies who would have been engaged to provide tickets for travel for persons - say you have a group that is travelling and a company outside of Barbados or a charity outside of Barbados was providing for those tickets, the payment for those tickets, but bought them from a travel agent in Barbados utilising an airline flying out of Barbados - there was some ambiguity as to whether they should pay the VAT or not, based on the jurisdiction in which the transaction was taking place. So if the person bought the ticket over there electronically, had the ticket provided to an agent here, you go to the airport and present your thing - the question was, who should pay the VAT in that context? Some airlines were insisting that the VAT be paid. Other airlines were saying, no, the transaction is out of the jurisdiction and therefore we should not pay VAT. And it was causing some confusion. And so the Tax Administrator said, look, it is better to address this issue.

And you would see that we ask that the section be amended so that it will be considered that where international travel or an international package tour will be considered to have been taking place outside of Barbados, that should not be applicable to the rate of VAT. And the amendment, of course, would also extend by its very nature the definition of what is considered, quote unquote, a ticket in the context of an electronic ticket as well. So that is one of the areas that was of some concern to the administrators. And our hope is that we can fix this, because if we check other value added tax regimes - certainly the modern ones - those have already been addressed in their legislation. And I think it is time that we get with this particular programme and be up to date in that regard.

There are other administrative things in relation to the Act that we seek to address in relation to certain aspects of how registration is done, when payment is done, and penalties. So you would see in the principal amendments which we are doing in Clause 7, which seeks to amend Section 28 of the Act, to address issues of registrations in terms of awards of contract by the Government of Barbados, which issues a tax invoice but fails to pay the Controller of Customs. Now, we know that this has been happening in some respects. I know the Solicitor General always raises the issue as to why government does this. And perhaps it is something that we need to look at. Where government has issued a contract to a registrant, the registrant performs the service on behalf of government or supplies the goods, whatever the case may be, there is VAT

to be applied to that - the input VAT or whatever the case may be, which they can claim - and the output VAT is to be paid on that service which has been supplied, the payment for which has been supplied.

Now, under the circumstances, some people have been saying - because it has happened - that government engages a service provider, pays them the fee VAT inclusive, and then the service provider does not pay over the VAT to the Controller of Customs. Now the question has arisen - and we may have to look at it; it is not here, but we may have to look at it - as to why the government should not deduct the VAT out of the payment and pay it into the Controller of Customs on behalf of the person and then remit to them the balance of the fee. That is a legitimate issue that has been raised, and I know our own Solicitor General has raised that issue, because too much of it has happened and then you have to send somebody running about behind the person to get the money when you could have avoided that distress in the first place. So this particular amendment addresses the issue of where they do not pay. But an additional issue has arisen as to why should you give them the full amount and then have to go running after them when they do not pay - just give them the fee net of the VAT and call that a day at the races.

And then deal with that in terms of Clause 9, which amends Section 46 of the principal Act, by inserting a subsection 1A, which gives the Controller the power to extend the time of payment of the output tax - that is the VAT output tax - by inserting a subsection 7, which provides that notwithstanding the extension of time for the payment, interest and penalties for payment had not been extended. So that gives ease to persons who may be in abeyance for one particular reason, at the discretion of course of the Controller of Customs, or in this case the Barbados Revenue Authority.

In fact, before I go to Section 60, I think I should say - because as you would have seen and heard, there were a series of proposed amendments in the original bill which was circulated in relation to promoters in Barbados. And when this matter was brought to attention and these amendments were put together - as I said, some time ago, some of them actually predated this administration; they were actually in the Solicitor General and the CPC's office for some while - the recommendation of the CPC was that since we were going to do the amendment in relation to the cell phone tax, we should use the opportunity of bringing some of those amendments which were there - they said there are a lot of them - bringing some of those amendments down to the House to have addressed. And we agreed with that, because the argument was you do not want to waste the time of the House coming back, coming back, coming back all the time, and that you should utilise the opportunity to put some of these additional things in. That is why we have some of these in there.

One of which related, in the old submission of the bill to the House of Assembly, under Section 8C to 8F of the original bill, to the issue of promoters. And of course there has been much discussion about that in relation to this. The promoters themselves have made very impassioned pleas, public pleas, about the fact that they felt that they ought to have been consulted on these particular amendments before we brought them to the House of Assembly. I know when the bill was first laid the Minister himself had indicated that that might have been the response of the promoters themselves. And we took the opportunity to delay the bill for a couple of weeks as we took a break and gave the Honourable Minister the opportunity to consult with those members of the promoting community who had expressed some concerns in relation to this. I believe the Minister did have such a meeting. And a series of other issues came out of those consultations that would have suggested that there are a couple of things that we need to re-examine a little more closely to see how we can of course get everybody - because the intention is to ensure that everybody participates in the system, pays their taxes, meets the rules and so forth, and that the rules are attainable, that you can meet the obligations in relation to this.

Now I have had to say what I had to say. I believe that the promoters are now at a fairly significant level in terms of promotion of events - not just shows, because they are all types of events, they are not just parties. Promoters do all kinds of different things. And they need to form themselves into an appropriate association or have a representative body so that when issues of this nature come up, somebody can write to the Ministry of Finance and say, you know, we have an issue with X or Y, can we have a consultation on it? And as we did with the - but it is my good friend from Christ Church who has arrived after a wonderful tour and a large body of work in Paris on behalf of the people of Barbados. And they have - in fact I understand that they have made moves now to form an association to represent their interests in this particular regard, because it is difficult having to deal with this promoter today, the next one tomorrow, two more next week - it becomes untidy business. And given that you are talking about a million-dollar enterprise, generally part of the culture, tourism, sporting and other activities, we should have that level of organisation.

And I am therefore happy to report that following consultations among ourselves, we have decided that we would freeze those particular amendments which related to Sections 8C to 8F - to take those out of these particular ones that we are going forward with now. And we propose to meet with a representative body of the promoters to go through not just these, but all of the concerns which they would have in relation to their interactions with the various regulatory bodies, whether it is the BRA, Town Planning, whatever. Because of course, we have the anticipation of

all the activities for the 50th anniversary of independence. We have Crop Over coming up.

Before you know it, it is back on, back on our things. We have the different, you know, promotions, reggae on the hill, the festivals and so forth and so on. And so we thought in the spirit of fairness and conciliation, that we should have a serious sit down and go through these particular issues. And I want to thank the Minister publicly for his interventions in this. To 9F - AC to 9F - in relation to these matters on behalf of this particular section of our economic and social community. And I think that is the only reasonable approach that we can take. And as I made that point because we're not dealing with unreasonable people. Our job is not to be a brick or a bridge or broken bridge to legitimate trade in Barbados. That's not the role of either the Ministry of Finance or the Barbados Revenue Authority. Our thing is to facilitate it, but ensure that in doing so we also make that people meet the commitments which they have and that they are clear as to what those commitments are about and the intention behind those particular commitments. So I think I should draw to the attention of the House that we are going to suspend those things and then have this discussion and then we will come back hopefully soon enough with an appropriate, appropriately designed section to plug in to that thing. So those are that.

One in particular I wanted to draw to the attention of the House, Sir. Clause 12 is one I want to draw to the attention of the House as well, that seeks to deal with an issue that we have had in relation to VAT. Unlike other different species of taxation legislation, where the Minister is given the power or the authority, I should say, to waive, remit or refund the tax. For some reason - I wouldn't say strange, maybe it was the design - for some reason, the Value Added Tax never had that particular clause in it. And over time, some very strange things have occurred. At one point in time, for certain projects, construction projects, for example, you will have a recommendation from the staff based on the concessions that are asked for by various entities for the Minister, including for the Minister to waive the VAT. However, on different occasions, separate occasions where an individual or club or whoever may come for a waiver of the tax, you were then advised that the Minister did not have any power in original jurisdiction to waive the VAT.

So I really became quite confused as to what my authority was under the Act. The Act surely did not say that the Minister could waive the VAT. However, the Minister was allowed apparently on the Cap. 67B to waive the VAT for certain projects, but for other things, the Minister was advised that he could not use 67B and that it was a standing opinion from the Solicitor General's Office that a general application piece of legislation by application could not overrule a specific, more modern piece of legislation and

that if it was the intention of the drafters of the VAT - which came many years after the 67B waiver - that they would have stated in the legislation that the Minister had the authority to do so. So what ended up happening is that recommendations for waivers ended up going to the Tribunal, the section 87 of the VATA and the old section 62 of the VATA. The Tribunal Chairman had to recently write back to one applicant that the Tribunal did not have such authority, which is true because the Tribunal only had the authority to hear disputes on the application of the tax and recommend to the Minister the remission and/or the refunding of the tax, but that the Minister of Finance had the authority under 67B to do it.

So again a set of confusion occurred where the Tribunal was saying the Minister could, the Ministry was saying the Minister could, but only under certain circumstances. And then some others were saying the Minister has the power, period. So in order to address that particular conundrum that we certainly have developed, we thought that we would make the VATA consistent with all the other pieces of legislation where the Minister is given the authority to waive the tax after an analysis of the request that has been made. And so Clause 12 - we are proposing to put in an amendment which should read, and we will make this adjustment when we come to the committee stage - amends Section 60 of the Principal Act to vest in the Minister the power to waive, remit or refund wholly or partially any tax, penalty, interest or other amount payable under this particular legislation. We believe that settles the issue and therefore everybody would be on the same page in relation to that particular section.

Then of course there is the section relating to distress. And this is a general thing which you find in most pieces of legislation where it gives the authority to the Comptroller of Customs, where a particular taxpayer is unnecessarily belligerent in paying over their taxes, that you give the authority to the tax regulator to levy distress on the person's assets, liquid or fixed, whatever they may be. It is not a clause that we like to invoke and a clause that is only invoked in the most extreme circumstances where people are just not trained not to cooperate or being belligerent in their non-cooperation in relation to this - being uncooperative in particular in terms of the payment of the tax. It has the necessary checks and balances in it. Because in order to go the full extent of that, not only do you have to notify the person, but you have to go to court and the court would have to issue a writ to allow you to be able to impose on that person if the person does not pay. That is something that happens in all of the current legislation. Of course you can issue guarantee orders. You can start there if you want. You can invite the person in to have a discussion on creating a programme for settlement of the account. If that doesn't work, you can issue a guarantee order. If that doesn't work, then you can levy distress against the assets. But you have to go to court and

convince the court that you have exhausted all of the avenues through which you were trying to collect the revenue in relation to that.

So that is under section 91, 91A of course, where it says subject to section 90, where the Controller delivers the demand for an amount payable or remittable under the Act, including the rate of interest thereupon requiring the tax debtor to make the payment, for failure of the tax debtor to comply with that, the Controller may authorise another person authorised by him may by warrant levy distress against the goods and chattels of a tax debtor. The Controller may also issue a warrant to levy distress on subsection (1), where he has served the tax debtor personally with written notice of his intention to levy distress on the selected items which shall be seen, of course, that may relate to goods which have been subject to pay VAT but has not been paid. And it shall be lawful for the Commissioner or other person authorised by him in the presence of a member of the Royal Barbados Police Force, of course, to enter upon warrant to take and seize as a distress any amount payable under this Act of goods and chattels of the tax debtor, except the goods and chattels that: one, are held by the tax debtor subject to the terms of a hire purchase agreement; or two, constitute fixtures the removal of which will cause irreparable damage to the premises of the person, so to speak, in that particular regard.

So those amendments we feel, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that I have identified give the tax authorities and regulators a little bit more leverage in terms of the administration of the tax, help to bring a level of efficiency to that administration, bring clarity to sections which I have identified may not have been as clear in the original piece of legislation and of course bring the Value Added Tax into a modern era of administration. These are not the only amendments which we will do. As I said, there are other amendments to be done, but we felt at this time, since we were coming here to do the other matter, that we should take the opportunity to bring these little updates and get some of these things that are not so clear out of the way and of course clarified in relation to this.

Of course, I may go back to the section as it relates to the clause as it relates to the imposition of the tax on cell phones. And you would notice that the imposition was slated to take effect based on the printed document on December 1st. Of course, we are long past that date and so we are going to amend to ensure that date be listed as January 1st, 2016. So those are the changes - the 1st of January instead of December 1st. And that is Clause 3B. Section 12 - we put in the word waiver to waive, remit, or refund. And section 8 we are deleting for the time being so that we can have further consultations from section 8C to 9F in relation to that matter. So with those words, Mr. Speaker, I beg that this Bill be read a second time.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Suspended until 6.25 this evening.

The question that the House be suspended until 6.25 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the sitting of the House is resumed. When the suspension was taken, we were on Order No. 17. And with that we shall continue. Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I rise in this debate with a heavy, heavy heart. And a heavy, heavy heart for a number of reasons. Yesterday we were led to believe that this amendment would not be debated today. We arrived here this morning to discover that in fact it would be debated on the eve of Christmas. Further, the bill which we received was replaced at lunchtime - or during lunchtime. I certainly saw it during lunchtime, after lunch. And in comparing the two, which was the first thing that we had to do to make sure that what we received and what we were told equated, I discovered that the sections related to the promoters were removed. And for that I am happy and we register our support. But what concerns me - and it so concerns me as an attorney-at-law who has been in practice now since 1987 - is that there is an attempt by the Government to increase a number of provisions in here that will have a deleterious impact on the conduct of business transactions in an economy that has been flagging for some seven years, almost eight years.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am going to avoid the temptation of speaking to the broader economic issues as much as I would have loved to and intended to in this debate, other than to make a few key points: that this Government from July 2008 has participated in a series of ad hoc tax measures, many of which were not well thought out. And if we go right back from 2008, some of which were not capable of implementation. It is a fact that the mobile phone subscription fee announced by the previous Minister of Finance, the then Prime Minister, never came to see the light of day. It is a fact that the taxes on slot machines, in a meeting held with - I believe - this Minister of Finance, has never been collected to the point where I believe some \$25 million may be owed on that. It is a fact. Well, I am being corrected and told that it was by the previous Minister of Finance. But the point is that the tax that was announced could not effectively be implemented because of the extent to which it would wreak havoc on the industry upon which it was being implemented.

Similarly, there have been other taxes - from the environmental levy to the municipal solid waste tax, which technically is still on the books, but which we have been told, and certainly in the course of this year, by practice, the Government has not sent out new tax bills. And the simple point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to know when to pause and to try to get it right before rushing to implement taxes and amendments to tax legislation that may not be able to withstand the reality of implementation and that may have the deleterious consequence of not expanding or triggering economic activity and growth, but in fact leading to insolvency and bankruptcy of enterprises and individuals - hence having the opposite impact of what this economy and this country really needs now.

I had hoped to be able to spend a long time this evening speaking on that. But what lies before us now is so potentially dangerous in relation to what this Parliament is being asked to pass this evening that, in spite of consultations with the Government, a determination has been made for them to proceed. But let us deal with the facts. The private sector of Barbados has not seen these amendments - neither through the Chamber of Commerce nor the Barbados Private Sector Association. And I dare say the individual associations: the Barbados Manufacturers Association, the Barbados Agricultural Society - and the representative for St. Michael West Central is here, and if he has seen them in his capacity as CEO of the Barbados Agricultural Society, he can let this Parliament know - the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association. All of the representative entities that are responsible for the conduct of commerce and economic activity in this country have not been consulted.

As if that was not bad enough, sir, I just discovered to my horror that the person who was responsible for chairing the Value Added Tax Appeal Tribunal - which, even though there is a Barbados Revenue Authority Tribunal in existence, that tribunal is still presiding over existing matters as we speak - they have not seen these amendments. And these amendments go in fact to removing authority from the tribunal in relation to the remission of VAT in whole or in part. So here is it that a piece of legislation affects the conduct of an entity, but the entity does not know that we are meeting in Bridgetown on the 15th of December after 7 o'clock tonight to discuss the removal of their role in a process that has existed for the last 17 years, 18 years since there has been a Value Added Tax in this country.

And to what am I referring? And I really will speak very briefly because I want this Parliament and the public to understand the fundamental difficulties that we have with this legislation that is before us today. The Value Added Tax Act passed in 1996, at section 60, provided at section 60, subsection 2, as follows: the Minister may, on

the recommendation of the Tribunal, by order published in the Gazette, remit or refund in whole or in part. So that while the Minister had the power to remit or refund, it was only on the recommendation of a non-political tribunal appointed with the appropriate staff, such that there was a level of confidence in their decision-making, and persons did not feel that there was a level of interference, and the fairness which Barbadians yearned for was therefore protected by that section. We meet here this evening to repeal that section and to replace it with a section that gives the discretion solely to the Minister. At clause 12 of this bill: the Minister may, by order, published in the Gazette. So immediately we remove the need for there to be a recommendation of the VAT Appeal Tribunal - a tribunal that has functioned with distinction, that has not been the subject of any negative public commentary in this country in the last 18 years since it has been in existence.

Now, I don't know about the Minister, but I would have difficulty shepherding this section in any bill, because quite frankly, this section will now lead to even baseless and unfounded allegations in circumstances where we have a society that is highly politically charged, highly polarised, and highly tribalised. And in those circumstances, sir, the Barbados Labour Party would have to say from this floor on this evening that we could not support this reversal in governance that is being proposed in this piece of legislation that is before this very House today.

Secondly, from a purely simple perspective, sir, we have a difficulty also with clause 17, because clause 17 seeks to introduce now the provision to attach unpaid certificates as judgments in the High Court and to have those judgments in the High Court now be charges on land. Now, I dare say, Mr. Speaker, that given the last seven years of flat economic activity in this country, there is perhaps an overwhelming majority of persons who find themselves in economic difficulty and financial difficulty with their businesses, either as companies or indeed, Mr. Speaker, as enterprises. And this provision, when introduced into the law now, will make it impossible for a person to sell a piece of land without satisfying the judgment creditor - in circumstances where it isn't so bad that the principal is owed, but it is the interest and penalties, which very often are larger than the principal debt, that may preclude the opportunity for that business or that individual to be able to sell their land and help refinance difficult financial circumstances, and in order to be able to keep their enterprise alive - or their little shop, or their little business, or whatever it is we are talking about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, too far east is west. Too far east is west. And there is no doubt that this Government has had a fundamental revenue problem for the majority of the last five, six years. The sad reality, however, is that these ad hoc tax measures which are being implemented by the Government cannot close the gap between \$2.5 billion in

revenue and \$4.3 billion in expenditure. It is not going to close the gap. And that is why year after year, this Honourable Chamber - including members on the Government side - have made the point that we have to reach the point where we need to determine whether it is not now appropriate to refinance a large part of Government's debt, because the gap cannot be closed by \$10 million here or \$20 million here or \$30 million there, or even sending home 3 000 public servants, or even restraining and not providing the money for critical government institutions to function in this country.

This Government introduced a 19-month fiscal adjustment strategy that has not been able to bring us to the point of success in closing this gap. And to the extent that it has introduced measures, they have had to extend it. In 2010, the Minister of Finance, in his first budget speech, announced that he was increasing the VAT temporarily for 18 months. We have now had a VAT rate of 17.5 per cent for five straight years - five years and one month. But we were told in this Chamber it was an 18-month proposal. We were told in August 2013 that the consolidation tax would be for 19 months. The consolidation tax is still a part of the feature of our tax collection in spite of the fact that the 19-month period finished in March this year, some nine months ago. And I can go on and on with other measures, Mr. Speaker.

In the same way that Government has been unable to implement some of the ad hoc taxes that were not well thought out, Government has not been able to see the reality of the recovery of its revenue because the economic base has remained flat or has shrunk. Real economic activity in this country is still smaller than it was in 2006. And Barbados' tax structure is such that we have a number of taxes that are transactional taxes based on the volume of economic activity undertaken in the country. The value added tax is the primary one. We have other taxes that reflect the lack of economic activity in the country. And let me just go through it very quickly, sir. Would you believe that in this year of 2015, on the verge of 2016, the Government of Barbados collected less revenue at the end of March 2015 from direct taxes than it did in the year 2007-2008? That in 2007-2008 we were collecting a billion dollars - a billion and fifty million dollars - from direct taxation: income taxes, corporation taxes, property taxes. But at the end of the last financial year in March, this Government collected \$996 million. But inflation has increased in excess of 40 per cent in that nine-year period. In absolute terms you are getting less revenue from individuals, from companies, from land - and in spite of adding to that a consolidation tax and a bank asset tax. So you understand that there are new taxes that did not exist 10 years ago, but we were collecting more revenue with less taxes and different tax rates.

Now, the fundamental point is: can you close the gap with this? Because governments don't grow. It is businesses and individuals, through their efforts economically, that cause economic expansion to take place. And the Barbados Labour Party has been consistent in its point that this Government is taxing businesses into oblivion, that we cannot tax our way back to growth. And the most obvious solution continues to be assured by the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Central Bank - that the one thing that continues to grow continuously in this economy is our debt service. Government's debt service continues to grow, but we are not prepared to pause and to examine the option of refinancing our debt in order to pay out less on an annual basis than we are currently paying now. I find this amazing, sir, I really do.

In relation to the VAT, would you believe, sir, that the only time the VAT reached in excess of \$930 million was in the year 2011, when it was first increased to 17.5 per cent? This side made the point to the Minister of Finance when he made the announcement that it would have the negative consequence of reducing economic activity in Barbados. So said, so done. That in 2011 yielded the Government \$939.9 million. By the next year, Mr. Speaker, it had dropped \$70 million to about \$879 million. The next year it went back up to \$905 million - with some twiddling. Last year, 2014-15, it had dropped again to \$886 million. Why? Because if I am charging 17.5 per cent on something, my yield is determined not only by the rate of tax, but the volume of transactions that I am taxing. So if the volume of activity is smaller, or if the capacity of people to pay is constrained, then Government's revenue is reduced. And we are saying that the time has come for this Government to pause. But instead of pausing and trying to recognise realistically how we can close the gap, how we can return growth to this economy, we hear all the time: next year we expect 1 per cent, 2 per cent, 3 per cent. Whenever you check, the reality is substantially different - flat or negative growth - to the point where people now have doubt in the statistics being proffered by the Central Bank of Barbados.

This is not a situation that any of us relishes, because it is now affecting the life and living of too many households and businesses in this country. It is causing a negative impact in terms of people's medical health, psychiatric health. It is leading to issues in relation to crime. And if you want to learn and see up front what increased taxation without thought does, we need go no further. The landfill tipping fee introduced by this Government earlier this year. The facts are that since the introduction of the tipping fee, the throughput going to SBRC, which was on average between 28 000 and 30 000 tonnes a day, has now dropped to the devastatingly low figure of 11 000 tonnes a day. Now, when you have a volume of municipal solid waste consistently at 28 000 to 30 000 tonnes for years, and with the introduction of the

tipping fee it drops to virtually one-third - 11 000 tonnes - it not only begs the question: where is that waste now going to? What is the impact on our environment? But the Government, by reason of the contract signed in 2009 by the Minister of Environment, still has to pay a minimum fee as if 30 000 tonnes were being supplied to the facility. It is a take-or-pay contract. So we have succeeded in diverting garbage from the facility - almost 20 000 tonnes a day being diverted from the facility - but we still have to pay for the 30 000 tonnes at the end of the year. And I asked the Prime Minister to investigate it, because that is the reality. So you are still paying the same amount, but you now have to deal with the impact that illegal dumping will have on the water table and on the environment of this country.

And I am saying: look, none of us in this Chamber wants bad for Barbados. Earlier today we discussed the ravages that climate change could have on this country. And we clearly have a problem. I stood in this Chamber for the last few years in particular and I said: let us have a Joint Select Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs. Because these issues that are facing this country are too serious and they literally threaten to put us in a cycle of underdevelopment for a generation. The purpose of development is not just simply to see a raw increase in per capita income - but we are not even seeing that. The purpose of development is also to allow for a fair and equitable distribution of wealth that is created in a country and to make sure that we have independence by reason of having freedom to choose. And we do not have that freedom to choose because this Government is not in a position to be able to access serious concessional funding in any major way other than the IDB on projects. We cannot get a policy-based loan from the IDB because we do not and have not met the macroeconomic conditions that will allow us so to do. We will have difficulty going to the market again because of the loss of investment-grade status - so fewer people can lend to us and the cost of lending becomes prohibitive - and other than the cost and the IDB projects, a mere \$10 million US for the [Inaudible.] bridge, which can in no way deal with the increase in poverty that has taken place in this country over the last five years, by this Government's own reports, where poverty has increased from 19 per cent to about 30 per cent and the level of intergenerational poverty is back on the increase again.

I am saying, as we close this calendar year - this year of our Lord 2015 - for the sake of this country, let us pause. And I want to come now to the other provisions legally in here with which this side has fundamental difficulty and with which we are satisfied that others in this community will have fundamental legal difficulty. And that is why, asked whether there was consultation on this legislation or not - I have already spoken to the reversal in governance removing the VAT Appeal Tribunal from recommending

remissions or refunds and making the Minister now the only entity, the only person in his sole and absolute discretion to determine whether a person should receive a refund or not. The Barbados Labour Party will have to review this.

Because this bill says clearly - this bill says clearly - that section 60 of the Act, the Principal Act, clause 12: the Principal Act is amended by deleting section 60 and substituting the following. Mr. Speaker, I have already read what section 60 says here. Section 61 in the substantive Act talks about: the Tribunal shall, in addition to its duties under section 87, hear and determine applications for remissions or refunds under this section. That section is now deleted. Section 60, subsection 2: the Minister may, on the recommendation of the Tribunal, by order published in the Gazette - and it goes on to make the same statement that is found there. Section 61 of this bill at clause 12 now says: the Minister may, by order published in the Gazette, remit or refund in whole or in part any tax, penalty, interest or other amount payable where he is satisfied that it is just and equitable to do so in order to give effect to the terms of any agreement or arrangement to which Barbados is a party.

Now, I really am not sure what is going on, sir. This is Chapter 87. This bill is No. 15 of 1996. Section 61 is different from section 61 here. If you have a new one, tell me. Sorry. Please - I will yield. Go ahead. I am not about making any naked political points. You can get up on a point of elucidation. I remember - you are either addressing the Chair upon a point of - please stop the cross talk. I apologise to you, sir, but the rules of this Chamber allow the Minister to rise upon a point of elucidation.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: That is all I remember. Thank you. On a point of elucidation, Mr. Speaker, sir, before the Honourable Leader of the Opposition goes too far in her wrongful exhortations in relation to what the leader is saying the Government is doing. In fact, I believe the leader said that we are technically abolishing the role of the tribunal. Section 87. Section 87 of Cap. 87. And I will go to the relevant section because I have it here. Section 87 of the Value Added Tax Act makes specific provision - for the purposes of this Act the Value Added Tax Appeal Tribunal, in this Act referred to as the tribunal, is established. The section which is being amended under this particular Act, section 60, does not in fact abolish that tribunal or the role of the tribunal. In fact, the role of the tribunal is to hear appeals against impositions made of the Value Added Tax on a registrant. If the registrant so believes that the tax has been inappropriately, mistakenly or otherwise incorrectly imposed on the registrant, they appeal to the Appeals Tribunal.

The Appeals Tribunal process is still very much in place in relation to this. What the amendment that we are

bringing in relation to the section which the Honourable Member referred to - and I explained it in my speech, in my presentation - is that under the current VAT legislation, unlike any other tax legislation in Barbados where the authority is given to the Minister to waive, remit or refund a tax which has been done, that is not under dispute, but for which the person may want to ask the Minister - for whatever reason, distress or inability to pay or whatever the case may be - to waive or remit it, the rules were not clear. In fact, it did not provide for the Minister to do any such waiver. And such waivers were being referred to the tribunal. The tribunal chairman in fact wrote back to one applicant - and I indicated that in my speech - that they do not have any such powers and referred them back to the Minister of Finance. So there was a ping-pong ball going between the Ministry of Finance and the Appeal Tribunal, one saying the Minister does not have the power, go to the tribunal; the tribunal saying that they do not have the power, go back to the Minister under Cap. 67. And in order to bring clarity to that situation, it was recommended by the consultant experts who looked at the matter that a specific clause, as per all of the other tax legislations - income tax, excise tax, customs and so forth - should be put in there to give the Minister the authority to waive the tax if it is so imposed by the BRA. So it is not true to indicate that we are abolishing the role of the tribunal under this particular Act. We are making it abundantly clear the rules between the two, which should be done. And Mr. Speaker, sir, I thank you for allowing me to close.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I am even more concerned now having listened to the Minister, because this Minister seems to have forgotten that he shepherded a piece of legislation through this Parliament called the Barbados Revenue Authority Act. And that in truth and in fact, barring a handful of cases, there is nothing called a VAT Appeal Tribunal anymore. And that what exists now is a Barbados Revenue Authority Tribunal headed, I believe, by a distinguished - retired - Justice. So that the first thing the Minister has done is to confuse what we are talking about. The second point -

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Yes, Honourable Member. The Honourable Member cannot come and expect to pass that on to the House of Assembly to give the impression that the Honourable Member - who of course is not a supporter of the Barbados Revenue Authority Act, because the Member said that in here very clearly - knows full well that the specific enactments relative to the administration of specific taxes, including the Value Added Tax, have been included and scheduled in the Barbados Revenue Authority Act. And the Barbados Revenue Authority is the administrator of those specific enactments under the law. And therefore the Value Added Tax, including the work of the Value Added Tax Tribunal which is now constituted under what is called the Barbados Revenue Authority Tribunal, does the work under the provisions of the existing

- because we have not repealed the Act - under the existing specific enactment as put in the schedule of the Barbados Revenue Authority Act. So you cannot pull that one on me. I am not a lawyer, but I am a little smarter than that. Mr. Speaker -

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I am even more concerned because the Minister seems to forget that there are two existing entities functioning. As I was just saying, there is a VAT Appeals Tribunal that is in fact finishing up existing matters. And there is a Barbados Revenue Authority, Mr. Speaker, sir. And there is a Barbados Revenue Authority Tribunal also functioning. One is chaired by Mr. Patterson Cheltenham. And one is chaired by Justice Waterman. And the reality is to refer to the two as a single entity would be to say that the Member for St. Michael North West and the Member for St. Lucy are one and the same person because they sit in the same chair and they exercise the same thing. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, the Minister has - [Interruption.]

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, sir, really. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is perhaps a little off her game this evening. There is nothing currently in existence called a Value Added Tax Tribunal chaired by any Mr. Patterson Cheltenham - that simply does not exist. There is a Barbados Revenue Authority Tribunal on which certain appointees sit. And the work is divided among members of the committee who have specific responsibilities for various taxes to which appeals will go. But there is only one tribunal now, and that is the Barbados Revenue Authority Tribunal.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Back to the elucidation. The God for witnesses in this chamber on speakerphone between half past six and quarter seven. After we met with the Minister of Finance and others in the presence of the Deputy Clerk of Parliament, in the presence of the honourable member for St. Joseph and in the presence of the honourable member for St. Michael South East, the chairman of the appeals tribunal indicated that there are a handful of matters that they are still reviewing and exercising jurisdiction over. And furthermore. And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the member seems to have forgotten what he just said because he just said that there is no VAT appeals tribunal. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the member is dancing all about the chamber to avoid the fundamental charge which was being levied. This is not an issue about the role and function of the Barbados Revenue Authority Tribunal. This is an issue about a minister bringing an amendment in here to reverse the power of a tribunal to recommend to him any remission or any refund under the legislation.

Now, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the tribunal. Mr. Speaker, section 62 of the law of Barbados. You notice that the minister prayed in aid section 87. I wasn't talking about

no section 87. I am talking about section 60 and clause 12 in this bill talks about section 60. But we have become accustomed to the bluffing of this minister, sir, when it comes to matters of fundamental administration of the financial affairs of this country. And then you wonder why we are in the state that we are in. The reality is that the legislation passed in 1996 gave the power to the Minister constrained at section 62, that it had to be on the recommendation of a tribunal to remit or to refund. The reality is that what we now have before us is a clause that removes any constraint on the minister. And now says that the minister, without any recommendation from a tribunal, from anybody at all, and the language is as clear as it can be as any word put upon paper, that the minister may, by order published in the gazette. What does section 62 say? The minister may, on the recommendation of the tribunal, by order published in the gazette. So that the previous legislation passed by the Barbados Labour Party sought to protect the interests of people in this country such that the VAT appeals tribunal was never the subject of any public disapproval. Not one. Not one allegation. Because it not only made the minister's power exercisable on the recommendation of the tribunal, but it insisted that the tribunal have that recommendation published in the official gazette of this country.

So that here you have a standard passed by the Barbados Labour Party in 1996, reflecting a level of transparency, modernising the governance. I hear you have a government this evening on the 15th of December, now removing the protections to the public interest and making the power only exercisable by a minister of the crown. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have already said that we have difficulties with the structure of the revenue authority with the minister appointing all of the members of the authority. This now goes much further and gives the power purely to one man. One man to determine whether refunds should be made or there should be remissions. And we are saying, sir, this is a reversal in governance.

I started to talk, sir, about the charge on the land that unpaid certificates will now impose. And in circumstances where that charge will also extend to penalties and interests. I can understand even there might be a case for the government to want to protect itself further for the principal. But given the economic conditions in this country, I am prepared to state here tonight that it will negatively affect any number of enterprises and individuals practising their trade or commerce in this country. In relation to the provisions now that are reflected at clause 17 of this bill, where you now seek to place charges on land at section 90 of the legislation. Indeed, sir, even the filing of a memorandum of satisfaction and waiting to get it signed by the registrar of the supreme court is likely to add to the bureaucratic delay in relation to transactions, particularly for land. May I also say that no financial institution is going to easily want to refinance any enterprise once they

have judgments attached to the enterprise or to them as individuals, such that their ability then to refinance and to help this country achieve growth again is going to be significantly impaired as a result of clause 17 in this legislation.

And then we go to clause 19, sir. Clause 19 is dastardly. And it is dastardly because clause 19 seeks to impose a statutory framework for levying distress against the goods and chattels of the tax debtor. There is no clarity as to how that process is to proceed. Suffice it to say that the common law now precludes the levying of tools of trade and as a result, statute trumps common law. And therefore this statute will now have the negative impact that a person may turn up at a person's business place. But we were told that we're going to take care of the other side. And in those circumstances you now have the ability to levy against a person in circumstances where that person may not be able to conduct their business. Again, what is the reality? That person has five days within which to expect that a person may now proceed against them, sir. In 26 years, sir, the few cases that I know where there has been attempts to levy distress, the Government of Barbados has ended up paying out money because 90 per cent of the time they have followed the wrong process and they have ended up having to pay back the person against whom goods and chattels were levied against. And I am saying to you, sir, that this is going to have a negative impact in relation to this matter.

You know what is of significance, sir? I told you that I don't agree with the name and shame. But as a matter for the government, I can tell you this. Has the naming and shaming by the National Insurance Scheme increased any revenue by the National Insurance Scheme? No, it hasn't. Because there is no negative consequence. In an environment of seven years of economic decline, can people be named and shamed in this environment? The reality of people's conditions in the conduct of their business is so difficult that people just simply cannot make it possible to pay. And I'm beginning to wonder whether the government is really understanding what is the underlying reason why, for example, its revenue continues to decline when you have stamp duty declined by 50 per cent in 10 years at a time when inflation goes up by the same 45 to 50 per cent. The reality is that so much is it not a normal period that the impact has been on businesses and on individuals carrying out commerce. So you have stamp duty collected by this government at \$11 million when 10 years ago stamp duty was collected to the tune of \$22 million. You have corporation taxes. And it is not only the loss of the international business sector - 10 years ago at \$521 million, last year \$206 million - 40 per cent. Because the reality is that businesses and individuals are not making ends meet. And anybody who goes and talks to anybody - some of the worst. We haven't even started to talk about the tax refunds, that there are people who are still owed

income tax refunds, VAT refunds. But yet the government is doing everything in its power to tie the hands of businesses almost to the devil. It is going to create an underground economy in this country. You are going to get people creating shell companies and separating assets out from trading companies. And what then gets destroyed is the willingness of Barbadians to want to adhere and to do the right thing. And I'm saying to you, this is not the way. This is not a party that is trying to fight you and say that you shouldn't collect revenue. But we're saying that pause. Because you are now imposing a new framework on the eve of Christmas without consultation, reversing governance, employing new legal mechanisms that will work against you and ultimately work against us all.

Because your failure is the country's failure. Your failure is the country's failure. Your failure results in people at the hospital not being able to get the treatment that they want. Your failure results in there being only seven SSA trucks operational on any one day when any newspaper carries 15. What they haven't told the country is that the 15 is what is operable at some point or another. Your failure results in a diminution in the quality of social services upon which Barbadians depend. Your failure results in the absence of the productive sectors getting the support that they need in order to restructure to bring about growth in this country again. And I'm saying to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is unfortunate.

The minister announced a whole set of - you know, sir, I don't know who spoke to the editor of the Nation on the front page, but the logic behind what was said sounded so similar to the logic that was just employed here in relation to section 60 and section 86. And it said to me that praying in aid, as was done on the front page of today's paper, the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act for an issue relating to tax clearance certificates tells me that the person did not know what they were talking about. Because the tax clearance certificates have nothing at all to do with the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act because they relate to the payment of taxes and a restraint of trade in the conduct of one's trade. The Provisional Collection of Taxes Act relates only to the imposition of a tax or revenue measure. But we have now been reduced to the point where there is much conversation not buttressed by an appreciation of either the law or the facts. And I say this with no glee or delight, sir.

And I say the fact that the measures to which we have spoken, particularly at clause 17 and clause 19, and indeed, sir, in relation to the earlier one related to section 60, the reversal of the governance - we believe, sir, we don't have any difficulty with some of the other measures that are put in here to tighten up the administration of the VAT, but we have a difficulty with the reversal in governance in relation to who can remit or who can refund in the absolute discretion. We have a difficulty in relation

to allowing a charging measure on land for tax penalties and interest in circumstances where penalties and interest very often is significantly higher - because interest runs at 1 per cent a month - than the original debt owed in tax. And we have a difficulty, sir, as I said, with the entire clause in relation to distress and the warrant being issued by the controller of customs to levy against the goods and chattels of a person, particularly given that it is not even constrained by the common law limitation of tools of trade. This is a wrong move in this country at a delicate time in the lives of enterprises and individuals and will do more damage to our need to return to growth than any other single measure that this government has brought before this chamber in recent times. And I only appeal, sir, once again, for common sense to prevail.

I have said we have no interest in the government's failure in relation to these revenue measures. We make the point that even if the government was to increase its collection of VAT, what is the reality that it cannot collect - cannot come close to closing the gap that exists between 2.5 billion and 4.3 billion. And even if you were to take out the billion dollars in amortisation, nine hundred and something million to be precise, you still end up with a \$600 million gap. Having sent home 3 000 workers, having cut welfare, having cut the hospital, having cut university fees, having cut a range of expenditure that are critical for this country's safety, public health and the stability of enterprises and the stability of people in Barbados. And all against the background on top of that of public servants sweating by their brow, not having received a single cent in increase in any wage agreement since the one agreed to in 2008 - this is now 2015 going into 2016. And in spite of all of that burden being borne by the population of Barbados, in spite of promises for an 18-month increasing VAT, in spite of promises for a 19-month fiscal adjustment strategy where we said you are asking Barbadians to bear a burden but without giving them light at the end of the tunnel. And here we are again trying to extract blood from stone from a people that can bear no more on the eve of Christmas and without consultation with the very people across the organisations who are going to have to deal with this. Sometimes I wonder if ministers talk to each other - the corporate services provisions that will have lawyers paying twice now for the same thing, the tipping fee, 18, 19, 20 000 tonnes reduced. We are making too many missteps. And I appeal to the honourable Prime Minister through you, Mr. Speaker. Let us pause, let us pause, let us pause.

There can be no glee in the failure of the government to achieve success in stabilising our fiscal position. There can be no glee in this government not being able to treat the ordinary Barbadians in the provision of services that they need, not that they want. And there can be no glee in using the law now to grind into the ground individuals and businesses who - not because they're worthless but because they do not have the cash flow or do not have the business -

find themselves in situations where penalties upon penalties and interest upon interest are not being paid. And at the same time the very same government owes them tax refunds, owes them income tax refunds, owes them VAT refunds. And you know what is even worse, sir? That we come here to tighten up what the controller can do in relation to monies owed and refunds owed, but we don't tell the same people that the government is prepared to pay them interest on the refunds, but they must pay interest and penalty to you as the government. Is that fair? Is that fair?

And all of the talk about the 50th anniversary of independence - if we don't understand the essence of who we are as a people, that Bajans want fairness, and that fairness in relation to the application of the law, in relation to how you apply the law for what is owed to you as opposed to what you owe. And Mr. Speaker, I am accustomed to the abuse, I really am. It means nothing to me anymore. So that the government must not feel that its way out of this debate is to avoid the substance of the legislation because at the end of the day this legislation is applicable to all Barbadians. All Barbadians. And if we have to be on the front line of the arguments that are sought to obfuscate and divert - as was seen just now when a point in relation to section 60 all of a sudden became an answer in relation to section 86 having a completely different role and purpose to what was being said - such is life. But it doesn't change the fact that come January the Minister of Finance needs ink in his pen to remit or refund and can do so without a tribunal saying yea, nay, maybe - it is in his absolute discretion.

The other thing that bothers me is the capacity of the system to manage all of this. And one thing that came out with great clarity were the officers from the Revenue Authority making the point that they have no clear idea within Inland Revenue or within the VAT Department as to what is owed and what they owe. And therefore the confusion. I know of circumstances where people have been registered twice. I know of circumstances with other kinds of things. And I'm saying that there's a genuine capacity issue. There are Barbadians who want to go and pay the taxes, but you can't even go down on the west coast and pay them anymore. Hence the long lines that the papers keep reflecting. We have problems, administrative problems, teething problems. But we are now adding to those by a series of legislative mechanisms that will work against the freedom of our citizenry to expect fairness. I ask this House tonight to pause. This is not about politics now. This is about getting it right. And this is about getting the law right. And I regret that the Honourable Attorney General is not present, I truly do. Because if we were to take advice - and you know what is significant, sir? When we said to the Honourable Minister of Finance and the Budget that

the attempt to introduce taxpayers certificates was unconstitutional, I made the point. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph, the Honourable Member for St. James North spoke at length in any budget debate about it. And today on our front page I could read that the Government is now waiting for a third legal opinion because there is a conflict between the first two. Now you did not need three legal opinions at great cost to tell you what the Member for St. Joseph, the Member for St. James North and myself told you in a budget debate in here. And we were not playing politics then. But it is because we understand that you cannot constrain a man's ability to work. And the Government already has powers to collect its revenue. And worse than that, the mere thought of the measures - following their announcement - sends panic through the society. And the last thing this economy needs is panic. We should be seeking to build confidence, not cause panic. And I ask therefore, through you, Mr. Speaker, for the Prime Minister to pause. We do not need to do this in this manner.

In relation to the mobile tax, I have not even had a chance to speak to that. But I have a difficulty with a second rate when in truth and in fact the majority of members in this House, including persons on that side, have already spoken to the need for the reduction of the VAT back to 15 per cent as a fillip for greater economic activity. We have been saying so for five years. And rather than see a reduction, we make it for the tourists, for the hotels, the tourism sector, because we understand somehow that it affects competitiveness there. But we do not understand that 70 cents in every dollar is spent locally generated.

And I say to you, sir, that it now imposes on all manner of class of human beings - from the very poor who use the cell phone in order to be able to protect themselves in a house because they are home alone, because the single mother is working at a gas station at midnight or working in what we call a mini mart and there is nobody to leave the children with. Today in the opposition office, a young girl came in here - grew up in Barbados, born in St. Vincent, mother went to the States, stepfather put her out - two babies and a third one which is with the father. And the Member for St. Thomas undertook to speak to the Member for St. Michael Central about her: nowhere to live, no money being earned. But she has a phone. Why? Because she needs the phone to be able to have access and to be able to call anyone she needs to call in case the children get sick. One was a 10-month-old baby, the other one is 2 years old.

We now reduce further - and I am not saying that there should not be any tax - but I have a difficulty with a two-tiered tax for mobile communications because it allows us to hide behind the fact that what is really wrong with this economy is the absence of growth, the absence of

sufficient economic activity. And if we get it right, we solve the problem. But we are not getting it right. And yes, when oil prices rise, the Government's revenue has been affected. Of course, by the same token, in spite of a 60 per cent reduction in oil prices for the last two years and in spite of an increase in tourism numbers which has still led to tourism revenue almost being relatively flat, the Government's reserves have declined - the foreign reserves have declined by \$100 million. We are still in difficult circumstances and the last thing we need now is to throw Barbadians overboard from the task of helping to rebuild this country and to return economic growth to this country. These measures go further to throwing good, honest Barbadians overboard in terms of trying to play their part in helping Government gain its revenue. And even when this revenue is gained, the gap is still not closed and the problem is still with us.

I close. And in the spirit of this season, I ask this Government humbly to pause. To pause. And let us get it right. Because this will wreak havoc. The worst thing is arbitrary legislation that can impose tyranny on people. It really is. And I ask this Government to pause, especially since it has not consulted on these measures and especially since even persons who practise within this area have a difficulty with the provisions - persons well known to this Government. They do not know what you are doing tonight and they have a difficulty with it. And it is going to have negative implications for the conduct of commerce and the return of economic activity to this country and the return of economic growth to this country.

I am obliged to you, sir. The Labour Party will have a difficulty in supporting this legislation with these provisions in it. And if the Government is prepared to pause and send this to a select committee, then we can talk. If it is not and insists on going through, then we have a difficulty in supporting this legislation here tonight. I am obliged to you, sir.

SUSPENSION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, sir, I beg to move that the sitting be suspended for dinner until a quarter to nine this evening.

The question that the House be suspended until 8.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

The source ends at the dinner suspension. The remainder of the Sitting is not recorded.

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SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

BOSTIC, Lt. Col. J. D.

BOYCE, Hon. J. D. E. (Christ Church South)

BRADSHAW, Miss S. J. O. (St. Michael South East)

CLARKE, Mr. G. A. (St. George North)

FORDE, Miss C. Y. (St. Thomas)

INNISS, Hon. D. O'N. (St. James South)

JONES, Hon. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)

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STUART, Rt. Hon. F. J. (St. Michael South)

SUTHERLAND, Mr. D. G. (St. George South)

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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 correcting and preparing this report. Members are named as in the 2013–2018 Parliament.

Q1. Front matter. The source does not record Prayers or the PRESENT list. The Members listed are those identified from the record; the time of meeting, 10.00 a.m., is as stated in the source. Please supply from the Votes and Proceedings.

Q2. Throughout. The bracketed time-checks in the source are out of sequence (for example '[12.30 a.m.]' and '[2.00 p.m.]' during the morning, and '[1.00 a.m.]' in the afternoon) and have been omitted.

Q3. Throughout. The source places the words 'I beg to second that' at the start of Mr. SPEAKER's putting of the question on the luncheon suspension. They are printed here as a separate seconding under AN HON. MEMBER; the seconder is not identified. Please confirm.

Q4. Committee of Supply. Mr. CHAIRMAN is not named in the source; the Chairman of Committees, Mr. J. D. Paul, is presumed. The Chairman's puttings of the question on each Head, the report and the readings of the Resolutions are condensed to the Official Report formulae.

Q5. Committee of Supply, Head 15. The Clerk's reading gives 'Office – Head 50 – Office'. The Leader of the Opposition asks that 'Head 15 stand', Hon. J. D. E. Boyce speaks of 'Head 15, Cabinet Office' and the Prime Minister moves that 'Head 15 stand part'; corrected to Head 15 – Cabinet Office. The storm is spelt 'Erica' and 'Eureka' in places in the source and has been printed as Tropical Storm Erika throughout.

Q6. Committee of Supply, Head 15, Hon. D. St.E. Kellman. Headed 'HON. MICHAEL A. LASHLEY, S.C., M.P. (City of Bridgetown)' in the source. The Chairman called 'the honourable member for St. Lucy', the speaker says 'as Minister of Housing' and speaks of hosting the housing conference, and Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw and Lt. Col. J. D. Bostic then refer to the speech of the Member for St. Lucy, so it is printed under Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN. Please confirm.

Q7. Committee of Supply, Head 13. The Chairman's call reads 'The Honourable Member for St. Michael South' (the Prime Minister's seat), but the speech that follows is headed Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, who had just reserved his right to speak, and it refers to the Prime Minister in the third

person. The call has been corrected to the Member for Christ Church South. Please confirm.

Q8. Committee of Supply, Head 79. The words 'Next head, please. Order No. 23 – Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development – in the sum of ...' are headed Hon. C. P. Sinckler in the source; they are the Chair's direction and the Clerk's reading and are printed as such. The Clerk refers to 'Order No. 23' here and before Head 21; the Order numbers of the three Resolutions are not otherwise recorded. Please confirm.

Q9. Committee of Supply, Head 79. The Chairman called the Member for St. James South, but the source runs the speech that follows into the Chairman's call with no heading of its own; it is printed under Hon. D. O'N. INNIS. The Clerk gives the sum as \$220,545 and Hon. D. O'N. Inniss as \$220,745; the amount has been left out of the heading. Please confirm.

Q10. Order No. 17. The second reading of the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill, 2015 was moved by Hon. C. P. Sinckler before the 5.00 p.m. suspension; the motion to suspend until 6.25 p.m. is recorded only as 'Suspended until 6.25 this evening' under Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, with no call from the Chair.

Q11. Order No. 17, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley. Towards the end of the passage before the Minister's point of elucidation, the source appears to run interjections from the Chair and other Members ('You can get up on a point of elucidation... please stop the cross talk') into the speech of Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, and the Minister's intervention opens 'That is all I remember. Thank you.' These are left as in the source. Please check against the recording.

Q12. Adjournment. The source ends with the suspension of the sitting for dinner until 8.45 p.m.; the time of the suspension is given as '[Inaudible.]'. The resumption, the conclusion of the debate on the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill, 2015, its outcome and the adjournment are not recorded. Part of the sitting is missing; please supply from the recording or the Votes and Proceedings.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 15, 2015, with Mr. SPEAKER presiding. The Minutes of November 17 and 24 were

confirmed. Hon. C. P. Sinckler laid two Duties, Taxes and Other Payments Exemption Orders, 2015, Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe the 19th to 21st Annual Reports and Accounts of the West Barbados Agricultural Management Co. Ltd., and Hon. J. D. E. Boyce the Report on the Unemployment Fund for 2010 to 2011. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce moved the first readings of the Holidays with Pay Bill, 2015 and the Labour Department Amendment Bill, 2015. Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42, 43 and 44 were suspended.

Under Order No. 16 the House went into Committee of Supply on the Supplementary Estimates No. 4, 2015–2016. The Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. F. J. Stuart, moved Head 15, Cabinet Office, \$2 040 000 to assist Dominica after Tropical Storm Erika of August 27, which had set that country's development back by about 20 years; he recalled the help sent through the Barbados Defence Force and Barbados's leadership on Small Island Developing States since the 1994 conference. The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, supported the Head, noting that the storm had wiped out 90 per cent of Dominica's GDP, and spoke of coastal change and earthquake risk. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman linked the debate to a housing and sustainable development conference, Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw asked for an update on those affected by Hurricane Tomas in 2010, Hon. C. P. Sinckler proposed a civil society commission, and Mr. D. G. Sutherland urged disaster risk reduction and raised Hurricane Tomas, drawing an interjection from Hon. D. St.E. Kellman. Progress was reported before the luncheon suspension.

In the afternoon Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, Miss C. Y. Forde, whom the Chairman several times directed back to the Resolution, Mr. G. A. Clarke, who asked how the funds would be distributed, Hon. R. D. Jones, Lt. Col. J. D.

Bostic, who noted that Barbados is a CDEMA focal point with responsibility for Dominica, and Hon. D. St.E. Kellman spoke. Replying, the Prime Minister noted the difficulty of drawing on the Catastrophe Fund, and Head 15 was agreed. The Committee then agreed Head 13, Prime Minister's Office, \$1 316 658 for the 50th Anniversary Secretariat; Head 21, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, \$9 433 485, of which \$7 633 485 met the cost of the Customs and Excise Department pending its transition to the Barbados Revenue Authority; Head 79, for the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, explained by Hon. D. O'N. Inniss; and Head 16, Ministry of the Civil Service, \$776 800 for a government wide area network supplied by Digicel. The three Resolutions were reported and agreed to.

At 5.00 p.m., under Order No. 17, Hon. C. P. Sinckler moved the second reading of the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill, 2015, which raises the rate of VAT on mobile voice, data and text services from 17.5 per cent to 22 per cent from January 1, 2016, empowers the Minister to waive, remit or refund tax, and defers the provisions on promoters for further consultation.

After a short suspension Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley welcomed the removal of the promoter provisions but objected that clause 12 removed the Tribunal's role in recommending remissions or refunds, set out declining VAT and other revenues, and asked that the Bill be sent to a select committee, failing which the Barbados Labour Party could not support it. On points of elucidation Hon. C. P. Sinckler maintained that the appeal tribunal remained in place under the Barbados Revenue Authority. The sitting was then suspended for dinner until 8.45 p.m.; the rest of the sitting is not recorded in the source.