
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, February 17, 2015

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 17, 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)

Her Honour Mrs. M-J. M. THOMPSON (Deputy Speaker)

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

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

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY (Minister of Transport and Works)

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, Q.C. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs)

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)

Prayers were read.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning, Honourable Members. This House is now in session. Members, I have with me the minutes for our meetings held on Tuesday, January 27, 2015 and Tuesday, February 10, 2015, respectively.

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

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 Nos. 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.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be suspended until a quarter to eleven this morning.

The question that the House be suspended until 10.45 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 9 – IMMIGRATION AMENDMENT BILL, 2015

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a simple but significant amendment to the Immigration Act Cap. 190 of the Laws of Barbados. And in particular, Section 30 of the act is being replaced. Section 30 presently states a person who is guilty of an offence under this act or the regulations is liable on summary

conviction to a fine of \$5 000 or to imprisonment for 12 months or both. What we are doing is replacing that section with a new Section 30, which will provide as follows, that a person is guilty of an offence under this act or regulations made under this act is liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$5 000 or imprisoned for 12 months, or both, or on conviction on indictment - which is really the new change, a significant change - on conviction on indictment to a fine of \$25 000, or to imprisonment for five years, or to both.

This amendment, in essence, strengthens the penalties that may be imposed under the current legislation by providing that cases can be tried both summarily - that is, by a magistrate - or on indictment before a judge and jury in the High Court, as appropriate.

The rationale for this is that we are moving in the direction of having new regulations and in particular providing for biometrics so that when one enters Barbados - either the airport or the seaport in the future - rather than the regular process that now obtains, one may be subjected to either a facial scan, fingerprint, or a person's retina, similar to what we see when we travel to most first world countries.

And what has been happening - and this is important - the immigration department serves a very crucial role in our security apparatus as a country. The ability of the immigration department to fulfil its responsibilities as seamlessly as possible is partly responsible for the way of life that we have in this country presently. From time to time, we hear lots of criticism of the Department. What we don't hear is the role - the significant role - that they play in safeguarding these shores. They are part of the apparatus of our security apparatus, an essential part of our security apparatus. And we must give them the wherewithal to continue not only to perform their functions, but certainly to enhance, where possible, the performance of their functions.

What has been happening, I am advised, is that we have had cases of individuals leaving Barbados and entering Barbados on one passport and leaving on another passport, so it is difficult to track the individual. We have had cases of individuals having been deported, returning to Barbados under new names and with new passports. We have also had - and I know of at least one case - Barbadians who have been deported back to Barbados who have been able to change their names and leave Barbados once again. And that has caused certain issues. In particular, one jurisdiction that comes to mind - I have seen some correspondence from the Canadian government expressing some concern about the fact that they were able to deport a Barbadian and quite soon afterwards he was able to re-enter Canada with new travel documents. That causes some security concerns for us as a country and certainly for the

Immigration Department and for us in terms of our national security apparatus.

And therefore, by being able to have the new biometrics regulations, the person who appears in front of the immigration officer - unless you are able to change your fingerprints or able to change your retina - that should see a more secure apparatus in terms of when individuals present themselves at our ports of entry. This is particularly important given the significant challenges that we are having, not only locally, but regionally and internationally, where the whole issue of security becomes central to what we do. As I say continuously in this House and in several other areas, we cannot take for granted that little Barbados, peaceful Barbados as we know it, is insulated from what is happening in other parts of the world and other parts of the region. And therefore, we must move with haste to bolster and to strengthen our security apparatus. And I believe that when the biometrics regulations are laid and the mechanism is placed at our ports of entry, that should add further security to our land.

I want to share with you some information on the workings of the Immigration Department, because, as I said, from time to time you hear so many negatives about the Immigration Department. You get the impression, if you listen to certain individuals, that this is a department that does little or nothing. I want to say that it seems to me that institutions that are involved in our security apparatus are the ones who seem to receive the most criticism. And that is not unusual if one sees what is happening in other parts of the world. So the Immigration Department is ripe for criticism, the police department, customs department, et cetera. But those of us who know better can tell a different picture.

And maybe if I use some data - in terms of the statistics that I received from between January and December 2013 - to give you an idea of the sheer volume of work that passes through that department. I have not yet received the information for 2014, but I have no doubt that it will be similar to what I am going to share with this Honourable House.

In terms of citizenship applications in 2013, there were 898 applications for citizenship of which 860 were approved. The total citizenship applications processed during that period was 1 093. There were 5 052 applications processed for permanent residents. There were 260 applications for immigrant status. Reside and work - there were 320 applications; 445 were processed. Reside and work as a result of marriage - there were 145 applications of which 213 were processed. Work permits - we hear from time to time about the issue of how long it takes to have work permits processed. During that period there were 3 097 applications for work permits of which 2 711 were processed. In terms of student visas - another

significant amount of work that the Immigration Department has to deal with on a yearly basis - there were 2 895 student visa applications of which 2 664 were processed. Persons going back into the department for extensions of stay - almost 5 000 applications were received during that period of which 4 090 were processed. New passports - during that year, 15 141 new passports were issued, sir. And all in all, sir, during the period in terms of arrivals and departures, there were 1 381 577 individuals who arrived or departed from these shores. And as you know, in both instances, when you arrive you are processed by immigration and when you depart, you are also processed by immigration.

Why have I shared with you this information, sir? Because I wanted you to see the sheer volume of work that passes through this department on a yearly basis. And my information is that 2014, even though I do not have the figures as yet, will read similarly. And in fact I am advised that there were more visitors to this island in 2014 and therefore that alone should have seen an increase in the number of persons arriving and departing from this country. One can imagine, given the sheer volume of work that passes through the department, that from time to time it will have challenges. But I am further advised that in terms of productivity, an analysis has been done of the department and it has been found that it is one of the more productive departments in our government apparatus.

So what I am saying, sir, is that it should be recognised - the volume and the significant volume of work that is processed by the Immigration Department on a yearly basis. And it is unfortunate that much time and effort has been spent in some quarters criticising the department as opposed to recognising the good work that they do. And I will go on to the challenges that they have in trying to do this good work on our behalf.

Sir, as I said, during that year there were 898 applications for citizenship. Even in applications for citizenship, there are challenges. It is not a case where the department can or should just accept the applications as submitted and accept the documents at face value. They have a responsibility to interrogate the documents, to look at the authenticity of the documents and to ensure that our laws are not being breached. Barbados citizenship is still well sought after. And unfortunately, some individuals have been going outside of our laws to acquire citizenship.

Just this morning, as I tend to do in preparation for Parliament, I was doing a bit of searching across the Internet and I saw a case of an English chap, 57 years old I believe, who visited Jamaica, fell in love with a beautiful Jamaican lass and spent about £5 500 getting her across to the United Kingdom. And she walked in - according to the report - walked into his place, sent him to the supermarket and quickly got into a taxi and went elsewhere. But of

course, yes, he had actually married her. Of course, the marriage was one where she was using it to ensure that she could enter the United Kingdom. This other story that I saw is of two individuals who turned up to the registry and the registrar actually overheard the groom asking for the correct name and pronunciation of the bride-to-be. And they were both subsequently convicted in the United Kingdom.

I give you these two stories because, in fact, just here in Barbados, that is a challenge that we have where individuals have been deported from Barbados and have returned providing certificates showing that they have been married to a Barbadian - usually obviously outside of Barbados. And we then have to interrogate that to see whether or not it is a marriage of convenience. And we have heard stories that in fact it is a business - that there are people who charge for facilitating these types of marriages. Indeed, I am very well aware of one case of a gentleman who used to live up by us in Six Roads who actually came to me and said, "Mr. Brathwaite, this lady owes me fifteen hundred dollars. She has not paid me the money that is due to me," because he was convinced that he should marry this young lady and in fact looked forward to receiving all of his money and never did. And he wanted to go to the Immigration Department. I am not sure if he ever did. He is now deceased. So we do have that as a challenge.

So what we have been doing in those instances where persons have applied for citizenship as a result of marriage - we have this challenge in terms of having to interrogate the documents that we have. And a policy has been developed where we give the individuals usually a work and reside permit for three years just so that we can have time to determine whether or not this has been a marriage of convenience. Again, you will hear much criticism of the Immigration Department for taking these steps, but they have to because of what they have been seeing. These are real stories and these are real experiences and, as I said to you before, we are being told that it is a bit of a business.

So we do have, as I said, on a yearly basis a significant number of applications for citizenship and permanent residents. There are not a lot of applications for permanent residents in terms of immigrant status, though there are a significant number of applications on a yearly basis with several challenges. Again, I am advised that there are many individuals who believe that once they have been living in Barbados for five years they have an automatic right for immigrant status and the applications are submitted. And if perchance an application is turned down for whatever reason, then of course the applicant has a right to a review before the Immigration Review Committee. That process has become a bit adulterated because individuals are sometimes advised not to keep their appointments with the Immigration Review Committee.

And from time to time the Immigration Review Committee sits waiting for the appellant to appear and they do not appear. And as we say colloquially, they go underground rather than face the Immigration Review Committee.

Indeed, and I want to say this - in some cases they are advised by their attorneys-at-law not to attend the Immigration Review Committee. Yes, I am serious, and do not tempt me to call any names either. I am serious and this is a practice that we want to say - and I want to signal - that we abhor and we want to put an end to. And indeed the Minister who chairs one of the Immigration Review Committees, I am sure, will speak on the practices there. They have then started a procedure where after three attempts to interview individuals who have appealed, they have then turned them down in absentia. And then you have the whole challenge of trying to round up these individuals and have them deported.

So I am not in favour and I am not supportive of anyone who breaks our laws - in particular who breaks our immigration laws. You may recall, sir, a couple of years ago that we offered an amnesty. We said it is preferable for persons who have been living here illegally and working - once they are abiding within our laws - that we will find some way to accommodate them. And the working reside regime was used as a mechanism to give these individuals some security. Yes, there were instances where persons were concerned about whether or not it was not employed by government just to have them appear to the immigration department and then have them deported. But that was a genuine effort on their part. And I know of several individuals who reside in St. Philip South who took government at its word and who are now living comfortably, who are now able to go and come as they please because they have a work and reside permit for this country.

But as I said, the whole issue of how do we treat the individuals who are here illegally - our preference as a government, and in particular where there are brothers and sisters from our Caribbean islands, our preference as a government is to encourage these individuals to come forward. And in particular, as I said, if they are working and are able to provide for themselves, that is our preference. I recall, sir, in 2007 going to a house in St. Philip South and seeing three youngsters of school age during school time and when I inquired, they were in fact not going to school because the parents were here illegally. Now that is the kind of thing that we do not wish to happen. That is the kind of thing that we will do all within our powers to see how we can accommodate those individuals. Because it does not make a lot of sense to have three or four youngsters not going to school, remaining in Barbados for many years on the ground, as it were, and then we have the other social consequences as a result.

And as someone who has spent 10 years outside this country working in a different land, I can testify to the experiences of someone who was on a work permit. I can testify also to the fact that more often than not these individuals who are on work permits are actually in the prime of their lives and are able to contribute significantly. So in most instances it is actually a win situation.

But as I said, sir, we do have a challenge in terms of the applicants for immigrant status because quite often when individuals do not receive the result that they want, they go on the ground, as I said before, and do not comply with our laws. And we as a government - and I am sure I can speak for the Immigration Department - would rather persons comply with our laws, would rather persons work with us to see how we can accommodate them. And in particular, as I said, I am concerned about instances where you have young children who are not going to school because their parent or parents are here illegally and of course they do not apply for student visas, et cetera. And that causes significant issues to us as a country and certainly to them as young children, because quite often, more often than not, these are individuals who are unable to provide a home-schooling situation.

So during 2013, however, as I said, we did have 260 applications for immigrant status, of which 164 were processed. And we would like to encourage more individuals who are - let me be politic - who are undocumented or whose documents do not accord with our Immigration Act at this point in time, to work with us and come forward so that they can benefit more from what this country has to offer.

And the other side of the coin - because you know, sir, that I chair the Trafficking in Persons Committee which has been established by the Governor of Barbados - as such I am always very cognisant of where there are opportunities for people to be exploited, and in particular if they are undocumented, because we hear stories of those individuals not being paid regular wages. We hear stories of those individuals sharing less than ideal living accommodation and we do not wish that for persons living among us. And we need to find some mechanism, we need to encourage them to work with us so that we can alleviate the kind of conditions that they are faced with from time to time.

Sir, we do not have an issue in terms of CARICOM Skills Nationals. I am advised again that CARICOM Skills Nationals - just in 2013 - there were 154 applications, of which 133 were processed. I am told that process has been going quite smoothly. The Accreditation Council gets involved and once they sign off, usually immigration is quite happy to get the applications approved with haste. That is an area of contention, as you know - it goes around the whole issue of free movement of CARICOM nationals,

in particular Skills Nationals. From time to time you hear stories about challenges in different parts of the region. You hear about challenges in Barbados, but I believe that Barbados is probably the only country in the region - and let me qualify, that I am aware of - who is actually able to provide statistics showing, or who is willing to provide statistics showing, the number of applications received and the number of applications processed, because we wish to abide by our treaty obligations. And certainly I know the Member for St. Peter, who believes that this is his baby - freedom of movement - will support me in this, and that Barbados is not afraid to put its hand up and signal the fact that we have been processing applications with some alacrity.

It is in the area though of the right of establishment that we have been having some challenges from time to time, because some individuals come in and claim that they are - let us use an example - they claim that they are hairdressers, for example, and then go on to do some other non-skilled job. A person comes in and says that he is a DJ and next thing you know he is doing something completely different. That is one area where we are seeing some applications but we do have some challenges in terms of the disconnect between what skills people are saying that they have and what they end up doing from time to time.

But all in all, sir, my report to this Honourable Chamber is that we are abiding by our treaty obligations. We are not in any way afraid of individuals from the region coming to live among us. There is a school of thought that we should be encouraging another 15 000 - in fact, that if we are to continue to grow at the rate that we would like to grow, that we should be aiming to have 300 000 plus living among us as opposed to the 290 000 that we have at this point in time. And a simple illustration, sir, is we have presently 103 or 104 individuals at law school. There is only so much work around presently. The only way to have an increased amount of work is if, of course, one way is to increase the population - there would be a demand for more services, et cetera. But of course any planned increase, any planned growth of a population must have the attendant checks and balances.

That is because if there is one criticism that I have about the free movement as contemplated, it is that I am not sure if the heads looked individually and collectively at what we could afford to do at that point in time. Because if I use Barbados as a good example - and the Minister of Education, the Member for Christ Church East Central, would bear me out on this - we are probably two secondary schools short. We are probably four primary schools short. We have challenges in terms of housing for our own people at this point in time. We have challenges in terms of providing the level of health care that we want for our own people at this point in time. So any planned increase in population must recognise that these individuals are going

to need housing, that they are going to need health care, that they are going to need schooling, et cetera. And that is the point I make in terms of whether or not we sat down and dotted our i's and crossed our t's to ensure that this could happen.

Unfortunately, though, sir - and I say unfortunately because I believe that over the last couple of years, certainly since 2008, and I say 2008 because that is when I began paying more attention to the whole issue of freedom of movement - the economic challenges that have plagued us in the region have in many ways retarded our freedom of movement. Because many of us have been looking at how do we solve our own internal challenges as opposed to how do we solve the challenges of CARICOM. I can spend lots of time on that because it concerns me. I still believe that we need to address many of our issues - many of our trade issues, many of our tourism issues, many of our security issues - that we do need to address these issues as a region, that we are too small individually, that we are too small to address these issues by ourselves. So let

me signal, because I don't want to appear, notwithstanding my comment, in terms of whether or not the heads at the time dotted their I's and crossed the T's and looked at the total consequences of free movement. I do want to say that, in fact, that I embrace the whole idea of free movement. I embrace the whole idea that we need in this global environment to address our trade and other issues as a collective. There's no issue. For example, sir, I have responsibility for disaster management at this point in time. None of us - none of us are equipped, even Trinidad, who may say to me that they are. I don't believe that none of us are equipped to handle a significant event alone. Just as simple as that. And, you know, so I just want to emphasise the fact that I believe that we need to address many more of these issues as a collective.

So just this morning, I was listening to my radio. I was listening in particular because I wanted to hear news about what was happening in St. Kitts-Nevis. And I heard a broadcast out of St. Lucia about the whole issue of whether or not they should have an investment programme, a citizenship by investment programme. We have not gone that route. But we have embraced a high net worth individual regime. Again, this has had some success. We had 57 applications last year for special entry permits of which 51 were approved. Basically what we are saying is that if you have a net worth of \$10 million or if you have an investment in Barbados of at least US \$2 million and you are able to demonstrate that you can look after yourself, that you will not be working, you are able to provide healthcare for yourself and for your spouse - basically we are saying rather than having to go down to the Immigration Department every six months or so, that we can give you a five-year visa. And that has in particular gone on quite well with our international business sector

because of the attractiveness of Barbados in particular to many of our investors and in particular at this point in time.

Sir, again sir, you know I like to share my anecdotes with you but I have a very good friend who presently lives in Boston and he sent me a note yesterday saying seven inches of snow. I can't take it anymore. Can I move to Barbados, please? And I'm sure there are many individuals like him who would not mind having a second home in Barbados, not only because it is a wonderful place but because it's a place that they also from time to time have done business and fallen in love with. And that's what that regime is trying to accommodate and has recognised for many years. Sir, we know that in fact that many individuals from Canada and from Britain and other parts of the world - I singled out Canada and Britain because of my previous association with the international business sector - that many of them bought second homes in Barbados and therefore this regime is just trying to make their lives a bit easier.

And the area of the issue of student visas - again, so we have had significant numbers but that has not been as difficult as some of the other work that the Immigration Department has been doing. And indeed we have been trying to issue five-year visas. And more importantly, one of the positives is that previously, sir, if an individual went to school in Barbados on a student visa, the time spent as a student was not counted towards any other application for status in Barbados. So simply put, you can have an individual who goes to primary school in Barbados and who goes to secondary school in Barbados and then applies for immigrant status and was told, notwithstanding the fact that you were residing in Barbados for the last ten years, that you do not qualify. We have changed that so that time now applies. And I am aware of many individuals who have benefited from that, who previously would have been to school here all of their life and would have been told that the time that they spent as young adults in this country did not matter. But we have managed to change that.

So I say all that to say that in fact that we have been working - and when I say we here, notwithstanding the fact that I'm not the minister responsible for immigration, but as the introducer of the bill, I'm taking some liberty to say we, including myself, in the Immigration Department - but we have been working here, sir, to see how best we can serve our public, how best we can change what we do to make life easier for those individuals who we serve. A simple illustration, sir, is just two weeks ago I went online, completed my application form for a new passport and did one for a little youngster, also was able to do it online. So you don't have to go down to the Immigration Department anymore and ask for forms. So the long lines you see, individuals waiting, et cetera, they don't have to do that anymore. That in fact, that we are now using technology. And I dare say, sir, that it is my hope - and I'm sure that the

Chief Immigration Officer and the ministry responsible will support me in this - it is my hope that within the next three to five years that the Immigration Department will go paperless.

Sir, I cannot imagine the sheer volume of paper that they have if they processed in 2013 some 1 381 577 individuals coming in and out of the country. Those are a million-plus pieces of paper alone. Not to mention, sir, the applications for citizenship and another thousand, et cetera. The sheer volume of paper that they must have is mind-boggling. And the only route, therefore, for them to go as quickly as possible - and it cannot happen overnight, there is a process - the only route that they can go is to go as paperless as possible. That is the way that we need to go, and many other departments as well. It is my hope that within our judicial system - it is my hope that the courts in Barbados will go that route within the next three to five years. And I dare say that I want to challenge the Immigration Department to ensure that whole issue - so save some trees and at the same time be more efficient. Those of us who from time to time have visited the Immigration Department can speak to the large amount of paper that is stacked up because of the sheer volume of work that they have to do from time to time.

So, sir, the point I'm making here about the Immigration Department is that notwithstanding the comments that you will hear, it is a department - it is an essential department to our way of life and is a department that does function and does produce a significant amount of work, sir. So the whole issue of work permits from time to time - and I know in particular we hear comments in particular from the international business sector about the length of time it takes to have work permits processed, et cetera. But again, overall, from my information, in 2013 you had just over 3 000 work permit applications, of which 2 711 were processed. You know, again, sir, it is not a case where they can just receive the information and sign off and say go your way without any kind of interrogation. We know the challenges, sir. We know that in fact that you cannot accept what is presented to you at face value in most things that you do nowadays. So you do have to interrogate the documents, you do need to examine the passport, you do need to examine the references, you do need to examine whether or not there is a nexus between the bank account that has been submitted as evidence of high net worth and the connection between the applicant, et cetera. So it is not a case where, as some people believe, you simply need to accept the information and let people go their way.

I will not serve to give your permission to just spend a few minutes on what I consider to be a naughty issue that has plagued the Immigration Department. And that is the Shanique Myrie judgment, which seems, in my opinion, to have shell-shocked some of our officers. And I want to use

this opportunity to send them the signal. The laws of Barbados - the laws of Barbados are the laws of Barbados - and immigration officers have to discharge their responsibilities fearlessly within the laws of Barbados. Their ability to discharge their responsibilities is central and paramount to our continued way of life. So they should not and cannot execute their responsibilities looking over their shoulders, worrying about whether or not Barbados will be sued. And therefore CARICOM has offered some guidance in terms of this issue of the automatic six months entry into Barbados. The Solicitor General's Chambers has offered some guidance. I know we have had discussions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but I want to make this point because I am clear about this. Notwithstanding what is said in the judgment, no one in Trinidad can determine what are our national security considerations. No one in Trinidad, right, or anywhere outside this country. We have our responsibility and in particular we, as the elected members of Parliament, are elected. And part of our responsibility is to secure our borders. And therefore we should not water down what we do because we are afraid of what people might say outside the region, in the region, or worst of all about being sued.

You know, sir, you would believe that Barbados is the only country that has ever deported anyone when you listen to some commentators. But Trinidad - I believe up to last year I saw Trinidad deported about 15 Jamaicans at one go, et cetera - and the Prime Minister of Trinidad came and said I am happy because what is paramount is that we abided within our laws. I'm not advocating, I'm not encouraging immigration officers not to abide by our laws, but I am saying and I am encouraging them: when individuals come in front of them, do not be afraid to interrogate them. Yes, there is a six months automatic entry, but you must ask the questions. How can you determine whether or not a person is able to provide for himself if he says he is here for three weeks? How can you determine whether or not he is able to provide for himself for three weeks if you don't ask him? How is he going to survive? If a guy comes and says he wants to spend four months, how are you going to determine whether or not he will not be a liability on the state unless you ask the question? So they should not be afraid to interrogate.

Sir, up to recently I went into the United Kingdom. I am the Attorney General of this country. I went into the United Kingdom up until recently and I was asked at the border how long am I going to be here, where am I staying and why am I there. And we behave as if there is something wrong with our own people asking the same questions that even I as a minister am asked. I did not quarrel, I did not complain because I recognised that the immigration officer was doing what he is supposed to be doing. And therefore, sir, if nothing else, I want to say to our officers: do not be afraid to do your jobs. And whilst I'm at it, I also want to make this point because I have been

told by at least two officers I can think of about feeling intimidated when they travel around this country, or persons waiting outside the airport and cursing them, et cetera. We will not tolerate that. We will not tolerate the abuse of our immigration officers and they must be able to go about their duties fearlessly, and we will provide whatever mechanism is in place to make sure they are protected. We will do that. They cannot and should not be afraid.

And yes, you hear complaints and stuff, and yes, people will make you believe that they are supposed to sit down and smile at everybody who comes to the airport and say, welcome, come, ask no questions. But that is not the case. That is not the case, sir. That is not the case. So I can tell you about experiences in Canada. I can tell you about experiences of going to the United States where the officers ask the questions. And yes, sir, in an ideal situation when you are travelling you want to meet someone who is nice and pleasant, et cetera. But you can be nice and pleasant and do your job and be forceful where necessary. So I am saying to them, sir, do not be afraid of discharging their jobs when it comes to any fallout as a result of this Shanique Myrie case. I am not going to spend any more time on the merits or demerits of the case.

But let me give an illustration of the kind of issues that an immigration officer might have from time to time. Now imagine, sir, for example, an individual comes into Barbados, he is given a six months automatic entry. He leaves for three days and comes back. Are you supposed to give him an automatic six months, or haven't you worked out that in fact that he was here for six months, even though he said previously that he was only going to be here for three weeks? Don't you have the right to ask him where he is going, how he is going to survive, and go beyond interrogation? Because a guy like that you need to look at a bit more closely - his connections, et cetera. And more than likely, if he is not a high net worth individual, more than likely he is working. So they need not be afraid in instances like that to ask the right questions. And yes, I recognise that they probably need additional support for the enforcement arm of the immigration office so that they can in fact do more in terms of going around the country and seeing what is happening. But as I said, sir, that is an illustration of the challenges that they are having and that they are unsure how to proceed. Again, my clear and unambiguous advice to them: if a guy is here for six months, leaves for three or four days and goes back across the waters and comes back and asks for another six months, more than likely he is working and you need to ask the questions and find out where he is working and if he is, do what needs to be done under the laws of Barbados. Do not be afraid.

Then, sir, we have an issue - and this is another issue, sir, that we need to spend some time on - because we

have an issue of individuals who may come here, sir, let us say, four months pregnant. You cannot refuse them entry. You may very well suspect or feel that that individual wants to have the child in Barbados. Nothing wrong with that; it is desirable. But the challenge that we have as a country, and what the Immigration Department and the ministry responsible, and maybe the Cabinet, has to make a determination of, is that once that child is born in Barbados, that child has all the rights, privileges and immunities of a Barbadian. That child becomes a Barbadian. So the mother then leaves the country and sends the child back eighteen years later and says, I want my child into university. The child is Barbadian, we have to accept him. And the government has to pick up the tab. The question I am asking is: is that what was intended, or is it right? Because in that scenario, neither the child's mother nor father has contributed, has sent to the coffers in Barbados, to the taxes in Barbados. They came into the country, had the child who becomes Barbadian, disappeared and turned up eighteen years later and said, I am here for free university education. I am Barbadian, I am here to go to school. And you cannot say no. That, to me, is an area that we need to have a look at and decide - well, first thing is we have to decide how many instances there are, whether or not it is what was intended, and whether or not we want to do something about it. I would think we want to do something about it. I would think, in particular, where an individual knowingly comes to Barbados, says to the Immigration Department I am here for a few weeks' holiday, knowing that in fact the reason why they are actually here is to go to the QEH during the ninth month of the pregnancy, have the child and then go off to wherever from whence they came.

Now, sir, I am not suggesting that Barbados should not have individuals from other parts of the Caribbean or from other parts of the world who want to have their children in Barbados. I am not suggesting that at all. What I am flagging is where it is done, as it were, in the dark of the night - where in fact the individual has come, allegedly as a tourist, but in fact the reason why they have come is to have this child and then the attendant benefits to the child. And the question is whether or not we as a country, whether or not the taxpayers, should have to pay for the support of that child. In particular, given all the other things I spoke about in terms of healthcare, education, et cetera.

Then again, another challenge identified to me by immigration officers is what do they do with an individual who comes to the airport with three minor children or two minor children during school time and says they have come on holiday? Do you give them all six months automatic entry? Do you have the right to ask why these children are not in school? Or do you just allow them to come, knowing that in several instances they are not coming on holiday? How far do you go in terms of the questions that you ask? Now, I said earlier about my concern about young people

in this country not going to school. So certainly it is not a desirable situation if we suspect that individuals are coming into the country bringing their young children and not coming as tourists - in inverted commas - and that in fact they are planning as soon as possible to disappear off the radar, and these young children do not have the benefit of going to school. So all these are questions that on a daily basis officers are asked and are expected to make decisions on. And I am saying to them, sir, that they will not always get it right, but they should not exercise their authority with fear. None of us are perfect. We will make mistakes.

I was advised recently - and I am hoping that it has been done - that in fact the Office of the Solicitor General was going to do some training with the Immigration Department to look at some procedural issues, because more often than not, when there are issues in terms of where someone questions what the Immigration Department has done, it is not the result that has been wrong. In other words, it is not how we may have decided that in fact this individual should be deported that has been wrong. It is really the procedure in terms of whether or not we have gone through, in particular, the natural justice processes. So we need to do some training in that regard. And we are doing some training in that regard because there are a few attorneys out there who are quick and thirsty - I almost said hungry, but I am going to say thirsty - and are quick to bring actions against us. I do not mean hungry in a degree matter; I mean hungry in terms of eager to bring actions against us, asking for a review of our processes. And we should not be afraid to do that.

But there are also some positives that I want to share with you going forward. Hopefully we should have some kiosks at the airport. We are working with GAIA Inc. to see if we can get that done. That should address the whole issue of congestion so that you would not have to come in and spend lots of time in line. We are going to start with our nationals and our CARICOM nationals. I believe I am right in saying that a loan has been obtained from the Caribbean Development Bank and if all goes well, come next year the Immigration Department should be moving into new headquarters on Hincks Street. I fully look forward to that. I am one who has been going to the Immigration Department from time to time and I know that they do have some space challenges and in fact that is being worked on, and I, like them, look forward to their move in sometime towards the middle of next year. I believe the projection is that the funds are available and that should redound for the benefit and the comfort of officers.

So I know that there are some challenges in terms of personnel. Some representation has been made that in fact they need a few additional bodies on the ground, in particular given the increased amount of work that they have had to do. That again, within our fiscal space, we need

to look at - and when I say we, I mean government here. We are not unsympathetic towards immigration officers in terms of the sheer volume of work that they are doing and recognise that in some areas there may be a need for additional resources. And I am sure that as our economic situation changes, we will get there.

Well, sir, because in fact it is seen mostly at the airport - when you come in from time to time you see that there are quite long lines at the airport. But you know, sir, the reality is that most times when you come in at the airport the long lines are not the issue with respect to immigration. It is the length of time that you have to spend waiting for your bags and getting through customs that is more the issue than the length of time it takes to have your passport processed when you come in. There are some individuals who make it sound, or will make you believe, that it is the length of time spent at immigration. It is actually not true. When you get through to customs, that is an issue. But having said that, I also want to say this: that even I sometimes complain about the length of time it takes to get my bag out of customs. But you know, sir, I travel to first-world countries and quite often have to stand just as long or longer waiting for my bag. And the same individuals who complain - I see them sitting beside me and I do not hear them grumbling. But let them come back into Barbados, let them come back into the homeland and have to wait half an hour, 45 minutes for the bag, and they grumble and complain about how inefficient we are. But if they are going up to JFK and waiting at the carousel there for the bag, not a word out of them. They can stay up there for an hour and not a word, because they feel that they cannot say anything in New York. But when they come back home for half an hour, there is a lot of noise. But we get used to that. I listen to them, sir, and I recognise that some individuals are happier to complain.

I have been encouraged to say that when some people go into Tampa, they do not keep any noise. But I will not say that because I know that Tampa is actually a smaller airport and it is a friendly environment to travel through. So the point I make, sir, is that we are addressing the efficiency issues in terms of the Immigration Department. We are looking at our personnel issues, we are looking at our processes. We are actually spending some time on the whole issue in terms of training and the issue of customer service. They are not perfect. But I believe that much of what you hear negative about the Immigration Department - the good that they do far outweighs the negatives that you hear. And as you know, sir, one thing about Barbados, and in fact the Shanique Myrie matter illustrates

that most of all one about Barbados is that we are quick to cry down our own. We are very, very quick to cry down our own. We like nothing better than to tear down our own, sir. Nothing better. I mean, well, I was going to

mention something about yesterday's newspaper. I will leave that alone. I will tackle that some other time. But we like to cry our own too much, you know, and stuff. So I am satisfied, based on what I am seeing and what I am hearing, that the immigration department is going in the right direction. So this simple illustration, as simple as it is, I want us to take the time just to update Barbados, to update this parliament in terms of the work and the significant work, significant body of work, significant body of work that is being done by the immigration department and the challenges that they have.

There are two other issues that I would like to touch on - two other issues that are close to my heart. One is, sir, the Immigration Department is playing a crucial role, a crucial role in our response to the trafficking of persons. And they have been doing a significant amount of training because when individuals arrive at our ports of entry who are victims of trafficking, we want to be able to identify these individuals, we want to be able to provide the support for these individuals that is required, that we have internationally committed to. And therefore we are training our officers to identify signs where individuals could possibly be victims - and victims as opposed to how they were seen previously, how they were seen previously as persons who were infringing our laws and who should be deported as quickly as possible. But we now have a more victim-centred approach.

The officers are very keen - those officers that I have been exposed to are very keen to understand the importance of the work that we are doing in the trafficking of persons arena. And I want to publicly thank them for their continued support. But the work is not finished because we still need to spend some time on continuous training because as new officers arrive, we need to ensure that whoever is at work at any of our ports of entry, that where there are individuals who may be trafficked, that they can be identified and assisted. And certainly even our enforcement division, that if they go out into Barbados and identify individuals who could be victims of trafficking, that in fact their role is not to deport them for infringing our Immigration Act, but if they are victims, that we need to give them the support necessary to help them as opposed to simply deporting them. But I am satisfied, given the level of training that we have been undertaking over the last two years, that there is a significant change of attitude of immigration officers and that they have bought in to our commitment under a trafficking of persons regime.

The final matter that I wanted to address, sir - which I should have addressed early when I spoke about the Shanique Marie matter - is the whole issue, sir, of cameras. The whole issue, sir, of cameras. You know, sir, I cannot understand why there is some resistance to cameras at certain parts of Barbados, in particular certain areas in terms of airports of entry. Because if there is one lesson

that we should have learned from the Marie case, it is the fact that if we had cameras all across the airport, much of the allegations would have been proven to be not worth the paper that they were written on. But there has been some resistance in some quarters for cameras.

I want to encourage them - and this is not just immigration I am talking about, because there is also customs and other areas - I want to encourage them to see the technology as their friend, see the technology as there to protect them as opposed to inquire or as opposed to snoop to see if they are doing their jobs. And so therefore, I want again to use this opportunity to encourage us, encourage the unions, encourage the individuals at work in these sensitive areas not to be afraid to embrace the cameras in their particular areas because they are there also for their own protection, because no one can accuse you of doing X or Y or Z if it is untrue, when in fact the evidence will be there to protect you and stuff.

So, sir, I want to close by thanking the substantive Minister for giving me the opportunity to make the presentation of this small but important amendment to the Immigration Act of Barbados. And with those words I beg to move that this bill be read a second time.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for St. James South.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I rise to give full support to this bill before us, which is the main Immigration Act, to provide for indictable offences on the Act or regulations made under the Act. And in noting the contribution of the Attorney General, let me say that whilst the bill before us may not be large in its wording, it is indeed very significant, for it certainly brings to the fore the penalties that will be imposed or can be imposed upon those who contravene the law regarding immigration matters, but also helps us as a government to set the stage in terms of reforms to the Immigration Department, our immigration laws, and certainly as a Parliament to help wrap their minds around the merit of challenges of the Immigration Department, the role of the Immigration Department in the social, economic and political development of this country, and certainly to continue debate at this level in terms of the way forward for us as a country, with some specific emphasis on this particular department and its work.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to start my short contribution by reflecting upon the role of the Immigration Department, because far too often when the Immigration Department is referred to in this country in a public manner, it is often referred to in a very negative light. You hear little bits about the bad things that they have done or officers, etc. And because they are a public service department, they are normally not in a position to defend themselves. But I think

that those who comment about the Immigration Department from time to time ought first to reflect upon the role of that department and its importance in our country. Certainly its work relates to the enforcement of immigration and citizenship rules and laws. That is not a matter to be taken lightly because at the end of the day, having that status as a Barbadian or citizen or whatever is extremely important, not only for existence in this island, but certainly for those who need to go abroad.

Certainly there is always the decided role within the Immigration Department that speaks to its work in national security. And I don't think that this is a matter that is often given the level of prominence in discussions about immigration matters in this country that it ought to have. Because far too often the average person, when they think of immigration, thinks of a passport renewal, issuance of a passport or work permit, et cetera. But behind all of this lies the very important role of national security. And we don't have to wait until something happens around here to say that they should have done this or should have done that. The simple truth of the matter is that every day our immigration officers and all of those who work in the Immigration Department are performing a very important role in terms of national security, in terms of protecting our borders. And we only have to reflect on some of the foolishness that is happening in other jurisdictions today and some lapsed immigration policies that have resulted in great human turmoil, to certainly reflect upon the important role of the Immigration Department in national security.

There, of course, is also the role that they play in our national social, political and economic development. Certainly in the area of ensuring that those who are entitled to citizenship or any immigrant status rightfully get it, and certainly in terms of those who ought to come to Barbados to be employed or to engage in legitimate business activities, that they are afforded the appropriate permission or authority from the Immigration Department that allows them to conduct their affairs in an unfettered manner, hence certainly contributing to our economic development.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few specific issues that raise their head from time to time in respect of immigration matters in this country. And many of us as politicians hear them every day. We often hear about the ones who feel that they have had a rough time with the Immigration Department. We don't hear about the ones who had a good experience. We hear about the ones who say that they have been waiting from time immemorial for a response from the Immigration Department. We hear about those who complain that they are supposedly entitled to something from the Immigration Department and they haven't gotten it. Those are the complaints we as politicians get. We hardly ever hear anybody come to us and say that they have had a wonderful experience in the Immigration Department, that they got their papers processed within a

reasonable time frame. But we all hear the bad ones. And we certainly as leaders in this country have to be always mindful in our conversations with those who come before us, and to respect government departments as to the role of those departments and to ensure that there is fairness in what is being said and what is being done.

One of the issues oftentimes is the length of time it takes to process matters. And I certainly can say nothing but good about my experience in interacting with the Chief Immigration Officer and her staff. When these issues are brought to my attention, I can invariably say that the delay sometimes is caused because the applicant has not submitted all of the information required. And this is not only unique to the Immigration Department. There are many other departments in government where the departments are severely criticised. But when you check, you realise that the problem often is that the applicant has not furnished all of the information required. Now, where the applicant has furnished all of the information required and the office has not responded in a timely manner, then I cannot defend the office. Let us be fair about that. And that also happens from time to time. Files go missing, officers haven't attended to them diligently, etc. But I can say with all the evidence that I have had, oftentimes it is because the applicant has not furnished all of the information in the prescribed form required by the particular department.

And then there are also some service providers in this country who take fees for immigration matters and do not submit them to the Immigration Department on time or in the prescribed manner as well. But they are, as always, very quick to say it is the Immigration Department that is causing the delay. Now, when these things happen, I think the service providers ought to apologise, return the fees, and talk to the Immigration Department and get the work done diligently.

Sometimes individuals talk about the cost for the services provided by the Immigration Department as another hindrance. But you know, we complain about these things here in this country. We say, oh, you have to pay so much money for a passport or for an application for a document from the Immigration Department. But we never complain about the fees we have to pay the US Embassy to get a US visa or to apply for one, because there is no guarantee you can get it, and it is valid only for a few years. But we complain about fees that we have to pay to our own Immigration Department to process something that you feel you want or you feel a sense of entitlement to. And therefore, I think we also ought to be very, very fair in respect of these matters. And it crosses the whole gamut, whether it is for work permits, immigrant status, permanent residence, citizenship, whatever it is.

Mr. Speaker, let me say in respect of some of these matters too, because I think we have a duty to not just

seemingly always defend the Immigration Department, but more to explain to the public some of the work they do and the challenges they face. All of us as politicians from time to time encounter individuals who say, look, we are applying to the Immigration Department to get immigrant status because we married a Barbadian, and we have our own doubts too about that particular marriage. We have our own doubts, you know, but there is a feeling that the Immigration Department should not have any doubts about these arranged things. And then you want to put pressure and say, well, facilitate them. And then six months after the documents are issued, you hear about somebody bringing the rest of their family around here, etc. Mr. Speaker, we have to be fair and realise that there is a national security and a social development work aspect of the Immigration Department that has to be attended to, so we cannot bury our heads in the sand on these matters.

We also have to recognise that one of the challenges that have plagued the Immigration Department in recent times relate to regional and international treaties or arrangements that Barbados has entered into that naturally then lend themselves to additional workload in the Immigration Department without the commensurate staff. One of the things that certainly comes to mind in respect of this is the Caribbean Single Market and Economy - what people call the free movement of labour, skilled labour issues, etc. At least this is something we have signed on to. We haven't said - whether it be the government or the opposition - that no, we are going to pull back from anything. One thing I can say about Barbados is that once we have signed on to any regional arrangement, we are the ones that seek to follow to the letter of the law, unlike - I don't know that could be said for other jurisdictions. But one thing I can say about Barbados is that we are a very law-abiding country. So once we sign on to CSME, we seek to make these things work. And there has been a significant attempt by sizable numbers of individuals to come into Barbados as skilled nationals under the free movement of labour regime, et cetera. And I can safely say, in spite of the rumblings you hear from time to time, in excess of 90 per cent of those who applied and have submitted all the documents have been processed in a timely manner and have been approved.

And let me say, Mr. Speaker, that at every CARICOM meeting that I have attended or seen minutes of, Barbados is the one island that has been able to produce statistics in terms of the free movement of labour. And a lot of the other islands that complain - either through their governments or their own citizens - are not in a position to provide any evidence as to the number of individuals who have applied for CSME status in their own jurisdiction and the numbers who have been approved, et cetera. And that, to my mind, is a very serious weakness in the whole debate. Every meeting we go to, Barbados says, here is our evidence - the numbers that have applied, where they are

from, who have been approved, who have not been approved, etc. All of the others keep quiet because they cannot provide that information.

The sad thing - and it hurts me a lot as a Barbadian - is the number of Barbadians who sit here and criticise our own Immigration Department. You don't ever hear a Barbadian running to the media to talk about any bad experience they have had going into any airport in any other part of the Caribbean. But they are very quick to call the radio programmes, write letters to the editors and do whatever, and criticise their own Immigration Department. Here we like to talk bad about ourselves, but we never, ever publicly reflect on the bad experiences we have had in other parts of the region or other parts of the world. I am satisfied that with all the circumstances and challenges of our Immigration Department, they do provide an excellent service, and they do a very good job in terms of border control and national security, social development, et cetera. There will always be little pockets of concerns, little issues throughout the entire public sector in terms of length of time to respond to matters, ambiguity, et cetera. But in most instances, wherever they raise their head, we are seeking to address them.

One of the issues that have come to the fore recently, Mr. Speaker, is in relation to the international business and financial services sector, or perhaps I should more accurately say in relation to the Immigration Department and some concerns raised by that particular sector, part of which I have ministerial responsibility for. And I have always said that when service providers or applicants have concerns, you raise them in the right places and invariably they are addressed. We had received, in my office and certainly in the office of the Minister with day-to-day responsibility for immigration matters, some concerns regarding the special entry permit. And we convened a meeting with the stakeholders and discussed it and reached some agreement.

But let me say that in reflecting upon the role of the Immigration Department or the role of immigration policies in enhancing Barbados' social and economic development, this government took a position that we needed to find a mechanism to make it easier for those high net worth individuals who come to Barbados or have opted to make Barbados a second home, and also to be able to better facilitate those who have opted to invest in Barbados but may from time to time have challenges in the Immigration Department - who feel severely pressured to be trekking down into Bridgetown every 28 days to renew their visa or renew their stay here in Barbados beyond the 28 days. And we came up with the high net worth policy of what people call the special entry permit, or they use the term interchangeably. Even though there may be some differences from time to time, Mr. Speaker, I can safely say that while everything has not worked perfectly, the

evidence is there that the Immigration Department has actually processed and approved nearly all that have come before them over the last year or so. And of course this special entry permit regime would have been enunciated by the Minister of Finance in the 2012 and 2013 budgets, as I said earlier, as a way of helping to stimulate some activity and facilitating those potentially investing and wealthy individuals. And some of the issues that we have addressed in the last couple of weeks in discussing this matter include looking at the various categories, the length of stay and the fee payable - those over the age of 60 years to be granted indefinite status and a fee of \$10 000; 50 to 60 years, you can stay up to the age of 60, the fee of \$7 000; and of course other matters relating to level of investment and special skills as well.

Going forward, Mr. Speaker, I wish to stress a little bit here on this point because some people get the waters a little bit muddled - sometimes deliberately, sometimes not so deliberately. Barbados has not opted to go the route as some of our neighbours have done and get into the economic citizenship programme or passports for sale. We have opted to say let us make it a little bit easier for those high net worth individuals who ought to come here either to invest or to have second homes in Barbados. We are not in the business of selling passports, so we have clearly established a policy. We have also established procedures to be followed and attached the necessary fee to process and the fee payable for attaining what you seek to attain here. Barbados is not going in the route of economic citizenship and signing passports. I don't think we need to. Quite frankly, I don't think we should either. It certainly has come back to bite, and will continue to bite where it hurts most, some of those who opted to go that route. I think we have the opportunity to attract legitimate business and grow it out here, to welcome individuals who opt to invest here and those who opt to have second homes here, without saying to them here is your passport in exchange for a cheque. So we certainly, Mr. Speaker, will continue in the Ministry of International Business to work closely with the Immigration Department to make the processing of applications for special entry permits as seamless as possible. We continue to hear the concerns as they are raised from time to time. Quite frankly, many times they are easily addressed by a simple explanation as to the policy and the procedures. Because we must not assume that every service provider is aware of everything. And we have always said where you have doubt, let us consult the Immigration Department or the Ministry of Defence and Security with respect to responsibility for immigration. And at all times we have been able to sit around the table, unravel the challenges and find sustainable solutions.

It is a work in progress. Our immigration policies are not cast in stone. As circumstances change at the national and international level, as we sign on to treaties, as we engage in other rules and regulations and as we plot the

way forward for this country, we will have to make changes to them from time to time. But at the core of it all is the fact that our borders must be protected, that national security issues are paramount and that people get from an immigration and citizenship perspective whatever they are entitled to.

Mr. Speaker, as we deliberate on these issues confronting the Immigration Department we also have to recognise, apart from the ones mentioned before, that there are some real issues that the staff face on a day-to-day basis, because you really cannot ask them to do all the things that they have been asked to do and not ensure that they are adequately staffed or adequately resourced, both in human terms and financially. One of the issues that we see readily is the Immigration Department at the Grantley Adams Airport - our main point of entry into this country - particularly on the days and the hours when you have major flights in from major source markets: London, Canada or New York, around the afternoon time and into the evening. And it is not easy to say to the airline you need to shift the hours of your arrival and departure to make it easier - the airport is not going to do that. And I know the Immigration Department at the airport has, I believe, about 26 booths - we call them - that the passengers go to to be processed to enter Barbados. But I am told that there are probably an average of 17 staff members, which means that they must be faced with heavy overtime and some toll on a human being who has to work there in these departments.

And they are only human. We hear from time to time that you go to the immigration officer and he or she has a frown on their face, they look vexed at the whole world, with the weight of it on their shoulders, and they are grumpy because they probably had a bad hair day, whatever it is. Now I am not making excuses because you ought to be professional at all times in the discharge of your duties. But I am also seeing instances where individuals have been so rude to them, feeling that they have a right to be in this country and a right not to be asked any questions. And I wish to support the Attorney General on this point and say to Barbadians and visitors: our immigration officers have a right to ask you questions besides what you put on your forms. They are security officers as well and they have a right to ask you questions. Where are you staying? How are you going to be financed during your stay in Barbados? Who are you staying with? You know, we get asked the same questions when we enter other ports around the world. We don't grumble, we don't complain. We put up with them, we answer the questions, because if you don't answer you may very well be put on the next flight back to where you have come from.

Unfortunately, Barbadians perhaps hardly ever have the issues and they are law-abiding. But sometimes you get the impression, as you listen to others, that our immigration officers at the airport are turning around loads of people

and sending them out of the country. The evidence is there that less than 0.01 per cent of those who enter Barbados are actually denied entry - 0.01 per cent of those who come into this country are denied entry, and are done so for quite legitimate reasons. But you listen to others and you feel as though loads of people are being sent out. And sometimes we do not appreciate the fact that those officers are perhaps helping to keep a level of stability in this country by what they do there.

So Mr. Speaker, one of the issues of course that we have to address as the government is the human resource within the Immigration Department. I am told there is perhaps a need for some additional numbers, which I hope the Ministry of the Civil Service is working with them on. But given the importance of their work, I think we have to do all we can to help relieve the stress and the strain and the burden and ensure that they are adequately resourced. It is not just at the Grantley Adams Airport, but any one of us - and I, from

time to time go to the immigration department or the head office in Bridgetown by the wharf road there and from the time I was a kid going in that department, I never thought it was one of the places to celebrate in the public service for people to work. Let's be honest about it. Over the years, we've not always - we, meaning successive governments - have not always done the best at providing accommodation for public officers. And I certainly believe that the Immigration Department is one such department that has not been given, or been provided with, the best level of accommodation for the officers who are asked to work in there. It's not easy. You go there, you see the files packed up around the place, the walls peeling and all the issues there. But I can safely say, Mr. Speaker, that this Government, the Prime Minister who has responsibility for the Immigration Department, have agreed to relocate the Immigration Department to more comfortable surroundings. And there should hopefully, over the next couple of months, be a move. I'm advised that financing has been found to renovate an appropriate building in the Bridgetown area to accommodate them. The Government certainly has listened to the concerns. I know it has been a work in progress for a very, very long time, and I must commend the department and the officers for having to put up with what they've had to over the last couple of years. But I assure them that some measure of relief is on its way as we have secured financing to relocate them to another building to provide them with more comfortable accommodation.

One of the other issues that they face, I believe, relates to information technology and the use of it - or the lack of use of it - in that department. And I say that is not peculiar to the Immigration Department because I'm still very concerned that in 2015 we have not deployed ICT within the public service at the rate and at the level and

degree that is necessary to get the level of efficiencies out of our public sector that we ought to be getting in 2015. An immigration department, as one that has to operate in real time with real-time information, must be pushed headlong into 2016 with information technology, ICT. Not just the hardware, because the computer and the desktop could be a piece of decoration, but also the software that would drive the processes and the interconnectivity between the various departments, both from Bridgetown and all the various points of entry into Barbados, as well as in the international arena, that allows them to capture information, archive it and retrieve it in a timely manner to help boost efficiency, customer satisfaction and staff satisfaction as well in moving the whole system forward. I think, Mr. Speaker, that these issues are rarely addressed. The Government certainly appreciates that they are very critical to our work in Barbados and in the Immigration Department as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me just simply summarise a few points quickly. One, that the matter before us today speaks to the increase in penalties for those who will contravene our immigration laws. It also helps us to set the stage for some regulations that are coming down the line in respect of the Immigration Department as we seek to improve upon the efficiencies in that department. But Barbadians must never lose sight of the importance of the Immigration Department. And I cannot stress that enough. We always hear or see in the public domain the negative things which, in many instances, are unfair. But we never hear about the positive things in the Immigration Department. And working there, we cannot underscore the importance of national security therein. The Attorney General cited or reflected briefly on the Shinique Mary case, which is above my pay grade, quite frankly, to comment on. But in his comments he made some very solid points and gave solid advice to immigration officers. You have a job to do to protect all borders and no judge or judges sitting, or anybody sitting here, there or anywhere, must take that responsibility away from our Immigration Department or immigration officers.

I travel around the world periodically and have been for many, many years. I have been travelling on a diplomatic passport issued by the Government of Barbados for the last 21 years, since 1994, when I became entitled to one as an officer working abroad. And with that or without it, I've always been asked: how long do you intend to stay? Even though I may always have a return ticket - who are you staying with? How are you going to be able to finance your stay in this country? And I've always had to answer. But there are those who want people to believe that you can get on an American Airlines flight or whoever, come into Barbados, and nobody at our airport can ask you those questions - that, to my mind, would be fundamentally wrong. And those who complain need to realise that when we leave here and go to other people's islands, we are asked the same things.

The other point that I am going to make in relation to this - and I've said it in here before, I said it two weeks ago and I'm going to say it again - doesn't have anything really much to do with the Immigration Department, but it just came to my mind when I spoke a few minutes ago. I talked about Barbados' commitment to regional treaties and regional agreements, and we stick very, very steadfast to them. And the one that we stuck very steadfast to is the Caribbean Court of Justice. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to wrap up briefly on this point because it is, to my mind, as a Barbadian, as a politician, a very serious matter. I will speak about it here, there or anywhere.

In, I believe, 1970, at the 6th Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, the Jamaican delegation moved a motion to establish what we now call the Caribbean Court of Appeal - the Final Court of Appeal in the region. In 1989, the Heads in the region agreed to its establishment. In 1999, Trinidad agreed to house the Caribbean Court of Justice. And on the February 14, 2001 - Valentine's Day 2001 - the Honourable Member for St. Peter, with all the love in his heart, he and the Honourable Member and most of the CARICOM leaders at that time signed on to the CCJ. On August 18, 2004, I believe, the first President of the CCJ was put in office. And on April 16, 2005, the Caribbean Court of Justice was inaugurated in Port of Spain. We are talking about 10 years ago. Only four - I think there are only four CARICOM countries that have the Caribbean Court of Justice as the final court for them. And not Trinidad - not Trinidad, that hosts them, that houses them.

Now, one of the reasons why we said we would go that route is that we did not want people in London, so far away from us, who don't look like us, having the final say in what goes on down here. And today, 10 years after the CCJ has been established and Barbados being the first one to sign on, paying all the dues, you cannot get one Barbadian judge sitting on the Caribbean Court of Justice. I say, Mr. Speaker, something is fundamentally wrong with that. And there are those who sit in lofty positions in this country who I can hear this morning saying that should not be an issue, that the CCJ is there for everybody, that we shall not make nationality an issue. Two Barbadians recently applied for a position as judge in the CCJ and not one was successful. Another Trinidadian got through. Mr. Speaker, I feel very, very passionate about this issue. I am very much a regionalist. I've always said that if I came into politics somewhat fiercely independent of thought - not of wealth, but of thought - it was because of the experiences I had as a youngster going to school in Antigua and in Guyana, a little work in St. Vincent, a girlfriend in Trinidad and one in Grenada. Not the same thing. [Laughter.] But I certainly had some experiences throughout the region. And I'm not saying for any moment, let us not continue to support what we signed on to. But I really cannot help saying that I am deeply troubled by the absence of

Barbadians on the Caribbean Court of Justice and by the institution being administered by citizens of countries who have refused and find all kinds of excuses not to have the CCJ as a final court of appeal. And I think this is a matter that we have to be very frank about in this country. There are those who will always talk about, oh, you're being nationalistic and you're not committed to regional integration - all of that - when it suits them fine. They say that once they are getting all the largesse and all the top picks.

And I'm going to say this again, Mr. Speaker, because it bears relation to immigration matters one way or the other. I have been a critic of the judicial system in Barbados. I've always been very, very clear not to comment on any individual officer of the court. But I've always been quick to say that we have some deficiencies in our system. And I commend the Prime Minister, the former Attorney General, and the current Attorney General, and all of them for the valiant effort they're making in reforms to make it more efficient. There are some good things happening in that sector, and I'm sure the improvements will be seen shortly. But I am satisfied that we have bright Barbadians, competent Barbadians, who have served on benches across the region, who today could be serving on the Caribbean Court of Justice. But for whatever reason, we cannot find it fit to get one there. And whether it's in Parliament or outside the Parliament, I will express my views - this matter troubles me immensely.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me say that we as a people cannot discount the importance of our Immigration Department. Yes, everything does not always go perfectly. We recognise the challenges they face - human resources and accommodation. Are we addressing them? Most importantly, we are giving them the policy space to do what they have to do. We are giving them clarity as to the rules and regulations to ensure that those who come before them clearly understand what they are entitled to and how things are done, and that the officers who have to make decisions do so in a manner knowing full well that the policies, rules and regulations and laws are there to buttress and support whatever decisions they take going forward. And I'm satisfied that at the end of the day we are going to have an Immigration Department that continues to make us proud. We're going to ensure that our borders are protected, that our citizens and those who ought to be visitors here or immigrants of whatever status they have can exist in harmony in this society. With those words, I'm obliged to you, Mr. Speaker, and I support the Bill.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the sitting be suspended for lunch until 2.15 this afternoon.

The question that the House be suspended until 2.15 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. Good afternoon, Honourable Members. When the suspension was taken, we were on Government Business Order Number Nine. And to that we shall now return. Yes, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I too rise to speak on this Bill and to say from the outset that I am fully in support of the operation of the Immigration Department. I personally and otherwise believe that is one of the most important departments, especially as it relates to security. And I want to support the view of the Attorney General when he stated that the operations of the Immigration Department must be taken seriously and that persons who want to make pronouncements on the Immigration Department must take into consideration the importance of the job and the security aspect of what they are doing.

I too must raise concern about the public utterances that I have heard, especially coming out of the famous case that we had in Barbados. And I was appalled when I heard some of the people of Barbados criticising the work of the Immigration Department. And I sometimes believe that as politicians we must appreciate the position that we sit in and that we should not get involved in cheap talk and political talk just because we find ourselves in opposition at the time. Because the decision of today will be your decision tomorrow. And I want to make the point that they need our support. And I do not believe that politicians should undermine - either undermine the police force, the defence force, the Immigration Department or Customs. I believe that we have some of the best officers in the world. And those of us who travel will know that sometimes the complaints that we hear going to those officers are not deserving.

We, even in senior positions in Government when we travel, are not devoid of the type of treatment that we hear people speaking of as it relates to our Immigration Department - and sometimes worse. It is not a doubt that sometimes I really would like to ask people to come and join us, especially when we travel to the UK and so on, and see that we as Ministers sometimes have to go through the same treatment as ordinary citizens. Not that we are asking for any special privileges, but what we are saying is that we do not belly it or we do not quarrel about it. But we understand that they have their jobs to do and we subject ourselves to them. So I do not see why other people come into Barbados believing that they should not be subjected to certain questions, because the people are doing their jobs

and they are professionals. And we have to understand that we are living in a world where you can expect anything to happen.

It is true that when we travel to the United States the treatment is quite different, but at the same time we have to understand that the immigration officers have a job to do and we have to subject ourselves to them. And we should not worry - a certain officer who sits at the table will tell you that when we used to travel on CPA business, he and I always used to laugh because I have always made the point that they have a job to do. When they ask me questions, I answer. And I have always said to them that one of the things that we have to be very careful of is that we do not go to other countries and give them the impression that their country is better than ours. And every time the question was asked of me how much time I needed, I have always answered the same amount of time that is documented. And he always used to ask me why it is that I have always answered in that manner. And I said to him, too often we go to other people's countries and we give them the impression that their country is better than ours. And we give the impression that we want to run from our country and we do not want to stay in our country and we want to go elsewhere. I beg to differ, because I believe that Barbados is the best country in the world and our officers are also the best officers in the world.

I also want to make the point - and this is where, as I was telling the Honourable Member for St. Peter this morning, this is where he and I differ as it relates to the CARICOM matter. Because as far back as in the 1990s, I have always made the point that if the Caribbean is to move forward - and this is just my personal view - we need to stop focusing so much on free movement of people and the wholesale aspect of it, and focus more on free movement of capital within the CARICOM region. For the simple reason that before we can talk about free movement of people, we must first put in place something to move to. And I think that we are not in a position as it stands right now. I have said this over and over and I will continue to make the point that until we build up the economies of the other CARICOM countries, it does not make sense for us to continue to focus on free movement of people. But we need to focus on moving capital where there are projects that have the capacity to develop the country and where we can have a buy-in.

And I have always made the point that if Guyana is strong in agricultural produce, then what we need to do is set up the necessary capital to push them forward and all the other CARICOM countries have a buy-in - likewise Barbados with tourism, and so on likewise. And once we have built the economies and put them on a standing, then we can talk about movement of people. Because then you have choice. If you do not do that, then you will find a situation where two countries will be targeted and it does

not make sense for everybody to move to these two countries. And then we create a vacuum where other people who would not have worked or who would not have healthcare come in anyway and develop and take the opportunities being offered in these countries. And a good example of that - we saw it with Guyana, where instead of us moving capital to the resources of Guyana, some countries encouraged the people to move from Guyana to Barbados, leaving the natural resources there. And the Brazilians and Chinese and everybody else moving in and capitalising on things that we should have moved capital to help build the CARICOM region.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I am in total support of this amendment. And I also want to say, sir, that it is rather interesting - when I have followed the particular case that was referred to this morning - that the decision, in my opinion, was done to attract a particular country to join the CCJ. If that is the decision, I am still awaiting the final judgment on it because I have seen no progress. What I can tell you, sir, is that when a certain Trinidadian left Trinidad and went to Jamaica, a decision was made and I did not hear any judgment from the CCJ or anybody putting a case before the CCJ when a man was placed on a plane paid for by the Government of Jamaica and sent back to Trinidad. Neither have I seen a case where on a daily basis when people leave Jamaica and go to Trinidad they are kicked out. I have not seen any cases going to the CCJ. But when we have a particular case and the evidence on the ground - and I tend sometimes to go on the evidence on the ground - the evidence has substantiated that this treatment, as they claim, and the treatment of judging the lady - I have not got evidence to the contrary. And because I believe the evidence, not only evidence from the immigration officers but the good evidence that I got on the ground, it was rather interesting, sir, that the evidence I got on the ground that was all across Barbados was not presented.

And I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that one has to be very careful how we allow these things to occur and how we allow people to continue to malign Barbados. And I have always made a point in this House that as we deal with CARICOM, they need also to deal with us. When I was Ambassador at CARICOM we paid everything, we supported everything. But whenever it comes to Barbados we do not see the same thing occurring. And I have always made the point it is not fair for Barbados to pay its dues and then to get a kick. We were the first people to agree to the CCJ. But what have we received from the CCJ? A judgment that people of Barbados have questioned. When we put people up to be judges we are told we are not good enough to have people on the CCJ. When it comes to paying money though, we must be forced to pay the money.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that we are not second-class citizens. If our money is good enough for the CCJ,

our workers have got to be good enough for the CCJ too. And it is time that somebody tells them where to get off. Because if we have to vote more money, it is going to be difficult for us to ask our people in Barbados to agree to this. Because if the public are not happy then the politicians cannot be happy - and especially if the politicians agree with the public.

So Mr. Speaker, with those few words I want to let it be known that I am in total support of the Immigration Department. They have a job to do and people have to understand that what I have seen at the Grantley Adams International Airport is as professional as what I have seen in other countries. They come here and because they measure us by our land mass and not by our total mass they believe that we are too small to be significant. But it is not the size of our land mass - it is what we stand for and what we will support. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I am in total support of the Immigration Department and I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join in this debate and to lend my support to the resolution - the bill before this House to amend the Immigration Act 2015. And the Honourable Attorney General in presenting this debate this morning put in perspective what the overall objective of this exercise was. It was basically, sir, to bring in line the penalty or the penalties for persons who contravene the Immigration Act, who commit an offence under this Act. Bearing in mind the move towards biometric identification and other means of non-tampering identification which is part of the development of the world today, and to basically increase the penalty. As he said, sir, it is an amendment to section 30 which seeks to increase the penalty for a violation - an offence under this Act or Regulations - to, on summary conviction, a fine of \$5 000 or to imprisonment for 12 months, moving it from that on conviction on indictment to a fine of \$25 000 or imprisonment for five years.

So, Mr. Speaker, sir, it basically speaks to the fact that we have to recognise that our border security is extremely important in today's world. And we see it acted out on our televisions every evening or all during the day as we see what is happening in the world. Europe today is on constant watch for all kinds of threats, both internal and external. And I dare say, sir, that we in the Caribbean, Barbados, are not exempt from this kind of scrutiny.

And, sir, I want to certainly - in the Ministry of Health our experience only recently, over the last six months or so, has been one in which we have enjoyed the international relationship that we have in being able to identify in good time persons who may have been travelling or who may have been exposed to countries in

Central Africa which were and still are suffering from the high incidence of Ebola virus disease. And only last week, the Chief Medical Officer of Barbados made the announcement that we again had two persons under some surveillance - careful surveillance and measured surveillance - internationally accepted protocols which will make sure that persons with a particular travel history had the necessary level of monitoring so as to keep Barbados safe.

And, sir, that is the point in our preparation, in our readiness, in our continued updating of our management of this disease. For instance, we have to be constantly in touch with the international organisations like the Centre for Disease Control and the WHO, World Health Organization, who help to provide us with information on worldwide travellers. They say the world is an island today. We can wake up in Sydney, Australia, and very easily go to bed in Barbados by the time evening has set. And this is the reality - within 12 to 24 hours, we can easily circumvent the entire globe. So, sir, there is a challenge.

The other point being made is the one where it is perceived that this kind of scrutiny sometimes makes people feel not wanted. And this is understood. And, you know, members have spoken to the fact that when you enter international countries like the United States and Britain, for instance, and indeed Canada, the questions are there. And the officers, the immigration officers, are carrying out their jobs. And indeed, sometimes you wonder why they are not really looking you straight in the face. But they do not need to look you in the face, sir, because all your information is there in front of them on their screens. And this is where we have reached. So, more or less, what they are doing most of the time is checking to see what you say, the answers you give, if those answers are in keeping with the information or the record which they have of you. And that is why they are. A member who just sat down said he could enjoy such an easy entry into ports in the United States because his information was always consistent. So there was no reason to cause any kind of interruption in his travel plans.

And, sir, in the Caribbean alike, we obviously have to be wary and to be careful that we too monitor the people who move between our borders, whether it be because of incidents of illegal entry into the country, whether because of seeking work. But at the same time, there are certain arrangements which must be in place, must be put in place if we are going to go about that exercise. And these arrangements are carefully published in the records of all of our countries so that citizens seeking to travel from Guyana to Barbados, from Barbados to Guyana or Trinidad or Jamaica or Antigua have certain protocols which we know exist and which have to be adhered to.

Other members have made the point that Barbados has tried certainly to be able to conform with the CARICOM Agreement with respect to movement of skilled labour throughout the region. And indeed, sometimes we feel maybe that more people come to Barbados seeking work than necessarily Barbadians get the opportunity to go over into other countries in the Caribbean to take advantage of the opportunities there. But these things sometimes appear that way to us. But for instance, this afternoon, I am sure there are many Barbadians who are enjoying the fact that they can go to Trinidad or be in Trinidad this afternoon and enjoy the opportunity to work as musicians, as producers, helping to create that very joyous carnival atmosphere which is actually winding down as we speak, sir.

So we have to take the bitter with the sweet. And when opportunities open in a country, we have to bear in mind that everyone is going to focus - especially those who are in need of that employment - will focus on moving to that area where there seems to be the greatest opportunity. Indeed, sir, Barbados, too, is recognised, in spite of the kind of figures which are sometimes touted, especially by the Honourable Members on the other side. We are recognised as one of the leading tourism destinations in the Caribbean. Our numbers may not be as great as Bahamas or Jamaica in terms of numbers, but certainly within the southern Caribbean region, Barbados remains a hub. And that is an important statement. Barbados remains a hub for international travel in that anyone coming into St. Vincent or St. Lucia, indeed sometimes Trinidad or any of the other Caribbean islands, tend to have to make a first stop in Barbados, especially from the United Kingdom and Canada. Increasingly, there are direct flights into these islands too. But we still boast the opportunity to become a hub for this kind of international travel.

The Honourable Minister of Tourism constantly speaks to the fact that we are building our cruise tourism industry, which sees sometimes as many as 3 000 persons coming into our country and moving through our airport to our seaport. And at the same time moving that same number of persons leaving our seaport, moving to our airport, sometimes with very, very short stops on land, actually on the ground in Barbados. But at the same time, these people have to be processed. These people have to be processed to the extent that we know all of the travel is legitimate and that the care has to be taken that there is no threat to the security of our country.

I referred to that question earlier. The fact that a lot of this work has to be done so as to maintain the security of our borders. Remember that people who practise these acts of terror always look for the weakest links through which to pass their information, to pass their people, or to pass whatever else will make it convenient for them to carry out their exercises - so that this becomes very, very important.

And sometimes, as I said, our immigration department or officers come under a heavy hammer by some members of the public who may have had a bad experience. But as has been said before, very seldom do we hear stories or any kind of reports of the many occasions - and there must be thousands of them - where everything goes beautifully, they have their arrangements as planned, et cetera.

I do not think that the Government of Barbados or our immigration department or anybody associated with our travel arrangements, be it tourists, Tourist Board, et cetera, are necessarily comfortable with everything that happens. We always need to go about making improvements to the way we do things to make life more comfortable - yes, more comfortable - for those who want to take advantage of the opportunities we offer. But at the same time, we have to recognise that there are limits to which you can surrender the sovereignty of one's country. So we have to bear these things in mind. And truth be told, many times when we talk to these persons who feel that they are probably being hard done or put under greater pressure or being asked to wait a while, many times they will relate that if they attempted to do what they attempted to do in Barbados in their country, it would not have been any easier. As a matter of fact, on most occasions it would have been maybe twice or three times as difficult.

There are regulations to be followed, especially - and whether - but especially if you are a skilled person, you need to recognise that in Barbados and in most countries, most developed countries now, there are bodies who deal with the question of accreditation, for instance. So if you come to a country and say you are a dentist and you want to reside and work in Barbados because you are a dentist and you are comfortable that you can build a business, well, obviously then our immigration people are going to need some kind of certification that you have met the standards - not necessarily in your country, but the standards that are required by the accreditation boards in Barbados. We get many questions asked in the Ministry of Health of the Medical Council, for instance, for doctors who want to practise certain specialties in Barbados. So obviously, the Council then has to task itself with going through the paperwork, the documentation, the credits which these professionals bring and making sure that these credits are acceptable under the arrangements of the Barbados Medical Council, which, indeed, in large measure mirror the arrangements of the Caribbean Medical Council. So we need to bear these things in mind. And that applies, Mr. Speaker, for most professions.

So sometimes again, it will take a little time. It will take a little time for these documents to be exchanged. Sometimes they come from countries far away and it is sometimes almost impossible to get back to the original documentation. And from time to time, one has to swear affidavits, et cetera, before this process is completed. But in

large measure, I think that the Immigration Department, the Customs Department of Barbados, and those who have the responsibility for carrying out these activities have been able to satisfy the needs of these people who come to Barbados. And they are largely very comfortable. Anytime that, of course, there is a question which may need special attention, there is access - there are appeals that can be made either formally to the Minister or to the department or through counsel to make sure that the measures are being taken care of. And more arrangements are being made for special entry permits to be issued so that even as we await the documentation, the clarification of the documentation, one is not threatened by expulsion or whatever. You may not be able to practise in the particular area or earn money in the particular area that you are seeking to - which is fair enough - but at the same time, you can be assured of our attention and certainly, as far as I am aware, any cases that have been brought to our attention, we have worked with the agencies in Barbados - and I choose my words carefully - we work with our regulators to make sure that everyone is satisfied that the requirements of the department, the requirements of the Government of Barbados, the rules of the country Barbados are being dealt with.

And, sir, the statistics will reveal that increasingly this is being seen. A cursory glance at the arrivals and departures in Barbados, for instance, for the Caribbean, demonstrates that there is not a very large imbalance by way of persons entering Barbados from a particular country and leaving Barbados for a particular country. It tends to speak to the fact that there is a level of equity being exercised. Yes, we all know that there are a number of persons from Guyana, for instance, who come to Barbados to work in our agricultural areas. There is nothing wrong with that. Once they process the documentation correctly, they will be given the permission to stay and they can live and work in Barbados for the periods that are extended to them. Similarly, in construction, the same thing applies. Many of the arrangements we have made in the past with agents like the Chinese Government, for instance, has been accompanied by large numbers of people from China coming here and assisting in the construction. And we can look around Barbados - many of our buildings in the last 20, 25 years which has been part of not only Chinese direct funding arrangements, but also the introduction of foreign Chinese labour. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with this as we continue to access the kind of opportunities that we want to take advantage of.

Mr. Speaker, at least one presenter this morning spoke to the question of the conditions of our workers in the immigration department. This is important and we should not go away from this debate without making reference to the fact that the agreement has been reached for the development or the redevelopment or the continued development of the BTI Kara Park at Cheapside so as to be able to accommodate the immigration department, a

department which presently exists in a building which constantly is under attack for its conditions. And only as recently as last Thursday, Friday, the entire discussion about the condition of some of our buildings has come under the limelight. And this weekend alone, I had a short conversation with one of the major suppliers of air conditioning equipment

in Barbados. And I made the point that I am concerned at the increasing reporting of what has been - we've gotten to know as sick buildings. And the truth is, as our discussion developed, they made the point to me that when in construction, for instance, or in redevelopment, you make a presentation to a developer about the kind of equipment and the kind of money or investment or the extra investment that would be required not only to cool the building, but to provide the kind of fresh air exchange and intake and expelling more or less foul air, the kind of equipment that we require to clean the air as it enters the building, the kind of money that would have to be spent is sometimes seen as prohibitive.

I think, though, the lesson that we are beginning to learn in Barbados is that we need to spend that money up front. We need to include cooling our buildings to make sure that there is a balance of fresh air uptake or intake to allow that building to remain healthy for a long, long time. And one is very, very concerned that some of our newer buildings can already be being earmarked for being what we call, as I said, sick buildings. So it is important that we move to put in place the new development at Cheapside for the immigration department, which will see them move out of a building which has been indicated before is a very old building which really does not fit the purpose for which it is being asked to serve today. And I want to commend the workers, of course, of that department for their patience as we reach this solution. But I certainly want to flag the fact that as a government, we will make sure that wherever possible, this question of air quality becomes a priority in our consideration.

Even in this honourable chamber, sir, from time to time, we have had persons, members who have said that they have had challenges in the atmosphere. I know a lot of money and time has already been spent on this facility. I am aware of that. But at the same time, we need to renew these activities and make sure that we are getting the very best service that we can for the money we spend. And indeed, sir, that we allocate the kind of money that is required to make sure that this air quality is of the highest quality at all times.

So, sir, we have to be rounded. When we look at the situation with respect to immigration, when we look at the situation with respect to the conditions under which they are asked to work, and we look at the situation in respect to the tasks they have to do. Certainly, sir, as I have

experience at the Grantley Adams Airport, I do not use the seaport very often, sir. Most of the time I go to sea, it is just to swim and to return. So I do not require any special entry arrangements. But at the airport, certainly, I have had nothing but a satisfactory experience. I am not talking about the treatment meted out to us as ministers of government, but I am talking about citizens of Barbados. And I think that once we remember that these privileges are privileges which should be restricted to our terms and the work we are asked to do, we really need to recognise the kind of challenges the thousands and thousands of people who these ladies and gentlemen who work for immigration have to encounter on a daily basis.

And that brings us to the question, sir, of training - that brings us to the very important question of training - in that because of the kind nature of the job, an officer can be satisfied in a given position. On an afternoon around this time, for instance, Grantley Adams Airport will be fully crowded. Our flights from London, our flights from the United States and Canada will be on the ground. And we will have well nigh 2 000 or more passengers using that facility for the next two, three, four hours. And we need to understand, not only is the passenger tired and frustrated having travelled for long distances, but so too are our immigration officers who have been going all day and who have to concentrate on their work. Because remember, each person coming to that wicket or that officer is a person whose circumstances they have to carefully study and make sure they are making the correct decision.

And I like to reference them because they are an important cog in the wheel too, because it is the whole question of our health - people. We have to have a constant vigilance on the conditions of persons entering our country so as to make sure there is no threat. And if the immigration officer is of the view that someone is not well, not looking well, or has any reason at all to be concerned, as I referenced earlier, because in looking at their travel history, for instance, there is reason to alert the authorities because they may be coming from a country where there is a contagious disease outbreak. It does not have to be, sir. It does not have to be Ebola. It does not have to be Central Africa. It could be measles from the United States. We are getting a lot of incidents of measles. It could be malaria. It could be any one of these diseases which are, as they say, reportable, which they need to notify.

So there are lots of things. The point I am trying to make, sir, is there are lots of things that these officers have to be thinking of and to be aware of. It is not only about how long are you allowed to stay in the country, whether it is six weeks or six months, whether you are allowed to reside and work. But there are all these other things which every officer has to take every passenger through that are extremely important to the security, the overall security of our country. And that is why the training is important. And

I believe that the department must take every opportunity available to make sure that the staff are trained and retrained, not only in the details of their job and the things they look for, like I said, but also in handling people, in the management of themselves, and their manner so as to retain that calm that is so important, to give the very best image of our country.

Remember also, sir, that the encounter with our immigration officer is often and more than likely the first encounter that any passenger has with a Barbadian. And the impression that will be created of our island, of our country, will depend so much on what kind of experience this passenger has. So this is a vitally important message that we must send. We must be on the side, therefore, of these important workers, the immigration officers, at the Grantley Adams Airport and at the Deepwater Harbour, as it is called. We have to be on their side. We have to be supportive of them. And at the same time, explaining and training them all the time in terms of what we expect, how important their job is. And as I said before, I think that in large measure, we are winning that battle. Or we have won that battle.

I do not want to give the impression to anyone in Barbados who may be awaiting documentation and clarification of their status that there is any kind of acceptance of negligence or slowness or delays. It is in no way my intention, sir, to give that impression whatsoever. And I can only urge that persons who have these kind of queries make sure they raise them to the highest level that they can - to the highest level of the Chief Immigration Officer or her senior officers - to make sure that their matters are dealt with. And it is, as I said, my experience that these matters will be handled.

So, sir, I think it is an important debate that we are having this morning, this afternoon, and that the issues that are being raised must be ventilated in Barbados for all to share. I think that Barbados, as has been hinted, has in large measure done its bit in terms of its neighbourliness and its friendliness towards our neighbours. But at the same time, we have experienced good relations with our neighbours, too. I have had nothing but pleasant relationships - anytime I have been to Trinidad, Grenada, St. Lucia, there has been no problem. And I think that this is a very, very important consideration. We must remain friendly. We must remain neighbourly. We must look after each other. And we must be able to share information that is vital to the security of ourselves and, by extension, sir, of our region.

So, Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to go on record as supporting this amendment, this bill, and to wish the managers and the officers of the immigration department continued success in what is a very difficult and challenging work and a very important work as we continue to build out Barbados as one of the more attractive

destinations in our region. And we recognise the importance of investment and growth in Barbados and being able to attract these investors from overseas and to attract our much-valued tourists to our island. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to you.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. My apologies for standing before I was recognised. I wanted to just make a brief contribution to the debate on this simple, very important piece of legislation before the House. Of course, I come to this debate not entirely unfamiliar with the challenges of the Immigration Department. Having myself worked - not in the environment, immigration - having myself worked for some period, a brief period, as an immigration officer. In fact, I shared quarters with the now Clerk of Parliament who is sitting with a very broad smile on his face. We had some very interesting and wonderful days at the Immigration Department working as two young public officers in the service of the Crown.

And of course, immigration services as provided across many jurisdictions - all jurisdictions of national states - at times can be a controversial business, at times can be a contentious business, but at all times can be considered to be an absolutely essential service to the functioning of any society, whether that society is independent, governing its own affairs, or even if it is under the jurisdiction and administration of another, as in the case of a colony or protectorate or department or whatever the case may be. And therefore, when we come to speak about immigration policy, immigration legislation, immigration administration, immigration services as delivered across various points in the country, whether at the borders or internally at the central office, it is a matter for which we should all pay very close attention and take cognizance of the import of what we are dealing with.

The immigration service's first responsibility, of course, is to ensure that it protects the borders and beyond the borders, because what comes in usually affects what happens in the country and, of course, usually what comes out, what happens internally. So it is usually housed within the context of looking to ensure that at first stop the interests of the country in which those services are being provided for are served appropriately - to protect the citizens of the country and the installations and property and so forth and so on that can be gathered within the geographic space that it has the responsibility for administering. And therefore it is never an easy task, because one needs to be able to know and understand and appreciate who wants to come in, as the policy of the government is to allow people to come in both in pursuit of pleasure or leisure and in pursuit of business, to help the

country economically or otherwise, to be able to achieve its socioeconomic and developmental objectives.

And that is the role of the Immigration Service - to make sure that those who are coming in, as well as those who may have reason to go out, can do so with relative ease and comfort, but within the context of a properly detailed policy backed by the appropriate legislation and administered in the most efficacious way that will permit for the stability and, of course, as I said, the development of the country. And therefore, for whatever reason - and members of the House have already reflected on this - for whatever reason people may want to have contestations with both immigration policy and immigration administration and immigration service, it is essential that those persons be able to seize themselves of the very serious responsibility of an immigration service in protecting the well-being and interests of any jurisdiction. And of course, Barbados, as we are discussing it here, is no exception.

And so I come to this debate having been able to work with that department and have a better and fair understanding. And I say fair, Madam Deputy Speaker, a fairer understanding. Because I sometimes believe - whether it is my own conjecture or whether in fact it is based on empirical evidence, of which I have none, so basically I can say it is a conjecture - but it would seem to come to mind that persons who have not applied sufficient study or consideration to what immigration services and immigration officers and immigration policy and administration is all about can get the mistaken impression that immigration, as we call it, has a problem with people traversing, coming in, entering or exiting a particular jurisdiction. And I have heard that discussion on many, many occasions. And it can become very contentious because there is a belief among people, even within the context of agreements which we may sign or be part of, that there is a natural right for people to enter and egress a country as they may feel like doing. And that myth must be exploded. There really is no natural right for anybody to enter and exit a country as they so please. Those privileges - and they are privileges - are granted within the context of policy and what the country itself wants to achieve utilising its immigration policy.

Remember I said, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is the first responsibility of the immigration services to control, protect, enhance and ensure that stability exists at the borders of a country. Because, you know, a country is like the human body or any other vessel - whatever you allow to go into it, if it is not all wholesome and good, then you could rest assured that what you get out may not all be wholesome and good. Precisely. May not all be wholesome and good. So that is the foremost responsibility. And if you give somebody that responsibility and you put them in the context within which they are to operate, one cannot then

expect that when persons are executing that responsibility they are to do it to your particular liking. That is not to say that they are to do it with blatant disregard for your feelings, your ambitions, or even your rights. But they have to do it with a level of conscientiousness - not only to the ambitions and desires and wishes of the persons who may want to enter into our country or for that matter leave, but to do so with the understanding that immigration has a responsibility first and foremost to protect the country. And when you look at that, then you will get - if you take it in that way - then you will get a fair understanding of why they function the way they do.

I was called to make a comment only recently. And I know, and people know this as a fact, there is a certain culture - they call it that - that you find with all immigration services. People call it a culture. I may even call it that myself. But at the end of the day, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a standard. It is not just a culture, it is a standard that people have been set within the context of the national immigration policy to ensure that the country is protected and that its interests are not usurped or compromised by those who may come in and those who may go out back and forth as they are for whatever purpose. And therefore, that is why, regardless of whichever jurisdiction you go to, immigration services all tend to look and behave the same. It is not that they all have this conspiratorial mind and that they all want to - they are all ruffians, as people believe they are, and that they behave badly and they do not like people and they want to ill-treat you and all of that. That is not the truth. I am not saying there are not one or two bad apples. There are always bad apples in any bunch. But the context within which they operate brings them to a space where in the execution of their responsibilities, there is only one way in which they can do it. And we know this.

So I heard honourable members speak. I believe it was the Honourable Attorney General who said that if you are coming into somebody's country, or even if I am coming back into my own country, there are certain things you have got to do. For some countries - the majority of them, a few have been abolishing it now - you have to fill out a form. You have to fill out an immigration form. You know, people do not like to fill out forms. They have some that cannot fill them out either. But there are a lot of people who do not like to fill out forms and believe that it is their right to put false information on forms. And it just goes to show how easily incorrect information given to either immigration or customs can cause problems.

We only recently, Madam Deputy Speaker, had a major outbreak of Ebola in some African countries, and it spread to a couple of Western industrialised economies - the United States, the UK and so forth. And in one of those cases, at least one of the persons who ended up having to be quarantined and I believe eventually passed away from

the dreaded disease did not properly declare on the immigration form where he or she had travelled previously in relation to that. And that question was on the form. So you see how easily it is to disregard something as simple as a few questions on a form. And then because the immigration person at immigration and customs could not obviously verify the information that was on there, ended up having to allow somebody to come in who potentially could have exposed a whole lot of other people to illness.

So when people speak about the fact that you present to an immigration officer at a desk on entering a country and you are questioned - you are supposed to be questioned. It is appropriate that you are questioned, because it is like your own home. If a stranger presents to your door and asks to enter your house, the first question you can ask them is: what is your business? Please state your business, who you come to see. They may be legitimately coming to see somebody in your house - a daughter, a son, a father, a mother, an uncle - but you have got to state your business. So if you ask somebody to state their business, when you look up you do not know the person, you are asking a simple question: who you come to see? And something as simple as that is your own form of border security at your house. Of course, we have more liberal ways of doing border security. Some of us put up security cameras, others get dogs. But we all have our form of border security because we understand the dangers of allowing just any and everybody to waltz in and out.

But when it comes to our home - which is our national home, the country - some people believe that the officer should not ask the question. You are delaying somebody from getting through the gate, and they have somebody outside waiting on them with a car. And it amazed me, you know, because a fellow would travel two hours to come to Barbados and will not wait five minutes to get through the front gate. Cannot wait. Cannot wait an additional time to be asked a question. So I never really understand the logic of it anyway. And that is not to say that you want to cause any unnecessary delay. We are a tourist destination and we want to make sure that we are efficient in moving people and so forth and so on. And of course nationals have to travel in and out and we want to ensure that they do, but it is for our own benefit and safety. And therefore I feel that it is a little disingenuous of us to want to have security and to feel secure, but yet for people to proffer arguments in what I call a false debate on both sides of that polemic to give the impression that you can just have any willy-nilly policy in relation to that.

So when I hear this debate about CARICOM, about free movement of persons and all of these things - I am a regionalist. I believe in the movement of persons and the relatively free movement of persons. But I know that with great power - and the free movement in the context of a regional agreement is a power; it gives you the power to

move relatively freely - comes great responsibilities. You have a responsibility to understand that even in the context of surrendering that part of my national sovereignty to determine my immigration policy, I still have a responsibility to protect the citizens of my country and to protect you too. Because some people may be coming for things that are not necessarily wholesome, and they too may be exposed to things that they probably would not have been if they had not tried to get into the country to do mischief. And I know, as a former immigration officer, that they do not make it public each time it happens. But on almost -

a daily basis there is always some mischief maker who is secreting themselves in the country and doing things illegal or setting themselves up in contemplation of doing things that are not necessary, wholesome within the country. And the immigration people have to be going for them, using resources, both physical resources, human resources, financial resources, going after people, running up and down, because there are people who find ways to inveigle themselves past the border security, get into the country, and then you have a whole lot of problems with them or who are allowed in for, you know, supposedly good reasons. And then they turn out that is not what they really were about in the first place. This happens every day and it compromises the national security of the country. If the immigration had to issue a press release every time they bat upon somebody who they had to intercept or go for or deal with in that regard and have to deport. There will be a press release in the paper every minute of the day. That is the reality. And a lot of Barbadians don't know it because they're not exposed to it at that level. I certainly know the Minister of Immigration is. He has to sign, he has to deal with those things on a daily basis. But the average citizen isn't. And so we must have a heads up view and a very clear understanding of the challenges which these people have to deal with in there.

And then of course you have the issue of social management within the context of a society. People believe that the management of demographics, it's easy. It is not easy. And immigration services are called upon whether they want to do it or not, or whether they understand what they're doing or not. And I believe they do. But they also have a critical responsibility in the management of social demographics. Because when large numbers of persons who can then be contextualised as a community within communities move from outside of the country into the country for whatever reasons, they don't come as a group. You know, they don't come all one time, they come individually. But when you put them together, they can constitute a group. And as much as we romanticise ourselves, and to some extent it is true, we fact, it is historical fact, we came from various parts of Africa and we came through a colonial experience and we have a lot of similar cultural things. There are a lot of fundamental

social and cultural differences between the peoples in the region and a lot of differences in socialisation. And I always know that for social cohesion. I'm not a sociologist. The sociologists in here and the social psychologists like the honourable Minister of the Environment, people who have studied this at an empirical level, they can better speak to it than I can. But they know that social cohesion within a society can easily be disrupted if you just clam people together. We know it from dealing with domestic activities. If you take up a set of people from one place and you mass move them to another set of communities, yeah, you do that. You can have a clash of community cultures, same people, you know, same country, blah, blah. But because they have been socialised slightly differently and have different views on mores and so forth and so on, you can have that.

So therefore, when the immigration policy is being executed by the officers, and I keep making that point, immigration officers do not make the policy. The policy is the national policy. It is their responsibility to execute it as efficaciously as they can. It is not their policy. They don't make policy, we do, we pass laws, we make policy, their job to execute. So when they're doing that, they have to be mindful of what is it that the legislators, what is it that the policymakers wanted to achieve or wanted to prevent so that they can be successful in the execution of the responsibilities and the achievement of the objectives. That is important. So if we say social and economic stability is critical to Barbados because it is a tourist destination, because it is a financial services jurisdiction, because it is necessary to get the development in virus among Barbadians and those who come to enjoy the space that we call Barbados in geography, then it is their responsibility to ensure that things are not done to disrupt that stability. And that is why you have what you have nowadays. Maybe some people who may carry out their responsibilities a little more zealously than some people may like. And as I said, there are always one or two bad apples in every bunch. But I think by and large I can say that we've had an outstanding immigration service and some very wonderful officers over the years.

I really want to pay tribute to them. In fact, a lot of them, unfortunately, who have worked very, very hard in that service over the last five, I would say five, seven years have passed on and I want to pay tribute to a lot of them who have. And a lot have not been able to see retirement or have had retirement and moved on, unfortunately. And it is sad because I know from working down there they have worked in very difficult circumstances, very challenging conditions, constantly being beaten up on by people, frankly, who should know better, called xenophobic and all kinds of derogatory titles attached only because they have been battling and fighting in the vineyard in the service of protecting the national interest of Barbados. People may say I am biased because I worked at the department, but I

know wherever I speak, so I don't mind being called biased. I know we have one of the best immigration services to be found anywhere in the world and they can hold their heads high in welcome of whatever kudos are given to them.

And unfortunately people don't do it often enough. I know the office down there has challenges. I am one of the first persons to have gone into that office. I believe the Clerk of Parliament as well. And from the time we were down there when it was a much newer space, I will never use the word salubrious or palatial because neither of those attach to that space down there - it has never been that kind of condition. But from the time we moved in there were problems down there. Yes, there are always problems down there. And I can only imagine how many years, decades after, it could only have gotten horribly worse. And that is why it gives me the greatest pleasure as Minister of Finance recently to have signed the CDB loan that is going to allow for the retrofitting of the space down at the car park place down there to get, finally get the immigration department out of there and in surroundings more fitted and suited for the execution of their responsibility. And of course the complex for increasing productivity of the officers down there. So that is where we are at.

And the latter point, of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, is how much money we have to spend on a daily basis as part of our responsibility, the execution of our national security, to ensure that the department is kept abreast and equipped with the latest technology to deal with the applications which they have down there, the principal one of which of course is the management of the passport section and ensuring that treasured national document is kept as secure. A lot of people don't know. There used to be something, I don't know if they produce it anymore, called the Red Book. I don't know if they still have it. They still use something called the Red Book where you used to go for training to see how people reproduce and copy passports and take stolen passports and put different pictures in them and all. The Red Book, that's what it used to be called. And I remember when I first saw it, I was fascinated. I don't mind - I wouldn't mind at all - the mischief that people get up to with passports, you know. And I always tell people, I always up to recently had to tell a couple of friends of mine, I said, listen to me, when you're travelling, your most important document, your most important thing that you have is not the money you get, the US money you get or whatever foreign currency you're utilising, which mall you're going to, who you're going to have lunch with, which part you're going to. None of that surpasses the importance of your passport. That's why I always say to people, I don't care where you're going, my passport going with me. I leave it in no safe. I leaving it at no front desk, at no hotel. I ain't giving a boy for the safekeeping. There ain't nothing called safeguarding with a passport. It is too valuable a document because

regardless of whatever happened, you could lose your bag for one, you could lose your money and ask for a penny. But anytime your passport goes missing you got real stress, real. Especially if you're in a foreign jurisdiction and they're not too friendly either and of which you don't have consular services. So you always ensure. And the immigration has to be constantly working on that document, the features, particularly the security features of that document, to ensure that those persons who are up to no good other than mischief should not be able to get those passports or to try to counterfeit or reproduce them to be used for foul or other odious purposes.

And therefore I think that it is important that we continue to find, even in our difficult circumstances, the resources essential to ensure that the immigration department is kept on the cutting edge. Whether it's with fingerprint technology, whether it is with whatever they're using down there, the machine readable passports and all of those things are absolutely critical. And we have to ensure that remains a national priority. So I want to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing, to congratulate the chief and her team for the excellent work that they are doing under very tough circumstances, under very tough conditions which we hope will improve considerably shortly. And on the bane of criticism from quarters both legitimate and not so legitimate, and to soldier on in the interest of the national good. And that we have to be eternally grateful that when we go to sleep at night and we wake in the day - but that's for those of us who prefer to sleep at night and do our business in the day - that we can do so in a relative degree of safety and security, that our borders are not being compromised and invaded upon by persons who may not have our best interests at heart. Only because we have a dedicated, loyal and proficient set of immigration services in the country. And with those few words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm obliged for you affording me the time.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It just falls upon me to thank all honourable members who spoke on this bill. I think we're all in agreement of the significant work which is carried on a daily basis by the Immigration Department and the challenges that they have. There's just two matters though that I want in particular.

One, I want the records of Parliament to reflect - which is that from time to time you hear suggestions that Barbados has been deporting lots of individuals and in particular our CARICOM brothers. And I want to reflect that when we did our research - and it's unfortunate that I can't find my notes - when we did our research it is actually not true at all. And I just thought I would wish Hansard to reflect that on this day in history that we

recorded the fact that it is untrue to suggest that Barbados goes about deporting individuals from its shores at the dead of night, etc., and in particular our CARICOM brothers and sisters. It is not true. And my colleague from St. James South is saying to me that in fact it's less than half a percent of the individuals who come to our shores. And I thought that I would want to make that point because indeed it did come up in the [Inaudible.] matter. And every day the research from then and we have continued to monitor it. There are obviously times when someone may not satisfy our immigration laws and we refuse them permission to land. We, like most of our CARICOM brothers and sisters, presently have a system now where persons are checked before they land. So that when an aircraft leaves London, for example, coming into Barbados, before it arrives in Barbados we would have done our security checks on every passenger on board. And from time to time things are found that would suggest that a passenger is undesirable. He may have a criminal record, he may have a history of abuse of young children or something like that, and we may deem him to be undesirable.

The second point that I want to make - and this is because it's an issue that over lunch I was discussing with one of my colleagues - which is the issue of student visas. There's a thought that in fact, given the fact that from a security perspective everyone coming to Barbados is scrubbed against Interpol and other databases, that it may not be a bad thing in terms of added efficiency if in fact we did student visa applications when persons land in Barbados as opposed to what presently obtains. The argument was positive that what happens is that an individual may apply before he arrives in Barbados, receives his student visa, but he doesn't go to school because he gets his student visa. We certainly don't follow up to see if he's going to the institution that he's supposed to go into. At least if he comes here and he does the interview, etc., you may get a better sense firsthand by interviewing the applicant to see whether or not what he's saying to you is indeed so. It may add to efficiency, as I said, but the fact in particular that we can almost instantaneously now conduct a security check against the individual. The only thing that we then need to be concerned about when an individual is interviewed here is whether or not he can pay for his education. And obviously the institutions that he's coming to will not take him in unless he's able to pay for his education. Because if I know them correctly, imagine someone coming to the medical school - I don't imagine the medical school saying to him, well, we are going to allow you in on condition that you pay us when you find some money. Not at all. That's not how they function. So it's something that we might wish to consider.

All in all, though, as I said, I just want to thank honourable members for their support of this bill. And with

those few words, I beg to move that this bill be read a second time. Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg that the House do now resolve itself into committee for further consideration of this bill.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and the Bill was read a second time.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg that you do now leave the chair and the House resolve itself into committee for further consideration of this bill.

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

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in committee.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Chairman, under clause one it should be amended to read 2015 rather than 2014. So it should read: this Act may be cited as the Immigration Amendment Act 2015. I beg to move that clause one stand part as amended.

Clause 1, as amended, was called and passed.

Clause 2 was called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, Mr. Chairman reported to Her Honour, the DEPUTY SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee with an amendment and Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Immigration Amendment Act, 2015.

Mr. CLERK: Order number six, sir. In the name of the Honourable Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development, move the passing of a resolution to approve, in accordance with Section 5 of the Crown Lands Vesting and Disposal Act, Chapter 225, the sale to Reginald Blackett of a parcel of land, the property of the Crown, situate at Haynes Hill in the parish of St. John in this island.

ORDER NO. 6 – RESOLUTION – CROWN LANDS
(VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 – SALE
TO REGINALD BLACKETT OF LAND AT HAYNES
HILL, ST. JOHN

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

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to the resolution as it pertains to the sale of 181.5 square metres of land, the site of the former public bath at Sargent Street, St. John, to Reginald Blackett. And to make the point that as far back as October 2001, Mr. William Clark sought to purchase the same said land. At the time it had a building - the bath had a building, there was an old bath. And before he could purchase it, the building was demolished, because he was seeking to set up a small shoe repair business and also a small hardware business. After it was demolished, Mr. Reginald Clark sought to purchase the land. He first offered \$6 000 for it, then he offered \$8 000. But the valuation of the land was \$12 670, and then he put in a bid of \$10 000 which was accepted by the Ministry.

Also, I would like to make the point that when the decision was made by the previous government to get rid of these public baths, the opposition of the time made note and made mention that in light of the development of tourism across Barbados, especially in rural Barbados, that one had to be very careful how they sought to get rid of these public baths. And we felt that if we were going to develop the tourism product, it was very important that if you are going to make a wholesale decision of getting rid of public baths, then you needed to see where you locate business facilities that will have the necessary facilities so that you could promote the product in tourism as it stands today.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen where all these public baths were removed - a majority of them - especially in rural Barbados. And now we need to seek to ensure that persons who are offering services also acknowledge that it is very important to ensure that these facilities, not necessarily public baths, but the latrines, are retained so that when people are touring Barbados they will not have to go to private individuals to ask them for the use of these facilities. Because sometimes decisions are made and when positions are proffered, a lot of people do not understand or cannot appreciate the point being made until they are confronted with the positions that we now find ourselves in.

It is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that as we develop the tourism product in Barbados and as we develop the rural areas - what I have always said is the remit of the Ministry of Housing, Lands and Rural Development - that rural development will have to ensure, as it behoves rural Barbados, that things like these will be important and that they are located in such locations that allow a role and also

serve the Ministry of Environment. Because we believe that if we are going to be expanding the tourism services of Barbados, then we need to help expand the product of Barbados. Because once we have good products, sir, then we can promote and market Barbados as truly a place that is suitable and capable of encouraging people to come to Barbados and enjoy the product of Barbados.

And that is why, even though as Minister of Housing I stand here today in support of this resolution, I think it is very important to point out that these areas, you must admit, were small, and they can only be used for persons who have land nearby, as in this particular case, where Mr. Reginald Blackett has an adjoining piece of land. But the point must be made that these public baths, when they were built, they were built for the people of the area. And it does not mean that because the living standards have now improved, there is no need. Because we now have to recognise that we are pushing the tourism product and we have to ensure, as we invite people to traverse right across Barbados and appreciate the beauty, especially in

the rural areas, that we also have these amenities. So with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I beg that this resolution do now pass.

Mr. SPEAKER: Oh, I am sorry - yes, you are the Member for St. John.

Mrs. M-J. M. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to contribute to this discussion briefly, albeit, but since I am fully acquainted with the lot of which you speak. Since it is located in the parish of St. John, it is at Haynes Hill, and it abuts a road called Highway F that leads in one direction towards Codrington College, the other direction towards - well, if you go down towards Bath, if you go up towards Coach Hill. This spot, Mr. Speaker, was once the location of a public bath, as the Honourable Member for St. Lucy just mentioned. And I suppose there was a time when not everyone had running water in their homes, and so these baths were necessary and were very much in use, just as there was once a time when there were standpipes dotted all over the island, and people went to the standpipe with their pail to get water for the house.

So I assume that with the advent of running water in homes, the public bath became no longer necessary. It seemed to have fallen into disrepair. And according to my constituent Mr. Blackett, who is interested in the spot, after some time the structure was in such poor condition that it began to fall in on itself. And eventually the NHC sent in a team that pushed it away, so to speak.

The goodly gentleman occupies the lot just above where this public bath was, and his dwelling house is located there. And he decided that it would be a wonderful

thing if he could make use of this unused lot, more or less with a view to not living on it, but setting up some sort of structure. Because bear in mind that this lot abuts the road, so it is in a perfect location for having some sort of vending business, whether he does it himself or his family. But it is definitely in a good location for the Blacketts. And so he decided that he wanted to purchase this lot. He said that as far back as 1992 he indicated his desire to purchase this lot for a small sum. So he is really, besides being very surprised, also very happy that this has finally come to the stage that it is at right now. And he looks forward to finalising the arrangements and having this spot for himself and his family.

And so, in closing, sir, I wish to say that I support this resolution. And I also hope that the sum that Mr. Blackett will have to pay for this lot will not be too steep and will be one that he will be comfortable with. Thank you, sir. I am obliged.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: I just want to make a brief contribution on this resolution to say, first of all, that it is always good when the government of the day can put in the hands of ordinary people a piece of land, regardless of who they are or where they are. But perhaps more significantly, the fact that the government, through the National Housing Corporation, can dispose of this once public bath or public facility speaks to a larger issue, in my view, and that is that the country is making tremendous strides in terms of the reduction of poverty, in terms of being able to now demonstrate that in communities as rural as this community, that gone are the days when residents are required to go to a public facility to have a bath. And I think that is significant and it should not be minimised.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, sir, it also speaks to our development gains in terms of the reduction of poverty in the society. Now I remember years ago people would argue that we need these public facilities for the convenience of residents who were not able to have a water toilet or a built-on bath to their houses - people who would have to bathe in the backyards and under the standpipe, as the Honourable Member for St. John mentioned. And I think that when moments like these happen, we need to really accentuate the government's policy in ensuring that ordinary people in the society make progress to the extent where they now can own a piece of Barbados in the most ordinary space, and removing a symbol that once demonstrated the impoverished conditions of members of our society. And I really applaud the National Housing Corporation for moving in this direction.

And wherever these spaces are around Barbados - I remember some years ago we had a couple of them in the

parish land community in Christ Church, and the National Housing Corporation was able to dispose of a piece of land similar to this to an ordinary resident in the community - I think that we have to continue. As we honour our global commitments, for example to the Millennium Development Goals that speak directly to the provision of sanitation services and the removal of the scourge of poverty on the society, I think it becomes important for us to note with some applause that we are making that progress in the society. There are still a few standpipes around in different communities, used for different and varying purposes. But I know that there has been removal of public baths across Barbados in a significant way. And I think that it is really a testimony to our development gains over the years and to the work that this government continues to do to ensure that ordinary people are empowered and given a chance to own a piece of land in this country. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: I knew you were going to hit that. I enter this debate very briefly, sir. Because I take note, Mr. Speaker, from the Minister of Housing, that this matter started way back in - I think about 1992. It is one thing that I discovered as Minister of Housing, in that members of the public, Mr. Speaker, will write to the Ministry of Housing, particularly one, to purchase land and secondly, even to lease land from the government.

I do recall, Mr. Speaker, dealing with one in BL. There was a public bath that is close to St. Mark's Primary School, and that application - that started in the 1990s too. I'm making the point, Mr. Speaker, because I certainly believe that we have to find a way in terms of fast-tracking these applications. And of course, particularly in some instances, we have situations where persons are on land that is owned by the government and in some instances carry on businesses, even in some instances build houses on them.

And I do recall particularly there was a business that was set up on a piece of land. And of course, the Ministry of Housing had a discussion with the particular - let me say, person who was occupying the land, because I don't want to use the word tenant. And what happened, Mr. Speaker, sir, is that the person developed a clientele and was carrying on a successful business. But the problem was, Mr. Speaker, sir, is that the paperwork wasn't carried out. And I think eventually that person was asked to move, obviously not in accordance with the rules and regulations of the land, particularly in carrying on the business. Of course there were health requirements and whatever. But I believe a situation like that certainly could have been salvaged if the Ministry of Housing and Lands particularly was proactive in terms of regularising the matter at hand.

And certainly they have files in the Ministry of Housing where people have applied. I came across one - someone wrote in 1980 to occupy a piece of land that belongs to the state in Belize, and it took a number of years to regularise it. Also, particularly there was a piece of land at Bottom Bay in St. Philip, a piece of land that could have been used particularly to assist the tourism product - a matter that was so outstanding, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we started that matter. I don't know. The Minister of Housing can probably shed some light on it. But there was a proposal to put a bar. Given the fact, Mr. Speaker, that Bottom Bay is one of the leading beaches - actually featured in many magazines - and, you know, after Crane, but it is one of the leading beaches. But there is a spot of land where there was an agreement with the Ministry of Housing and Lands for an exchange, and the matter was sitting there - it started in the 1970s or thereabout, and we started to deal with it. I believe that it should be more than half - the Minister of Housing would speak to me in relation to that. Not only because it is in my constituency, but obviously it would assist the tourism product, basically because there are no facilities down there for tourists or even locals to go to Bottom Bay, particularly in using - in fact our rural development - particularly in having facilities for the tourists and whatnot.

Further, Mr. Speaker, sir - I said rural development. Further, Mr. Speaker, sir, there has to be some way that we can fast-track these matters because too many Barbadians, particularly obviously, want to have access to lands. In fact, Barbadians even go out there and do their territory search themselves and come back to the Ministry of Housing and indicate to the Ministry of Housing that it is state land. And in more than one instance - in fact a number of instances, sir - it is correct when we do our check that there are idle lands up there owned by the state. Barbadians identify them, go to the Ministry of Housing to get permission either to lease or to purchase. And it takes too long, Mr. Speaker, for these matters to be settled, particularly whether it is for sale or whether for the leasing of these lands.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I just want to support the Minister in this matter. Of course, there are a number of other lands that we could identify that can also assist, particularly in hot spots and particularly for persons to set up their businesses. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I totally endorse all that was said. And I want to make the point that I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for Christ Church East for making the point and beating me to it. But it is good to know that he today passed his certificate of being a social engineer in making the point that it shows how far the country has come. Because you know, Mr.

Speaker, I have said over and over, and we are continuing to make the point, that in the 1960s, when Mr. Barrow brought free secondary education, he brought it for our parents and he brought it to ensure that our parents were able to send us and give us the opportunity to go to school without paying the cost and for us to develop ourselves so that we could then turn around and do what our parents could not afford to do for us - and that is to empower us.

As you will be aware, sir, 300 years before that the people before us would have been slaves, asking for shelter, clothing, food and education from the masters. And those persons who fought hard, fought to ensure that those persons delivered themselves and moved away from the mentality of having to depend on the masters or the state for those social gains. But today one gets the impression that even though persons of that age fought to move away, that we now want to remain on the nipples of the country, Barbados. And as the more we develop, the more we expect of the country, even though the demands on the country are getting greater. And I am glad to see that we do not now have to depend on the standpipes, the public bus or the latrine rooms, and that we are so developed and that we have so empowered ourselves that those social needs are now met by ourselves.

And I tend to believe that one of the best social needs is the need of education. And I want to congratulate this government in not moving away from full contribution for public education, but just asking people only to pay 20 per cent. Even though our poor people have been empowered, it shows that public Barbados has made great strides.

I also want to make the point, Mr. Speaker, that the Ministry of Housing and Lands - I have asked for a copy of our total land bank. Because one of the things I have observed is that if we are going to empower the people of Barbados, there are many small business people who right now might be using lands or could be using lands belonging to government to empower them. But some of them are using the lands and they need to be regularised. And some of them would like to use the land, but they do not know the true ownership. So what I have asked the officers within the ministry - and in many requests I have made - is that I would like to see the total land ownership so that areas could be designated so that small business people can have the opportunity to maximise those land areas. Because as we develop the product across Barbados, surely we will be developing areas as we move, especially from Archer's Bay and St. Lucy, right up to Consett Bay and Bottom Bay also. And also St. Mark's as we build out the product.

The important thing of building out that product is the ability to allow the people in the area to recognise the value of the product and to offer services to the tourists as

they come to visit the product of Barbados. And for example, when you want things about the area at St. Mark's - a wonderful view. But the most fascinating thing is not only the view, but the cave that tourists should be visiting. And all that is needed is for rural development to get the necessary funds and to build the stairs to the cave, like what has been done at Archer's Bay, where previously the people in that area saw the beach but could not get to it. And if they wanted to get to the beach, they had to swing down on ropes. Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to report that there are now 66 steps to the stairs and that the people in the area are allowed to get to the beach. And not only that - on top of that, the tourists, when you see them going, you would ask where they are going, but they understood and I could appreciate the beauty of Archer's Bay. And we have been able, just by putting in 66 stairs at not substantial cost, to develop the product for tourism so that there is now another offering.

And I am saying that all we need to do is small projects like these which would make substantial contribution to the tourism product and allow the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. to have something to promote Barbados. Because we cannot continue to ask people to come to Barbados and to limit the opportunities when they come to Barbados. What we have to do is offer new offerings and move away from the prison-light approach, as I have always spoken about, where when the tourists are in Barbados today, you know the few spots they are going to. Prior to that, sir, when we had the minibuses in the 1960s and the 1970s, we did not suffer that problem because the tourists were allowed to ramble through Barbados and they were able to appreciate Barbados.

What we need now to do - as I keep saying - one of the most beautiful things of those tours, the four-wheel drives and so on, has now given us a golden opportunity to understand the areas of Barbados that the tourists appreciate, and not only allow them to go and just see them in five minutes, but allows the opportunity to build out those areas, put the necessary amenities and ask the people in the area to manage and offer services so that we can help reduce the unemployment situation and also extract a larger sum of money from the tourists by the many more offerings that they have. And you know, Mr. Speaker, what we will be offering the tourist is something that they can relate to as it relates to Barbados.

So I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that this government is on the right track. And I want to applaud the Minister of Tourism for separating the marketing from the product. Because there is no doubt that once you have the right product then you can market something. And it is going to be very important for us to continue to build up the product, to give the marketing arm something to market and to ensure that when our visitors come to Barbados that they have many more offerings.

So Mr. Speaker, this is only one of the many issues that we might have to deal with. But the bigger picture is to utilise the lands vested in the National Housing Corporation or within the purview of the Ministry of Housing and Lands to ensure that we empower people - whether it will be from Rock Hall, whether it will be Spikethorn, whether it will be Long Bay, whether it will be up by the East Point Lighthouse, St. Martin's Bay, Ragged Point - you name it. It is important for us to get in there and ensure that we put the necessary amenities at minimum cost, but look at the end product, because the returns will be much greater than the input.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words I do beg that this resolution do now pass. And to say, sir, that as people of Barbados, we continue to do the work of the people. And I must tell you, sir, that the atmosphere is good in the House. I thank you.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Mr. CLERK: Order No. 10, sir. In the name of the Honourable Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development, to move the passing of a resolution to approve, in accordance with section 5 of the Crown Lands Vesting and Disposal Act, Chapter 225, vesting in the National Housing Corporation of parcels of land the property of the Crown, situate at Leadville in the parish of Christ Church in this island, for residential purposes.

ORDER NO. 10 – RESOLUTION – CROWN LANDS
(VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 –
VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING
CORPORATION OF LAND AT LEADVILLE,
CHRIST CHURCH

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, as we move to ensure that the finances of the National Housing Corporation improves, it is very important for us to vest this 33 398.7 square metres of land along with another 9 298 - these two parcels of land situated in the parcel of Leadville in Christ Church. Because previously, Mr. Speaker, it was thought that these two parcels of land would have been used as a buffer zone. Then it was decided there was no need to utilise it for such. And to ensure that we move to improve our finances by selling to the persons who had lands next to the same said land so that they can extend their properties and at the same time they are able to increase their land ownership. While the Ministry, through the National Housing Corporation, will be able to reduce the deficit and to be able to service their debts and also look to see how they could complete the projects.

It is no doubt we have a lot of projects and we have to manage how we go forward. And one of the first things you have to do is to ensure you complete what you have before you go and start and put yourself in more debt and find yourself in a situation where you have large numbers but no completion. So what we are seeking to do is ensure that we complete all the houses that were left to be completed and that was given to us as stock. As I said in this House on more than one occasion, these houses might be capital assets to Government, but they are stock for us. And it is important for us to get rid of the stock. And that is exactly what we have been doing. We have been putting out all the fires that had to be put out and we have been ensuring that we improve and reduce the deficit that we have.

And we will be seeking to ensure that we are able to continue to offer opportunities to those persons that we are supposed to help and those among us less privileged. But we are ensuring, Mr. Speaker, that those who have money to pay that they too get an opportunity to help the ones who cannot pay by ensuring that we look at our asset base to put the best possible assets on the market to have the highest return so that we can continue to keep the prices for the masses at the right prices. And that is what we will continue to do.

One of the things we also recognise is that we need to get some money in as fast as possible and that is why we have to find some creative ways where we might have to find some systems where the Board of the National Housing Corporation can work with financial institutions to help us build up our house spots so that we can get the necessary money to put in the infrastructure and then we repay for the infrastructure as we sell the lots. But it is very important for us to create some activity as fast as possible. We cannot all expect for the NHC to continue to do camp programmes but we must be able to get the cash to ensure that we implement a total programme.

And that is why we felt, reflecting, sir - that is why last week we spoke, sir, of ensuring that all of those units that we come with a capital programme to ensure that we complete those, put those behind us and then we can move forward. It does not make sense, sir, going forward and have work that is not completed behind you, sir. And that is why we are seeking to ensure that we wrap up all the past ends that we have to tie off and then move forward with any new programme.

But we are ensuring, Mr. Speaker, that when we come we have a holistic approach to the housing solutions of Barbados. We are not here to create deficits. We have been left with a lot of deficits by the other side and we are slowly but quickly, quietly and effectively working on them. And we will continue to do that. So Mr. Speaker,

with these few words, sir, I beg that this resolution do now pass.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. With that we have come to the end of Government Business for today, and I beg to move that the sitting of this House be adjourned until Tuesday, March 10, 2015 at 10.00 in the morning.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that motion, Mr. Speaker.

The question that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, March 10, 2015 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

CONTENTS

MINUTES

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE.....1

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE.....1

RESUMPTION

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 9 – IMMIGRATION AMENDMENT BILL,
2015.....1

Hon. A. D. Brathwaite, 1; Hon. D. O’N. Inniss, 10.

RESUMPTION

ORDER NO. 9 (resumed)

Hon. D. St.E. Kellman, 15; Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 17; Hon.
C. P. Sinckler, 21; Hon. A. D. Brathwaite, 24, 25.

ORDER NO. 6 – RESOLUTION – CROWN LANDS
(VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 –
SALE TO REGINALD BLACKETT OF LAND AT
HAYNES HILL, ST. JOHN.....26

Hon. D. St.E. Kellman, 26, 28; Mrs. M-J. M. Thompson,
26; Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe, 27; Hon. M. A. Lashley, 27.

ORDER NO. 10 – RESOLUTION – CROWN LANDS
(VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 –
VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING
CORPORATION OF LAND AT LEADVILLE,
CHRIST CHURCH.....29

Hon. D. St.E. Kellman, 29.

SUSPENSIONS.....1, 15.

ADJOURNMENT.....30

Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 30.

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

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

BRAETHWAITE, Hon. A. D. (St. Philip South)

INNIS, Hon. D. O’N. (St. James South)

KELLMAN, Hon. D. St.E. (St. Lucy)

LASHLEY, Hon. M. A. (St. Philip North)

LOWE, Dr. the Hon. D. S. (Christ Church East)

SINCKLER, Hon. C. P. (St. Michael North West)

THOMPSON, Mrs. M-J. M. (St. John)

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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 the PRESENT list or the officiant at Prayers, and the Prayers are recorded only in part. 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 '[1.00 a.m.]' during the morning debate and '[12.30 p.m.]' after the luncheon suspension) and have been omitted.

Q3. Order No. 9, opening. Part 1 of the source ends with the suspension of the sitting until 10.45 a.m. and Part 2 begins with Hon. A. D. Brathwaite already speaking on the Immigration Amendment Bill. The resumption, the Clerk's reading of the Order and the Chair's call are not recorded; part of the record may be missing at this point. The Order number is taken from Mr. SPEAKER's later reference to 'Government Business Order Number Nine'. Please check against the recording.

Q4. Suspension (luncheon). The source records the time of suspension as '[THE SITTING WAS SUSPENDED AT [Inaudible.] P.M.]'; the motion and the question were for suspension until 2.15 p.m. Please supply the time from the Votes and Proceedings.

Q5. Order No. 9, after Hon. J. D. E. Boyce. The source does not record the Deputy Speaker taking the Chair; from the call of the Member for St. Michael North West onwards the Chair is Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER, and Mr. SPEAKER is again in the Chair when Order No. 6 is read.

Q6. Committee. Mr. CHAIRMAN is not named in the source; the Chairman of Committees, Mr. J. D. Paul, is presumed. The Committee stage is condensed to the Official Report formulae; Clause 1 was amended to read '2015' in place of '2014' and Clause 2 passed without amendment. The source records the short title as 'the Immigration Amendment Act 2015'.

Q7. Order No. 6, Mr. SPEAKER and Mrs. M-J. M. Thompson. Mr. SPEAKER began to put the question and then gave way to the Member for St. John; the words 'you are the Member for St. -' and '- John' are split between the

two speeches in the source and are joined here in Mr. SPEAKER's words. The interrupted put is omitted.

Q8. Order No. 6, Hon. D. St.E. Kellman. The Clerk reads the sale as to Reginald Blackett of land at Haynes Hill, St. John, while the Minister refers to 'the former public bath at Sargent Street, St. John' and to 'Mr. William Clark' and 'Mr. Reginald Clark' as the applicants. Printed as in the source; please check the names and the location against the recording.

Q9. Order No. 10, Mr. CLERK and Hon. D. St.E. Kellman. The last words of the Clerk's reading ('residential purposes') and the Minister's speech appear in the source under Mr. SPEAKER's call ('Yes, Honourable Member for St. Lucy'). They are restored to the Clerk and to Hon. D. St.E. Kellman; the Clerk's 'investing in' is printed 'vesting in'.

Q10. Adjournment. The words 'I beg to second that motion, Mr. Speaker' appear at the end of the Leader of the House's motion in the source. They are printed as a separate seconding under AN HON. MEMBER; the seconder is not identified.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 17, 2015, with Mr. SPEAKER presiding. The Minutes of January 27 and February 10, 2015 were confirmed on the motion of the Leader of the House, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, and Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42, 43 and 44 were suspended for the remainder of the sitting. The House was then suspended until 10.45 a.m.

Under Order No. 9 the Attorney General, Hon. A. D. Brathwaite, moved the second reading of the Immigration Amendment Bill, 2015, on behalf of the substantive Minister. The Bill replaces section 30 of the Immigration Act, Cap. 190, so that offences may be tried on indictment as well as summarily, with a fine of \$25 000 or five years' imprisonment on indictment, in step with new biometric regulations. He gave figures for 2013, including 898 applications for citizenship of which 860 were approved, 3 097 work permit applications of which 2 711 were processed, 15 141 new passports and 1 381 577 arrivals and departures. He spoke of the Shanique Myrie judgment, saying immigration officers must apply the laws of Barbados without fear, and of kiosks at the airport and new headquarters on Hincks Street to be financed by a Caribbean Development Bank loan. Hon. D. O'N. Inniss

supported the Bill, defended the Immigration Department against public criticism, said the Prime Minister had agreed to relocate it to better accommodation, and reviewed the history of the Caribbean Court of Justice.

After the luncheon suspension Hon. D. St.E. Kellman supported the Bill and said the region should concentrate on the free movement of capital rather than of people. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce drew on the Ministry of Health's monitoring of travellers during the Ebola outbreak and spoke of sick buildings and the training of officers. Hon. C. P. Sinckler, who had worked briefly as an immigration officer, spoke of border protection and the security of the passport. Replying, Hon. A. D. Brathwaite placed on record that it was untrue that Barbados deported large numbers of CARICOM nationals, and suggested that student visas might be dealt with on arrival. The Bill was read a second time and passed through Committee with an amendment to Clause 1 changing '2014' to '2015', and was read a third time and passed as the Immigration Amendment Act, 2015.

Under Order No. 6 Hon. D. St.E. Kellman moved a Resolution under the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act, Cap. 225, approving the sale to Reginald Blackett of 181.5 square metres at Haynes Hill, St. John, the site of a former public bath; he said a bid of \$10 000 had been accepted against a valuation of \$12 670. Mrs. M-J. M. Thompson, in whose constituency the lot lies, said the purchaser had sought it since 1992. Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe said the disposal of public baths reflected the reduction of poverty, and Hon. M. A. Lashley called for applications to buy or lease Crown land to be dealt with more quickly, citing land at Bottom Bay, St. Philip. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman said he had asked for a record of the Ministry's total land bank. The Resolution was passed.

Under Order No. 10 Hon. D. St.E. Kellman moved a Resolution to vest in the National Housing Corporation two parcels of land at Leadville, Christ Church, given as 33 398.7 square metres and a further 9 298, once intended as a buffer zone, so that they could be sold to adjoining owners to improve the Corporation's finances. The Resolution was passed. The House adjourned until Tuesday, March 10, 2015 at 10.00 a.m.