
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, January 13, 2015

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 13, 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. R. L. SEALY (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW

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

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL (Chairman of Committees)

Dr. M. M. AGARD

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY (Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth)

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

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

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK (Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management)

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P.

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

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

PRAYERS

Prayers were read.

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning, Hon. Members. This House is now in session. Members, let me take the opportunity to welcome you back from our Christmas recess. I hope that you are well rested and reinvigorated as we continue the people's business. Members, I have with me the minutes of the meeting of Tuesday, December 16, 2014.

MINUTES

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I want to join you in welcoming all Members back from this new year and wish all Members a very useful and productive session as we continue the very important work. Sir, I beg to move that the minutes referred to be taken as read.

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

MESSAGES

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I have with me a message from the Honourable the Senate to the Honourable the House of Assembly. The Honourable the Senate has the honour to inform the Honourable the House of Assembly that at its sitting on Wednesday, the 17th day of December, 2014, the Corporate Miscellaneous Provisions Bill, 2014, passed with the following amendments. The Schedule was amended by deleting subparagraph 66 of paragraph 1, Companies Act, Cap. 308, and with the consequential renumbering of the subsequent subparagraphs. The Honourable the Senate transmits the amended Bill to the Honourable the House of Assembly,

inviting concurrence in the amendments to the said Corporate Miscellaneous Provisions Bill, 2014, dated the 17th day of December, 2014, and signed by Her Honour, Madam President, Kerryann Ifill.

PAPERS

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Productivity Council Annual Report 2011–2013 and the Duty, Taxes and Other Payments Exemption - Darrells Commercial Park Inc. - Order, 2014.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Police Complaints Authority Annual Report, 2013.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Honourable Member, I am commanded to lay the Rural Commission Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2005, the Rural Commission Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2006, and the Rural Commission Annual Report for the year ending March 31, 2007. I am obliged.

FIRST READINGS OF BILLS

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I beg to move the first reading of the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill, 2014.

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

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.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I rise in relation to a matter which has been engaging the public's attention within the course of the last few days. It is a matter, Mr. Speaker, which I am sure you are well aware has caused some concern not only in this chamber, but also in the public domain. And it is one which, Mr. Speaker, seeks to implicate you by a judgment which was made against you in the course of the past few days. I would, therefore, Mr. Speaker, crave your indulgence.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just a minute, Honourable Member. I want to suggest that if you are going to deal with that matter in any way, I recuse myself and the chair be taken by the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: [Inaudible.]

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege in relation to an issue that has been engaging the attention of the public and certainly Members of this chamber within the past few days. It is a matter that relates to a judgment which was entered against the Speaker of this chamber and one which I believe causes some concern in various circles as it relates to the Honourable Members and their ability to feel comfortable with the Speaker being able to preside over this particular chamber. I do so, Madam Deputy Speaker, on the basis that I believe that the Honourable Speaker should perhaps be given the opportunity to explain to the chamber the circumstances surrounding this judgment, or at the very least, recuse himself of the position until such a matter has been determined by the court.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is important that the public and the people in this chamber - the Members, the elected Members of this chamber - have confidence in the Speaker. And I believe that rather than the Honourable Barbados Labour Party bringing a motion on this issue, that it would do all concerned a justice to enable the Speaker to be able to address this chamber on this particular matter and to be heard as well.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is indeed the highest court of the land. All of us who are here hold the offices that we do on the basis that, as the highest court in the land, those who look to us expect a certain standard to be displayed by each and every one of us in this chamber. And therefore, I believe that it would be in the best interest of preserving the integrity of this chamber and indeed the overall government and the confidence of the people of this country, if indeed that opportunity was given to the Speaker of this chamber to be able to address Honourable Members before this sitting commences today. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: In this case, I would like to rule that we refer this to the Committee of Privileges so that a determination can be made.

Mr. CLERK: Madam Deputy Speaker, we revert to announcements by Your Honour the Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I would like to welcome our visitors this morning who are here from Elon University. There are 20 undergraduate students and this is their 12th year visiting beautiful Barbados. They have visited Parliament before, so we would like to welcome all of you here this morning. Government Business is the order of the day.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. CLERK: Order No. 18, Madam Deputy Speaker. In the name of the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, to move the second reading of the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill, 2015.

ORDER NO. 18 – VALUE ADDED TAX AMENDMENT BILL, 2015

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Thank you very much. Madam Deputy Speaker, permit me to engage the attention of the House of Assembly on this small but very important matter as it pertains to the execution of government's policy and administration in relation to the collection of taxes and revenue for the government for the orderly disposition of the business of the country as it relates to the value added tax, but not only in terms of the value added tax, also relative to impinging other legislation, pieces of legislation that impinge on the execution of those responsibilities. The amendment that draws our attention today is that of an amendment to section 31 of the value added tax as it pertains to a loophole or as the lawyers would say, a lacuna in the law in relation to the desire, the intent and intent of government and in this case, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs in the execution of his responsibility as guardian of the public purse and purveyor of the incentives which may be granted from time to time to various individuals and or entities in the economy of Barbados.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, as you know, executing the responsibilities as Minister of Finance is vested with the authority in various pieces of legislation to grant waivers of duties and taxes on items imported into Barbados by individuals, grant those waivers to individuals of items imported by individuals and companies into Barbados. The Minister is also empowered, as we know, to grant discretionary waivers under the Duties, Taxes and Other Payments Exemption Act, Cap. 67B, as we call it, 67B, more popularly known, to various categories of individuals and organizations subject to certain conditions to incentivize or otherwise provide a stimulus to those persons as a way of reducing the cost of input into whatever process they may be undertaking, whether it is a major development or if it is a social organization, you may give it to a social organization or whatever. So at two levels, both in statutory and in discretionary, waivers can be provided and are provided.

And we have said repeatedly, perhaps ad nauseam, in this House of Assembly, we have spoken about the waivers that are given mainly, we believe, to drive

economic activity, but also to provide social coverage to members in the society who may be doing work that rebounds to the benefit of the wider community. And to the extent that we do give on an annualised basis an average of \$700 million worth of waivers to these various individuals and organizations and corporations, it is not an insignificant amount, and not one, of course, that we should blush at, because of course, it means this is revenue foregone by the government to assist in the orderly management of the country.

And to the extent that this is true and that the legislation provides for both statutory, that is permanent, and discretionary, those are temporary waivers as provided through the signature of the Minister of Finance, either by way of those legislations or by way of a specific statutory order appended to the regulations of those pieces of legislation, then it is part of the system that we enjoy now. Government, through the Ministry of Finance, is not bound to give waivers. Government does not have to give waivers for anything, actually. But we know that, in a society such as ours, developing as it is, trying to carry out the space, trying to build capacity, trying to do things in the country, it would not be in the best interest of progress, it would not be in the best interest of building capacity, it would not be in the best interest of building social cohesion in the country if these waivers from time to time are not given.

Those to which we ascribe in statutory law - some of them relate to business, others relate to charities, but some as well relate to our statutory obligations overseas in relation to diplomatic missions, treaties that we may have signed onto, whether it is the Vienna Convention or whatever the case may be, as we are required by law under the privileges, immunities and other exemptions provided to diplomatic missions, to international and regional organizations headquartered in Barbados and so forth and so on. We could equally find some of these waivers statutorily, as I said, in things like the Fiscal Incentives Act, now under the Tourism Development Act, expanded as it is to the entire hotel sector, for manufacturers as I said under the Fiscal Incentives Act, we also have on the various pieces of legislation for farmers, the Small Business Act under the requisite legislation, for special development areas legislation. So the waivers and concessions can be found across a plethora of statutory instruments, statutory acts that provide for such equally as well. On the 67B it is the retained authority of the Minister, the discretion of the Minister under the law under certain conditions to provide for waivers as well, mainly for social integration matters, but also importantly as well, substantially for major investments that will bring foreign exchange earnings to the country, create employment, provide economic activity and of course, build capacity in various areas of economic and social development.

It has, however, been recognised over the last couple of years, in particular in the last 18 months to two years. And it is something that when the economic planners and technocrats examined it, we got a little concerned because we could not necessarily place our finger entirely on what was the exact reason for the problem which I am about to describe. We noticed that in the last two years, in particular, as I said, 18 months to two years, that an anomaly was being created in the system where our import duties were beginning to come back up from the fall-off that they would have had during the major part of the economic and financial fallout from the global crisis and its impact on Barbados. Our excise taxes were stabilising and beginning to come back to reasonable levels that we expected. However, somehow in the system, the value added tax attached to imports was trending down and we inquired - I certainly, as Minister, inquired - as to why that was the case.

Because if you import an item into the country and it is VATable, and all items imported into the country are indeed VATable, except they have been waived specifically by the Minister or by some one of these specific statutory instruments that we referred to before, then your VAT should not be correspondingly going down whilst your import duty value was going up. Because the VAT is applied whenever an item is brought in, of course, as a final processing, a final value added tax onto whatever other impositions were made. So if you brought in an item of X value and you add a customs duty to it, now you add an excise tax to it, and that is it - say, for example, a very simple example - then you apply the VAT. So the VAT is always applied at the end of that calculated process, that cumulative process value of the product. So if the customs duty and the excise tax is moving in the right direction, your value added tax should not be going down at the same time, because that is a percentage of the moved value, the increased value, the cumulative increased value of the item before it is delivered to the consumer. But we saw this anomaly in the system where import duties are going up or holding steady, excise taxes were going up or holding steady, but the VAT was going in the opposite direction on the same item. And we knew that something had to be wrong.

So we invited the new Barbados Revenue Authority, along with the Customs Department, to investigate and see why this was occurring and what explanations could be given for some of that. And during those investigations, one of the things that came up was that across the plethora of waivers which the Minister of Finance would have afforded to various entities outside of those that specifically gave a waiver of VAT, it was discovered that within the VAT Act itself, working in collusion, in this case with other pieces of legislation, for example the Customs Duties Act, that a clause within the VAT Act - section 31 -

allowed for a certain degree of automaticity in the waiving of the VAT once that waiver was given for customs duty.

So to put it in a simpler frame so that we could understand it - Madam Deputy Speaker - if I brought an item into Barbados at \$80 and it attracted an import customs duty of \$20, then the cumulative value of the item before VAT is applied will be \$100. And I would apply 17.5 per cent to that as that is the rate of the VAT, and therefore I would get \$17.50. However, if I decided as Minister of Finance that for the person importing the item I would waive the import duty,

the VAT, by virtue of section 31(1), A and B, are 1 and 2. Section 31(2), by virtue of section 31, would automatically kick in and waive the VAT even though it was not the intention of the Minister or not the intention of the piece of legislation governing the waiver for which it was granted. And that, Madam Deputy Speaker, clearly could not have been the intent of the drafters of the VAT. And so we noticed that in the system, that particular loophole was there. And of course, those who were alert, who understood the law and who were alert enough to address this issue, could have and have been presenting to Customs that even though they carry their letter saying specifically the only Customs duty or excise tax was waived, they could say, but the VAT Act says that I specifically get that waiver, too.

And I think it is important to read it because sometimes legislation can be very - you know, when you have legislation, unless you specifically state some things, it could run you into particular problems. Section 31(1) gives you section 31(2), Madam Deputy Speaker. This is the section. It says quite clearly that where A, an amount of duty other than a tax imposed under this Act - this is the Value Added Tax, obviously meaning the VAT - that is payable upon entry of goods into Barbados is remitted, refunded, drawn back or reduced under the Customs Act or any other regulations or order made thereunder, and B, a remission, refund, drawback or reduction of the tax payable in respect of the importation is not otherwise provided for in this Act - the Customs Act or regulations or order referred to in paragraph A - the provisions of the Customs Act and the regulations or order under which the remission, refund, drawback or reduction of the duty is granted shall be deemed to provide for a remission, reduction, drawback or refund, as the case may require, of the amount of tax calculated on the duty.

Remember I said the VAT is, as we know, a tax that comes at the end of the accumulation of the cost of the item. So it is on the value added. So this Act is saying, unless it specifically states that the VAT is not waived, then it automatically is waived by virtue of the fact that in this case the Customs Act has waived the Customs duty. And that, Madam Deputy Speaker, was not the intention of

the drafters and it clearly could not have been the intention of the Minister. I am advised by the technical people and the staff that actually, prior to about two years ago, it was the practice for this to be administered as I am trying to do it now, but somehow in the last 18 months or so, a couple of people have come and said, but you know, you should read this because this actually gives me an entitlement. In the spirit of cooperation, we felt that in looking at this, we should give people some time to adjust. And we have been alerting people when we give statutory orders for waivers that unless it is specifically stated in the letter, that was not the intent. But of course, the law is the law, and you cannot cut a person off from the law if they are entitled to something by law.

What we have to do, if it is not the intention of the law or not the intention of the drafter or not the intention of the Ministry or the Minister, is to come to Parliament and have it amended - to have Parliament express its favour in relation to what it was. So it is a cleaning up. Now, I want to make the point before anybody gets the idea: it does not stop the Minister from giving a waiver of VAT on anything. The Minister can give a waiver as is prescribed in authority by discretion in the law. It does not mean that those laws that exist that already give a waiver of the VAT - because that was the intention - that any of that is withdrawn. And indeed, we would encourage people who have good projects and good ideas, whether they are social projects or economic projects, and believe that a waiver of the VAT is required to help them better execute, to continue to apply for such, and we would adjudicate on them to see the merits and demerits of it. And if it is necessary and required, we will give it.

So this amendment will not affect our farmers. This amendment will not affect our tourism people. This amendment will not affect our manufacturers, who under the Fiscal Incentives Act get what they get and are entitled to what they get. It is just to ensure that unless we specifically say that the VAT is waived and that is the intent, then it should not by automaticity of the law kick in.

So the amendment therefore that we are asking this Honourable Chamber to ponder over, debate, and of course express its favour - and I wanted to make the point, Madam Deputy Speaker, before I go there, is that as part of the introduction of the new Asycuda World system at Customs, as part of the reform process of Customs and of course the build-out of the Barbados Revenue Authority - and we know that certain parts of Customs, certainly the tax function, parts of Customs will transition into the BRA over time - that as part of the UNCTAD training and the World Customs Organisation training and so forth, senior members of the BRA team were given the opportunity to go to some countries and observe how their Asycuda World system operates. One of the countries is Dominica.

And in Dominica they have a slightly different way of doing what we do. We do the waivers up front, so we do a waiver of Customs duty, excise, whatever the case may be. We give a letter to the person or company, they go to Customs and present it. They import the good, they identify it in the tariff code and they submit a value to Customs and then they present a letter saying, well, I have had a waiver from the Ministry of Finance for this and that. And then Customs extracts that part of the value and then applies the VAT. In other countries - Dominica in particular - they do it the other way around. They calculate everything, Madam Deputy Speaker, as part of the process. So they do not recognise the waiver until the end; they calculate the Customs value, import duties, excise tax, other duties and charges, get a total value and then put the VAT on top of that. And when they are finished, then they deduct the waiver from the process. Very, very interesting. We do it the reverse way, but that way seems to make a little bit more sense because it gives you the opportunity to properly apply the intent of the Minister and the Ministry and then show the value of the discretion as exercised. We do it the other way around. And it is also useful because it helps the person who is getting the waiver to understand fully how much it is that they are really benefiting from, and of course not take it for granted. So we have looked at that and we will continue to look at it, and maybe there are lessons there for us in this particular regard.

So, in essence therefore, we are asking Parliament to exercise its judgment in relation to a simple amendment - actually one word we are putting in - where it would now say, at paragraph at section 31(2), and I quote, that the provisions of the Customs Act, regulations or order under which the remission, refund, drawback or reduction of duty is granted shall not - and that is the word we are putting in there - shall not be deemed to provide a remission, refund, drawback or reduction, as the case may require, of the amount of tax calculated on that duty. So by simply placing the word "not" in there, it eliminates or extracts the inherent automaticity of this particular section of the Act that has created a lacuna in relation to the intent of the law as it relates to the application of VAT as a tax on the duty and the overall value of the item.

So I wanted to bring this very early to the House. Of course, as we know, there are many areas in the VAT that need to be addressed in terms of reform. We have had a tax reform study done by the IMF. We have had, of course, the special committee headed by previous retired Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, William Lynn, that I established, who has also done a report on it. We have had word from many of the organisations as part of the process to discuss the coming budgetary proposals, and we are now doing a lot of impact analyses to determine which of those recommendations we can go with. We have shared the study with the Opposition and we hope that they will share with us their ideas and we could possibly have a meeting

with them on it as well, because we think that this is important. The VAT is an important piece of legislation. It is Government's largest gatherer of tax revenue. And it is not something that we should trifle around with. We should try, now that we are 17 years into VAT, to get it as good as possible. No legislation is perfect. No tax, of course, is loved. But for the orderly disposition of business in the realm, it is necessary that we make sure that what taxes we do have, that we make those reforms. And perhaps, Madam Deputy Speaker, that can lead us in the very, very near future to our ability to reduce the rates, bring those rates down, as we repair the base of the VAT, which in many respects over the last several years has been eroded gradually and caused lesser revenue to come into the system.

So simple amendment, important in the process. We thought it would not cause too much disruption. It is not a revenue grab because you are not really going to get any great lot of revenue from it one way or the other. But it is something that we can quickly do and we prefer to bring it here to the House of Assembly as we open up this year in session for the work of the Government and certainly the work of the Ministry of Finance. So I will close on those few words, Madam Deputy Speaker, and express my best wishes to you, of course, and to Barbadians, and for the opportunity to have presented this. I beg to move, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this Bill be read a second time.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall not be long and I just want to rise to make a few observations. In principle, I understand and accept what the Minister has said about seeking to correct an anomaly in relation to the use and practice of the charging of value added tax in instances where persons or entities have received or entitled to receive a refund, a rebate or remittance of the tax that would otherwise be paid, especially in relation to import duties under the Customs Act. And in that context, if that is in fact the way in which it has been applied, it means that this has been a source of revenue as well as a payment that enterprises and individuals would otherwise have been subject to, other than those few who have disputed it because of the absence of the law providing for the same.

I am glad to hear that because my initial concern, quite honestly, would have been the impact on enterprises if this was a new practice. And the Minister has given the House the assurance that this is not a new practice, that this is, in fact, the correction of an anomaly in relation to the manner in which the Barbados Revenue Authority would have to apply it in circumstances where those people have taken the legal point.

Now, I say all of this to make the general point that one of the difficulties that this economy is facing is that in the pursuit of more and more revenue through increases of taxation or enforcement in a manner that goes beyond the capacity of individuals or entities to bear, we are in danger of - perhaps we have reached that point already - where there are diminishing returns from the collection of taxes because of the inability of enterprises and individuals to pay anymore. This economy has been effectively in recession now for six years. Enterprises and individuals have had to draw down their savings. And it is against that background that we have said that you can only restore health to the revenue of government, not by the increasing of taxes, not by the broadening of the tax base significantly to bring in people who may not be able to carry the burden, but through growth in the economy. That the tax structure which we have in Barbados with growth is sufficient to meet reasonable expenditure on the part of government.

And that is why in the adjustment process, the one clear point we have made is that the one thing the government has control over is expenditure. It hopes for revenue based on what it charges, but it has control over expenditure for sure. And in the circumstances where companies and households, individual taxpayers, have had to continue to draw down on savings, where the level of business activity has reduced significantly, their ability to pay is compromised.

Now, what are we talking about? Madam Deputy Speaker, you have a situation, for example, where the government's revenue has fallen from about \$2.5 billion in 2007 to about 2.1 billion last year - that is the official figure, the figure given in the February 2014 statement of the Accountant General. And we await the March 2014 figures because those are the actual figures on which we have to rely; it is only about 1.9 billion up to the end of February. And in the IMF tax study, it has it at about 2.1, whereas the estimates have it at about 2.2, 2.3, 2.25. So that what we are clearly seeing is an inability for the government to legitimately collect, not because people want to be breaking the law or to be whatless - to use a Barbadian phrase, worthless - but because people just simply do not have it to pay. And this is the conundrum that we face, so that we have to find ways of triggering growth.

Because more than 65 per cent of government's revenue comes from the volume of transactions in the country. The value added tax is a transactional tax. The more activity we have, the more taxes will be collected. The import duties depend on volume and therefore the level of business activity in the country. The excise taxes, for the most part, bear the same relationship. But the excise taxes are likely to take a hit when the volume of economic activity reduces in a country. So that it is clear to all that triggering economic activity such that growth can return to

this economy is the most important thing that is required of us as a country at this stage.

Now, there is a point at which you do reach rock bottom. And if you start to measure growth - if you reduce yourself to 60 pounds of weight and you go to 62 or 64 - [Laughter.] I did not say anything. And the Minister of Finance knows the joys now of having lost weight. And I congratulate him on that, because you need health in order to survive in anything. Some Members are saying it is as a result of the recession that the Minister has presided over. But the point is, ma'am - and you know that well - that is an essential part of healthiness. But a percentage growth simply means that you are trending in a different direction, that you have broken the decline. But 5 per cent growth, 2 per cent growth, 1 per cent growth, if you have declined 25 per cent cumulatively, does not restore you to the condition where you were.

And that is the danger that we will see later this year. I am not trying to preface the Governor's report. Suffice it to say that the question will be: has revenue declined or has revenue held? Let us not look at the 0.1 per cent growth or the 0.5 per cent growth that persons will try to trumpet. What is the condition of the government to honour its obligations to its workers? And that is now a topic today that is right before us, with the workers of the NCC making their claims. What is the Government's condition to honour its obligations to debt that it carries? What is the capacity of government to provide the support necessary for the productive sectors to help trigger growth back in this economy? Those are the questions that fundamentally have to be confronted. And not just the simple analogy that if you have hit rock bottom, if you have gone so low, you may appear to have some measure of growth, but that measure of growth is so insignificant and makes no difference to the condition of the ordinary person or the ordinary enterprise.

And this is the fundamental point, because if we focus on that - rather than has government's revenue improved, is it true that between April and December government is still facing a decline in revenue? And is that decline to the tune of \$20 billion or more? We are so close to the Governor's report; it is regrettable that he does not believe he has a duty to speak to the public of Barbados anymore. But at least the figures will come. And the question, therefore, is in the context of a Barbados Revenue Agency, are we seeing the turnaround in revenue that the Minister had hoped he would see on the establishment of that agency.

Now, there are some concerns that we would wish the Minister to address as well, because it is our information that 10 persons have already asked to go back to the public service and that there are about 60 persons overall who are asking to go back. Now we are asking for

his assurances as to what is happening, not only because these people have asked to go back, but the general experience of taxpayers has been that the Barbados Revenue Agency was not in a position to process people in a quick and expeditious manner who wanted to pay their taxes. The lines were long, they were centralised. People who were accustomed to paying certain taxes, particularly road taxes at certain offices - for example, in Holetown and elsewhere - were told that they had to come to Warrens. And when they got to Warrens, particularly a number of them who were elderly, were forced to wait in long, long lines. We saw the pictures in the paper as well. And it cannot be that Government is in need of revenue but is not facilitating the ease of payment on the part of taxpayers who want simply to pay their taxes. And I think that this is a matter that the Minister may want to address because people genuinely, genuinely have not had the best of experiences in seeking to comply with their statutory obligations in respect of the payments and the lines that they have had to confront.

But suffice it to say, ma'am, that I am also happy to hear the Minister speak about the importance of correcting the law such that the law is followed, because there have been some moments that the Barbados Revenue Agency has presided over in the last few months that have given others cause for concern. We have not made major political issues out of it, but we are concerned and we have spoken to it because we believe that it is important to get it right and we accept that it is a new agency and there will be teething problems. But having said that, you cannot perpetuate something which is not rooted in the law.

And to what do I refer? The notion that you needed tax clearance certificates to complete conveyances was a matter that caused great concern - concern not just to attorneys at law, but to persons buying land or indeed borrowing against land through mortgages or other loans in this country. The second major matter - and if the Minister and the Prime Minister are not aware of it, they may have to address it - is the issue of the 25 per cent rebate that is provided for in law under the Land Tax Act for villa owners. A number of villa owners and a number of real estate agencies have complained that villas were not being allowed to claim the 25 per cent rebate that is provided for in the law. And to the extent - and this is the point I am making - that we are not seeking to make political points, but we do believe that some of these teething problems will go to the confidence that people have in dealing with the institution.

So I am not sure that the Minister is correct in his vocal comment that they are not entitled to it, because the law does provide for it. And in that context, if it is not the wish of the government to allow villas to benefit from the 25 per cent tax rebate, then the Minister perhaps needs to do what he has done here today by bringing legislation to

make it absolutely clear that the government does not want to give them the benefit of the 25 per cent rebate, or if they do, then allow it to happen. But what we cannot have is uncertainty in the collection of taxes, uncertainty in the incidence of taxes.

And in those circumstances, Madam Deputy Speaker, we feel that there has to be greater attention paid to the whole issue of how the BRA is interpreting the law and how it is collecting, because it has not done itself any good service by making those rulings that have caused people to perhaps not have as much confidence in the new entity as they should. The question that has to be answered, of course, by the time we reach the Estimates, is can we justify the increased expenditure on a Barbados Revenue Agency if in fact and -

in truth it is presiding over the collection of less money, less revenue? Now, we will not know that until the outturn is there. And it is not to speak to the long term future of the agency, but it speaks to the issue of how we execute and how we roll out. Because if you were collecting more money when these entities were within government departments than you are now that it is a statutory agency, then you may have to review it. Is it true that the terms and conditions at the top are so significantly better than the public servants conditions that they previously would have had, that this may well be a concern to some of the employees and to other employees in the government? So I think we need to take an open approach because we all accept that without revenue, the government cannot play its role in relation to either the protection of people in this country through law and order, the protection of public health, the empowerment of persons, the protection of public health spaces without funding.

And what is the reality of our condition? That while earning \$2.1 billion a year, we spend 1.5 billion in debt service between amortization and interest. Our wages bill for central government and statutory corporations is about 1.4 billion. So you're at 2.9 billion before you even pay out a pension. Retiring allowances and pensions are another 250 million. You have gone over 3 billion just with people expenses, salaries and pensions and debt service and you're earning 2.1 billion. Now. You can't continue. And I think this is a point that the Member for St. Philip West has been making consistently, that you cannot take a traditional approach to the resolution of these problems and you cannot expect to tax your way back into fiscal health and stability. And as I said, unless you increase the volume of economic activity and unless you look at your debt service costs, you are going to be climbing a steep, steep slope, almost like Sisypheus. You will never get there.

And I believe, honestly, ma'am, we said it as early as 2009. We said it in 2010. We said it when the other member, the now independent member, was leading this

party in 2011 and 12. I said it again in 2013. I called even for an eminent persons group, we support the notion that fiscal stability needs to come not only by the application of fiscal rules, but we have said that we may have equal even to look at even more stringent measures to cap the deficits to reasonable levels. We do not accept that a government such as ours cannot run a deficit because we have not reached that state of development yet. But deficits that are certainly above 3 per cent are unsustainable for us, especially year after year. But I genuinely believe, ma'am, sincerely believe, that a national approach to the fixing of our condition is absolutely essential.

And it is against that background that I say that we would do well not to play politics as usual, but to understand that if we were to review the statements of the Minister of Finance over the last four years, that we would see that many of the same things that we have said he says too. The difference is that having said them, he does not have the authority to implement them. And at the end of the day, if you don't implement them, you cannot get the benefit of them to curing the fiscal condition and situation of the country. Any independent observer would realize that. And I am saying to this Honourable Chamber now, as we discussed the amendment to the Value Added Tax Act and create the anomaly, you cannot restore government's revenue situation by additional taxes. The people of Barbados can take no more taxes.

In fact, the people of Barbados want to know when they will get their income tax refunds. The people of Barbados want to know when they will get their value added tax refunds. And the evidence given in another place in May of 2013 was that at that stage, almost two years ago, the government owed more than \$300 million in VAT refunds to businesses and individuals in the country. That was the evidence given by the VAT division to the Public Accounts Committee in May 2013. The minister ought to tell us what is the current situation? Has it reduced, has it increased? But the country needs to know, because almost every company is complaining that the absence of the VAT refunds is causing them significant stress, increasing their costs, financing costs, because many of them have had to go for overdraft facilities or term loans just to be able to keep going, because they rely on the VAT refunds as a critical source of revenue in the operation of their businesses.

Similarly, Barbadian workers have traditionally relied on the income tax refunds coming in August and September to be able to plan out things for themselves and their households. And the notion that only a handful of people have received income tax refunds, or the notion that people are being told that they may well get it if there is a medical condition and a letter comes from a doctor, does not give people the confidence. Only yesterday in these precincts, two separate workers came to me to ask the

question about the income tax refunds. Two separate workers who legitimately expected that they would receive the income tax refunds as they have done in years past. And these are the things that cause people not to have confidence in the functioning of government. These are the things that cause people, when taken together, not to have confidence.

Now, I pray, I pray that there will not be an attempt to rubbish the legitimate concerns of Barbadians. I really do. We saw the folly of rubbing the legitimate concerns by dismissing the views and the ratings of the international credit rating agencies. That it has led to a decision by perhaps the oldest Barbadian company, 175 years old, taking a decision to redomicile its effectively its holding company to make the cost of capital cheaper for them to be able to borrow cheaper is a national blow. It's a national blow. And one of the things that may happen - because this news has only broken in the last week, so we now have to wait and see what is the impact of it.

And the Minister for Commerce, the Member for St. James South, has correctly stated that rather than seek to rubbish the concerns, or rather to seek to dismiss them as the Member for St. Lucy tried to do, even when he was advised to keep his mouth shut yesterday, multiple times to protect himself, he embarrassed a whole government. And if I were in the government, I would wonder what form of - I can't even say midsummer madness because it's not summer - but what would have occupied the Member for St. Lucy's mind. What folly that would cause him to recreate or to create a set of circumstances to bring the government into disrepute with one of the largest companies in this country.

Now I make the point that we have now to wait and see what the impact is because there are consequences to actions. And when we said to the Hon. Prime Minister, do not rubbish the credit rating agencies - when the Member for St. James South says as recent as last week that the object and objective of government must be to regain investment grade status, the Member for St. James South is clearly taking a different position from that which was taken earlier by the head of his government. And deep down we all know that it can only be through the regaining of investment grade status that we can make the cost of borrowing cheaper for the government and for companies who are domiciled here. It is a legitimate ambition for this country and it must be pursued as a major national objective.

Standard and Poor's and Moody's are not Democratic Labour Party or Barbados Labour Party or Barbadian even. It is what it is. And they pass a judgment that happens to reflect each other, that is reinforced by the judgments of the IMF Article 4 and reinforced by the judgments of the Inter-American Development Bank and

the European Union and all other agencies. How can everybody be wrong and this government be right? How can the Member for St. Philip West be right on his own in the government and the government dismiss what has been said by him as a legitimate means of confronting the economic problems that we have had in this country? So all of the international financial institutions are wrong, all of the credit rating agencies are wrong, the opposition has been wrong, the Member for St. Philip West is wrong. But the only body who is right in this is the government. You keep doing the same thing over and over but not getting the results that you or the Governor of the Central Bank hoped that you would get.

Over the holidays, the Governor delivered himself of comments that he is so happy that the government of Barbados has now done like the US and the UK and given him a role in the formulation of economic policy. Now this is a government of a central bank that is governed by a Central Bank Act whose actions are restricted to monetary policy. Economic policy is to be formulated at Bay Street, not in the Central Bank towers. But we now better understand the Governor at an awards function. We now better understand part of the difficulty.

And I am saying to the Prime Minister, I'm saying to the Right Honourable Prime Minister, I'm saying to the government, I'm saying to the country - we are now so deep in it that what is required is a national approach. Forget where we stand and forget how we got here. Let us determine how we must move from here. Let us determine how we must stabilize this economy and put it on a platform and a pathway to growth. The Minister of Finance cannot be speaking the right thing and doing the wrong thing, because that's the experience of the Minister of Finance by Barbadians for the last four years. His speeches appear to be acceptable. His actions appear to be lacking.

Now, if I were not in this place, I would describe him in a way that might not be flattering to him. His speeches appear to say the right thing when he addresses the Chamber of Commerce in May 2010, when he addresses us in other speeches in here. But where's the action now? If the action is as a result of people being frightened for their political survival, then I am saying to the government, put it to one side, stabilize this country, because this is the only country that we have. I don't know about other people in here, but I carry one passport and one passport alone. I have no other place to which I can legitimately go to live. And if that is the condition of thousands and tens of thousands of Barbadians, then we owe it to them to get it right. And I trust and pray that we will not stand on pride, because pride cometh before a fall. I trust and pray that we will not stand on partisan sides.

I'm finishing now. But what we face today, and the reason why the minister is treating this with diligence today

and speed, is because he knows he has a revenue problem. And he is rushing to plug every hole and to get every possible cent. Because the truth is he is under pressure to pay the bills of government. And I empathize with that. But this cannot be the way to resolving our condition. The Barbados Tourism Authority has left a slew of bills across the world in excess of \$35 million. And we can go through entity by entity. The government can't pay if it doesn't have the money. It can't manufacture money - although it has tried to do its best with allowing the Central Bank to print beyond what is acceptable to the point where it puts the exchange rate at risk. The NIS cannot take up much more money of government paper. So where are we going with this?

Before it is too late, before other acts of desperation are necessary, I say to the government in good faith, let us pause and let us get a national group to address the issue of revenue and expenditure, the fiscal condition of government, because it is now leading to social consequences. And when social consequences become the order of the day, they are not immediately capable of resolution. We can bring back economic health within two to three years, we can do the things that are necessary for that. But when public health issues become the order of the day, when crime rises - or violent crime, I should say, and acquisitive crime, in straight language, robberies, burglaries, attacks - when people start to pass judgment again in a way that they did not in the last 40 years, that it may be better for them to go overseas and live, young Barbadians not finding jobs here, middle-aged Barbadians laid off going to work in the region, going to Canada, people are making those decisions. They're not going to come back in a hurry. And without them, we can't rebuild this nation.

When families get under pressure because people are not working and fights break out as to how the little bit of money - whether it is welfare or unemployment benefit for as long as it lasts - should be spent in households, it leads to the breakup of families. It leads to social problems. The difficulty, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that we are now reaching the stage where government's inability to pay its way because of its inability to get revenue is having deep and deleterious consequences on the condition of institutions and on ministries to legitimately pay those who they owe. And as a result of individuals and enterprises not receiving that money for which they have supplied goods or services, it is putting pressure on those enterprises and individuals to keep their head above water. I say that the time has come for a national approach to the stabilization of the fiscal condition of this country.

The only reason this is the first business of the Parliament in the first sitting of parliament for 2015 is because of the dire nature of government's revenue. It is the first order of business on an order paper that has over

12 or 13 matters, including matters that have been on the order paper for over three, four months. But this matter is being dealt with in all of its stages because government has to close the loophole in order to protect its revenue. That's the reality now. We're not going to quarrel with the government about that. So it's no use the Attorney General saying, sort of, okay, it's not true. It is true. And in the circumstances it is our judgment that it is true. But what we are saying is the situation is far bigger. Let us work together to resolve it. We understand where genuine attempts have been made and we understand where the prescription has been wrong. We understand where the Governor has now placed himself in the formulation of economic policy and has presided over a situation where he is attempting to cure a 3 per cent decline in an economy since 2007.

But the government's own Statistical Services Department, under the Minister of Finance's jurisdiction, has predicted that the decline has in fact been eight times that, to the tune of 24 per cent. Now, if you are treating the patient for a superficial cut when the patient in truth and in fact has chronic heart problems or chronic lung problems or kidney problems, then the prescription which you give for a 3 per cent decline is unlikely to be the prescription to get you better. And the government and the members of Cabinet must ask themselves, how can the Cabinet and the Government have before it two public entities whose judgment as to the performance of this economy over the last seven years is as wide apart as that of the Central Bank and the Statistical Services Department?

Bearing in mind that the Statistical Services Department is the only entity at law entitled to collect the statistical data, and bearing in mind that the Statistical Services Department would have asked for and received technical assistance from the international financial institutions to help it do a better job, it must be of concern to the government that on the one hand, one entity is telling you that your decline since 2007 is 3 per cent, and on the other hand, the entity that is responsible for the collection and dissemination of state statistics is telling you that it is 24 per cent - it is way outside the margin of error. And it is a matter that ought to attract the attention not just of the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister, but the entire Cabinet. Because you know in your capacity as Members of Parliament that Barbadians, through what they are facing on a day-to-day basis, are more reflecting the reality of a 24 per cent decline in the last seven years. Forget the numbers. Barbadians are smelling hell, people are eking out a living. And our task, quite frankly, has been to ask people to keep hope alive. Because it is only when people believe that better can come that they will not risk themselves or their family circumstances to do things that they might be tempted to do. It is only when they believe that better can come that they will not seek a better living outside of these shores.

And we are at that stage now where the last six months has begun to show us the reality of our condition. This country needs a minimum of 35 garbage trucks to collect garbage - it is now having in its possession, don't mind all the fancy talk about 22 and 23, last Friday they had up to 17. And even if it were 22, it is not the minimum needed. There are 59 routes to collect garbage from a day. And if you deploy them twice, the 30 will get you barely over the top. 35 will give you some comfort. You think I feel that the Minister and the Sanitation Service Authority don't want to collect people's garbage? Of course they want to collect it. But it is a money problem. It is a revenue problem. You think I feel that the hospital doesn't want to have autoclaves working such that surgeries can be done daily and efficiently? Of course they want to do it. But it is a money problem. A revenue problem. You think I feel that the Minister of Education does not want to give the bursaries to which he committed to thousands of Barbadian students who now face the reality of going back into a semester without knowing whether they can register or not? I know he wants to give it, but he can't get the money because there's a money problem and a revenue problem.

You think I don't feel that the people in the sugar industry don't want to get their money? You have farmers who were promised \$120 in price support, got \$60 last year, never got the other \$60. They needed the \$60 in a timely way to apply fertilizer, to be able to do the kind of good husbandry, to be able to get yields up and the crop ready to reap for the next year. And they still didn't get any money yet. Almost \$10 million owed to the sugar farmers of this country. The Minister of Housing making a case now for the Grotto - the contract for the Grotto says that they should be paid within 14 days of practical completion. \$30 million to go to the contractor within 14 days of practical completion. I understand the pressures that the government finds itself under. The Minister of Tourism is in between and in betwixt. More than \$35 million owed by the Barbados Tourism Authority in the marketplace.

Small businesses, all in six - and I didn't intend to go there, but all I'm saying is this: the government has a revenue problem. We understand that. We have reached the stage now where its implications are beginning to affect the social fabric of this country. Let us agree as 30 parliamentarians to work with others outside of this chamber who have the best interest of this country at heart. I said it a year ago. I called it an eminent persons group. If you want to call it something else, call it something else. If you want to call it by whatever name, call it by whatever name. But what is required is the agreement of Barbadians to a plan that can work, that can stabilize this country.

And the Attorney General says, must you make the same speech all the time? I say to the Honourable Attorney General that I want to make the same speech because if people are hard ears and if people are committed to the

path of destruction, then you have to repeat yourself ad nauseam until the public gets the opportunity to correct them by the only way that they need to be corrected - by removing them from the position of taking decisions in this country. That is the reality. And many of them individually make the point that they know that things are hard because people are coming to them. They don't only come to us. Do not look a gift horse in the mouth. Prime Minister, I am being honest and sincere. I really am.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, the opposition may be being carved up, but the one thing is that the opposition does not have to preside over people carrying away money from clients. No. I am saying to you, Mr. Speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me withdraw that comment on my own. That is all right. I am saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, that these 30 members in here must understand that this is not about us. This is about the condition of families in this country. This is the condition about individual employees. This is the condition about the condition of enterprises. And this Act, this Bill before us as the first Bill of 2015, is a reflection of what is intended to correct a desperate revenue situation. Let us not stand on ceremony. And the anomaly in the law is critical to be corrected because government needs every cent to satisfy those agencies which I have referred to and more who do not have the ability to pay their bills and to pay what they owe.

In the circumstances, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will not stand in the way of this amendment. We support the amendment. But we say to the government, remember what they are responsible for. They are not responsible for a political party in the House of Assembly. They are responsible for the condition of a nation. And the time has come for all efforts to be taken to restore confidence in the fiscal affairs of this country, to regain investor grade for the country and for its companies, and to ensure that the people of this country no longer face the social deterioration that has been setting in over the last six to nine months as a result of the lack of money.

The fact that an unemployment benefit fund could reach the point where, after the end of January, without capitalisation, it will have no money, is the saddest commentary that we can make. And the government was aware of it for the last six months. But once again, at the last minute, action is known to be proposed to replenish it with twelve and a half million. But the reality is that the layoffs are continuing.

Step back and understand that it is not about the 30 of us in here. It is about the condition of Barbadian households, Barbadian companies, Barbadian individuals. And if we fail to do it, it will be at their peril. And if I have to say over and over to the Honourable Attorney General, to the point where he believes that it is repetition, it is

because the correct things are not being done, even if said on occasion by a few members on that side. It is now time for action to correct the problem. And I trust and pray that his spirit will come over this chamber to allow us to do the right thing for the people of this country before it becomes too late. I am obliged to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central. Thank you very much.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this amendment to the Value Added Tax Act, which has been introduced by the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs. And I also would like, Madam Deputy Speaker, to agree with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that as we introduce this measure before the House - the first one in 2015 - it signals the seriousness of the government in dealing with the economic issues facing Barbados. And I believe that this is a fitting point at which perhaps her call for a national consensus on economic matters should leap from. And to that extent, I believe we are starting the year 2015 on an excellent note.

That the Barbados economy is on a growth path. I also believe that the Minister of Finance was very clear in introducing what is in effect a rather simple amendment to the Value Added Tax Act to the House. But most importantly, I believe that underpinning this amendment has got to be an indication that the government is moving in the right direction in relation to its fiscal policies. And if we recognise, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this particular measure is not in any way isolated from the measures that we took from the commencement of the last financial year in April last year, which saw the introduction of the Barbados Revenue Authority, to my mind, a big decision, because what it did was to bring under one roof, so to speak, essential revenue authority designed to ensure that matters such as these can be quickly assailed and corrected. And I dare say without the vigilance of the Barbados Revenue Authority, this particular matter, which, as the Minister of Finance correctly identified, was indeed corroding our revenue base, has now been brought to an end in circumstances where both the opposition and indeed clearly demonstrated by the Government, we are keen on seeing the Barbados economy returning to growth and returning to a state where we can move beyond the ratings of international agencies, which, of course, has been a topic which has been very much dear to the hearts of many economic observers.

I dare say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that in relation to the findings of international rating agencies, I don't believe you can find a statement made by this government that seeks to suggest that ratings made by international agencies are not to be taken seriously. Indeed, the Government of Barbados, by its necessary existence, have to operate within an international financial environment in

which the views of not only rating agencies, but the views of economic advisers and certainly international bodies are always factors to be incorporated into our fiscal and economic strategy. What I would say, though, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that one should not misinterpret the right of the Government of Barbados to also analyse in a prudent manner the findings of international rating agencies. We have led, and I believe this was done, initiated by the Barbados Labour Party, our government. We have led a significant fight over the years against the findings of the OECD that threatened to impact negatively on our international ability to grow in relation to international business. And there has never been a divide between the opposition and certainly the Democratic Labour Party government in relation to how we approach matters of an international nature, whether it be the OECD, whether it be the international rating agencies or not.

What I would say, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that what the country is looking for from us in this House is not just words of platitude in relation to how we should approach the economic stability of Barbados. They are not just looking for words that say that we should have a national discussion or a national discourse. What they are looking for, Madam Deputy Speaker, is when matters, particularly in relation to findings of international agencies, are mooted in the international arena, that we can find a discussion rooted in a desire to secure the international and national credibility of the fiscal performance of Barbados. And while we may disagree, Madam Deputy Speaker, in relation to how the economy of Barbados is being managed, we can disagree on that. What we should not disagree on is that any government, whether it be this government or any other future government, must analyse, must be free to analyse the findings of international rating agencies. And that is what is happening, Madam Deputy Speaker, across the globe. And we should not use the findings of international rating agencies as a dagger to create fear and frustration across Barbados.

There is no secret, Madam Deputy Speaker, that particularly in the developed countries, those that have vast resources, much more than Barbados, they have had to deal with the ratings of international rating agencies. And in fact, I know for a fact that countries such as South Africa have in fact used legislative and other measures to ensure that the findings of international agencies alone do not dictate how their economies are analysed. Because there have been issues where the international rating agencies have got it wrong before. There are times when they have gotten it right. But what we must not surrender to, particularly in small, vulnerable economies such as Barbados, we must not surrender ourselves to only relying on the ratings of international agencies. Not when we have been the products, Madam Deputy Speaker, of an excellent educational system. I am not saying we dismiss them, but we must not cave in and surrender because we face a

downgrade or some statement. Because it does not only have to be a downgrade, it does not only have to be a statement by an international agency, but we have to be clear that we must find ourselves placed very squarely in one place. That is the defence of the fiscal integrity of Barbados.

And if we are truly to have a national debate, a national consensus, a coming together in ensuring that we can secure and defend the Barbados economy, particularly when it is at a very sensitive stage. And I want to make this point, Madam Deputy Speaker, because my position, and I would say it is not only my position, but it is clear that the Barbados economy is poised to grow. All the indicators are there. All the indicators that the Barbados economy is poised to return to growth are there. And I would like that positiveness, I would like the positiveness that investors are feeling, I would like that to also be resounded from the benches of the Barbados Labour Party, because I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that we are Barbadians first and foremost. That is why this particular measure, which is brought before the House, designed to ensure that a loophole in relation to exemptions is not used for the purposes of interfering negatively with the revenue position of Barbados, is a neutral position. I believe that by signalling that you will not oppose the amendment signals that you are also on all fours in relation to where we are going as it relates to the need to grow our revenues.

But I think we have to take it a step further, Madam Deputy Speaker, because what we have to engage in is a wider debate, a wider debate now on other issues pertaining to the taxation system of Barbados. And I would like to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this is a good time at the beginning of 2015 to look at the extent to which we can come to a national consensus on the whole question of the tax base of Barbados, the tax base upon which we will grow the Barbados economy. How do we tweak it? How do we ensure that our tax base is sufficiently resilient to ensure that the expenditure of government is properly secured? And it is a known fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, that in an economy that is growing or that is about to grow, you will need to expend more resources particularly targeted at those growth areas. And we have to find a way to come up with a balance that while we are prudent in relation to our expenditure, we do not sacrifice our growth strategy. We do not sacrifice our growth strategy because those are the areas that will be critical in returning Barbados to its position of growth.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I raise these issues in this debate because I think that we have touched on a very important point of potential consensus. We recognise that we have to ask ourselves questions such as: what is the ideal system or level of taxation that we should have in Barbados? Many countries are asking themselves the same question. What is the ideal level of taxation? What are the

factors that will impinge and impact on how we get to that position in terms of determining that? What, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the ideal level of government spending? What is the ideal level of government spending as it relates to, particularly, an economy that is growing? We have to ask ourselves that question. Because I, Madam Deputy Speaker, am responsible for one of those areas, which is the cultural industries sector. And we are very clear that we have to ensure the growth of that sector, not by watching the sector and not by watching the players in the sector working hard to secure additional revenue, but we have to be able to apply and provide to them the necessary incentives and so on. And some of it, Madam Deputy Speaker, will entail the whole question of waivers as we are having to deal with in relation to this amendment - the waivers and tax exemptions. And very shortly, I hope to be able to say to the cultural industries practitioners that we have proclaimed the legislation that will give them the incentives, and we are working to do that early this year.

But this is what we are talking about. Exemptions and tax incentives often, sometimes, are seen to be an erosion of revenue, if you look at them literally. But they also play a critical role in ensuring that we can have the growth of businesses and that we can have the growth of wider streams of revenue in Barbados. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have to prepare an economic environment in which our investors are comfortable. And therefore, the debate on the prudence of measures such as this is certainly welcome. But we have to ensure the integrity of our finances in a manner that allows Barbadians to feel safe and feel happy in relation to going about their daily activities, whether that activity be regular employment, or whether they are involved in investment potential opportunities. So my intervention, Madam Deputy Speaker, is merely to underscore the importance of growing our revenues, having our parliamentarians, who are our major lawmakers, reaching a point of consensus based on what is right for Barbados.

And I am hopeful that this debate, being the first one - and it is not correct to say, as the Leader of the Opposition said, that the reason why we are having this as the first Bill before the House is that there is some crisis in the finances of the government. What it shows is that we have entered 2015 with a clear plan, a clear strategy to ensure that the public's business is given priority. And you will find, if you look at the order paper, that it is filled with a number of important matters which will occupy the attention of this House. And I want to appeal to the opposition to be a bit more serious about their involvement in the House this year, because we are going to be involved in rather serious business. And therefore the agenda each week will be filled with matters of critical importance to the country - the agenda for the government of Barbados, which is also the agenda of the opposition. Because, as

your leader correctly said, we are involved in the business of putting the country and the business of Barbadians first.

And it should be welcome, I believe, when we have made points in the House that reach that peak of national consensus, as I have seen coming from the Leader of the Opposition, that we should embrace it. Because I think that is a point that we need to get to where, as lawmakers, we recognise those matters that do not need a divided House. And I believe matters in relation to securing the revenue of Barbados is one that should see a House united - united not only in relation to a desire to see Barbados continue to prosper, but united in coming up with meaningful alternative suggestions. And I want to put before the House in this first debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we resolve in the year 2015, across the divide, to speak in this House in relation to the present and future development of Barbados. And that we resolve that we will get from both sides, because when we are here, I agree the House does not see political parties, and I believe in that. But what I want to appeal to, if we are really serious about national consensus, is that we will get from both sides of the House examples and alternative strategies on how we can accelerate the growth of the Barbados economy in 2015. And certainly, as a government, we remain open to suggestions coming from the opposition.

And I believe that, particularly in view of the recent reshuffle of the shadow cabinet, the signal from the opposition in reshuffling its shadow portfolios suggests to me that this year they are going to be more open to ideas from this side that suggest that we are going to proceed as a united Parliament in this House. So I am happy about that.

I also believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, that in dealing with matters in relation to the Barbados economy, we have to engage in structured debates that are designed to bolster public confidence in the Barbados economy and not to distract or create distractions and create doubts for our potential investors. And I must say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we have to have more faith as a people in our ability to manage our own affairs even in tough economic times. That is what I believe Barbadians are asking from us. And while we are not saying that we are not open to criticism, I must admit that sometimes when I hear that there are negative pronouncements being made on the Barbados economy, there is a tendency - not only from members of the opposition from time to time, but there is a tendency sometimes for people who may not share our philosophical position - to see that as a jump-off point in which to even lash Barbados even more. I am saying that while we disagree and while we are critical about the pathways that we have been forging as a government, we must ever be mindful that at the end of the day, as a small-volume economy, our investors or potential investors can either be shied away based on what positions we take publicly.

And I am saying that all across Barbados, and certainly the economic reviews that I have seen, point to an economy that is poised to grow. We have a number of projects that we have indicated will be brought on stream this financial year and we are at a time of hope rather than despair. And therefore, while I have been supportive of the Leader of the Opposition in her quest for a national coming together of both the opposition and the government in relation to forging a new approach, a new attitude in terms of how we approach matters of the economy, I am saying that is the tone in which the government enters this debate in the House as the first item of debate in the year 2015. We came out of 2014 in a position where we are saying that we are prepared to roll up our sleeves this year and to put the economy of Barbados back into shape. All of the areas, all of the agencies, all of the entities, the individuals that make up the Barbados economy are now being required to respond.

And I must say that I have seen a significant and good response so far from the cultural industry sector. In fact, only last night I was invited to view one of the up-and-coming films which will be showcased very shortly in Los Angeles and which I believe will take the world by storm. Young entrepreneurs involved in the filmmaking industry in Barbados are awaiting the incentives which we will shortly proclaim under the Cultural Industries Act. But they are doing a phenomenal job internationally. And I have indicated to the group that I met last night - all of the agencies, the BIDC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and of course the Culture Division of the Ministry, the Film and Video Association of Barbados - we are all prepared, particularly in this year, to provide the kind of collaborative, financial and other support to those filmmakers in Barbados who are blazing a trail upon which I believe quite a bit of the growth potential of the Barbados economy rests. And I always say that sometimes we do not pay enough attention to some of the very innovative developments occurring within the cultural industry sector. And I have singled out the film sector as one, but there are several others that are certainly doing their part to help to return Barbados to a position of growth.

And we have indicated, and we will do that, because I understand that in some quarters there may be some doubts as to whether or not we will proclaim the Cultural Industries Act. But that matter is going to the Cabinet very shortly and I have no doubt that we will be proclaiming the legislation very shortly. But that legislation itself, that Act, contains within it a number of very important incentives for the sector. Well, you will see perhaps on the one hand waivers and revenue measures - measures that will perhaps take away a little bit of revenue. On the one hand, you will see the opportunities for growth within this sector that will help to lead the return of the Barbados economy to a position of growth. And I have signalled that example, Madam Deputy Speaker, because this sector, in my view,

holds the key, along with some of the other major sectors, to the return of growth of the Barbados economy.

Only recently I had the benefit of getting a report, an informal report, in relation to what some of our artists or entertainers are doing internationally in relation to the income and revenue generated from various levels of their activities, particularly in North America and Europe. And what is happening - and we are going to get the statistics, we are going to get the measurements and bring them to the House - but the earning of revenue from royalties in particular, where we are having, for example, Barbadian songs being utilised by some of the major supermarket networks across Europe, we are even having entities such as Disney World using creative products and services coming out of Barbados, notably songs and tracks that are developed right here in Barbados. And we are seeing, Madam Deputy Speaker, the movement of royalties, earnings from royalties coming from that activity coming into the Barbados economy. And I believe we have got to get to the point of measuring that impact, measuring the amount of revenue, because I can say to you that there are many Barbadian entrepreneurs involved in this activity and the activity is bringing much benefit to the Barbados economy.

That, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the kind of diversified economy that we should be aiming to create and support in Barbados. Those are the revenue streams, the new revenue streams, that we would have crafted in our growth strategy. And therefore our approach is quite clear, because we recognise that while we have to grow new streams of revenue, we also have to protect the revenue that we have. And that is why I believe that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, in addition to what the Barbados Revenue Authority has been doing, has been to make sure and to ensure that the revenue base is protected. What we have to focus on now - and I would say not only to this House, but to all individuals, businesses, persons who are involved in making a contribution to the Barbados economy - is that this year must be one in which we increase our revenue-earning capacity across all economic sectors in Barbados. It cannot be only the business of the Ministry of Finance or the Barbados Revenue Authority to be looking at revenue streams and so on. But it is in the interest of the return of the Barbados economy to growth that all potentially revenue-earning sectors, whether it is the small entrepreneur, whether it is the larger entities, irrespective of what area - and I have stressed those areas in terms of the cultural industries sector - but all areas of economic activity must be focused on widening the economic base. Because I believe that wider base, which will determine the kind of tax streams that we will have to come up with, will determine, of course, how we can move forward in terms of a newly structured Barbados economy.

And in my readings, Madam Deputy Speaker, particularly within the context of the aftermath of the international recession, these issues are not new issues pertaining to what other countries have had to grapple with. I have read, for example, in the UK, that they, I believe in 1991 or 1992, had to grapple with the whole question of raising their VAT. VAT has now been raised to 20 per cent, I believe, and they raised that because they also had to grapple with issues pertaining to a revenue base. And in fact, if you look at the recent debate in relation to particularly developed economies and developing economies trying to come up with what is the ideal tax base, you will find that different approaches have been taken across varying economies. We have got to find the ideal one for us. But by and large, there is no escaping, in my mind, the position that we have to grow our revenue streams. We have to be able to -

to now reach a point where we are going to be more aggressive in terms of growing new streams of revenue, particularly those that are going to be foreign exchange earning. And therefore a balancing act will have to be created in relation to how we utilise our tax dollars in terms of expenditure and those areas of revenue that will actually equate to not only creating jobs, but they will equate to creating foreign exchange in Barbados.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will bring my presentation to a close, but I believe that I could not allow this opportunity to pass where I believe, as a Parliament, given the sentiments on both sides of the House, we are on a path by signalling to the rest of Barbados that we will go through 2015 being analytical, being critical, yes, but being serious about this thing called national responsibility in relation to attacking the critical areas of concern in relation to the economy of Barbados.

And it is important for us to signal to Barbadians, because one of the things we have to be serious about in growing the Barbados economy is that we have to move our country forward in relation to the responsibility that each of us have as Barbadians - to work harder and forge a new path of responsibility.

Whether it is that we need to have new roads, we need to have new services, new institutions - at the bottom line must be our resolve that we have to work harder as Barbadians. We have to work harder to create the increased revenue that we require to expand our economy and to create the cadre of goods and services that would make us more competitive internationally. That, to my mind, Madam Deputy Speaker, is really where we have to get to.

I do not believe that any Barbadian would question that national consensus reached across the divide in this House, where at the end of the day we have a greater handle on our ability to raise revenue and therefore place

ourselves in a better position to deal with the myriad issues - whether it is at the constituency level, whether it is in relation to dealing with issues on our vulnerable eastern coast in terms of the Scotland District, whether it is providing financial assistance and support to our artists, our cultural practitioners, who will be and are the pioneers for economic growth in Barbados. All of that has to be captured within a context of a consensus towards economic growth in Barbados in 2015.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, with those remarks, I again restate my support for this amendment.

SUSPENSION

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

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the sitting until 2.00 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The sitting is now resumed. When the suspension was taken, we were on Government Business and with that we will continue. Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. M. M. AGARD: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to what has so far been a largely non-contentious debate and I just want to make a very short intervention on this particular issue. I am mindful that when the concept of a value added tax was considered, it was supposed to be a good tax to the ordinary man. It was a tax that would serve the purpose of replacing several minor taxes and duties applied to the cost of goods and therefore it would lead to a reduction in the price of goods. And so the ordinary man considered and looked forward to a reduction in prices. In an era of trade liberalisation, where there was a platform for the reduction of import taxes, it served at the national level to facilitate the demands of those calling for the reduction of import taxes and the levelling of a playing field, so to speak, in terms of our manufacturers here. It also served the purpose of allowing them to become more competitive as their export duties were also reduced. And from a government point of view, it provided an excellent revenue stream upon which government could rely for their resources.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to embrace this value added tax because I believe that it has served its purpose well, even though in the last few weeks we have had varying voices being raised on the issue. But I prefer to

take the view of the head of the VAT Implementation Unit who once referred to it as a tax that, if you treated it with intelligence, integrity, care and respect, it was likely to reciprocate. And I know that VAT has done that because we have had even the Minister of Finance at one point in time boasting that VAT had actually exceeded even his expectations. And rather than collect 800 to 900 million dollars in an 18-month period after the rate change, he collected 1.3 billion dollars. So we know that this is a tax that works.

However, I want to say to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that if indeed we have a tax that works, and if we have a tax upon which the backs of ordinary Barbadians are contributing and contributing even in these harsh economic times, I believe that we need to look very critically at ways in which we can - I do not necessarily want to say give back - but certainly we need to look at ways in which we can make this tax work for the ordinary person.

Now, one of the things that I have to say, and I speak on behalf of a number of people, not just in my constituency, where we do have not only a residential area but a thriving commercial area, is that delays in VAT returns have caused considerable hardship on small business people. In essence, most business people work or labour under a very small cash flow and they depend on refunds from VAT to finance further purchasing of goods so that they may ply their trade. What has developed recently - and maybe it has been going on for a long time, but it has certainly been exacerbated of late - is that most business people are crying out for their VAT returns in the same way that the ordinary household is crying out for the income tax return.

Now, when Barbados faced its difficult economic situation, we were asked by the Prime Minister - and I say we, because I am a small business person as well - we were asked by the Prime Minister to work with Barbados. He called upon the private sector to give of their all, to make the necessary sacrifices and to make the necessary choices to support the government. And I believe that small business people have done so. We have registered over 11 000 small businesses, even though it may not seem that way. We contribute over 50 per cent to GDP. We are employing people who would otherwise not be employed. We are employing some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society - young people, women for example - and we are providing them with an opportunity to manage their households. Yet in as much as we are playing our part, I believe that government has not necessarily been fair to us and fair to small business owners out there in terms of the delay of this VAT refund.

Now, the legislation in the VAT Act actually calls for a 1 per cent rate of interest to be levied on any outstanding funds by Government. It also makes provision

for the second contributions to actually be offset by monies owed by government. Yet in many ways, we are not able to make use of these provisions. And in doing so, many small businesses actually suffer. Some suffer in silence, others might be vocal, yet they suffer all the same. And I simply want to say to you that we need to be cognisant that if we are going to ask small business people to partner with government in ensuring some buoyancy in the economy, that we need to be fair to them and that we ought really and truly to ensure that VAT refunds are done in a timely fashion. I certainly hope that the blip that the Minister of Finance spoke about recently about the website being hacked has been fixed so that small businesses can get their refunds in a timely fashion.

The other small intervention that I would like to make is on behalf of our medical services. Now, you know that medical services are classified as part of the exempt services in the schedule. We have from the time of implementation carried all of our cost. Every facility within the medical fraternity carries a VAT addition to it. If we are purchasing supplies, they are vat-able. Our rent and utilities are vat-able. Every swab of gauze, alcohol, needles - all of them are vat-able. We, on the other hand, cannot recover any of the VAT that is paid for our goods and supplies. Many people have said in the past that the particular cost that we have been asked to absorb can always be redistributed to our patients. But let us be fair. Medical costs today are some of the most escalating costs that an individual has to face. And it is virtually impossible, if not improper, for practitioners or physicians to pass that cost on to their patients.

I am asking that a study be done. I believe that the time has come for a study to be done for us to determine whether the tax policies of our government are actually contributing to the escalating cost of medical services in this country and if any consideration can be given - if it is shown empirically that such is the case. And I am not necessarily saying that such might well be the case, but I am simply asking that if such is deemed to be the case, that some consideration is given to the review of medical services in that VAT schedule.

I also know that in a past BLP administration we had looked very critically and I do believe that Cabinet had approved a basket of goods that would include medical supplies and supplements. Now, these things are critical in the prevention of severe or chronic debilitating diseases. During the by-election - and I believe it was the by-election in which you emerged victorious - there was a lot being said about this basket of goods. Subsequent to that, we have not really heard much about it. And I believe that the time has come where even when government itself is grappling with its inability to finance its own health costs, that we should look very critically at applying whatever strategies we can apply to ensure that we facilitate this

basket of goods and that we contribute to the health of those who might be otherwise afflicted with chronic diseases.

Now, in addition to the ones that we know, I want to bring to your attention mental health disease. This is a rapidly emerging condition. Most Barbadians have not yet come to terms with it, but it is indeed a condition that can be exceedingly debilitating. And I am asking that included in that basket of goods, if there is consideration to be given, that one would consider medication for mental health. I want to qualify what I am saying because I do believe that someone will say, but not all medication has that applied to it. I am not speaking of medication that has been listed on the formulary or those that already have been exempted. I am speaking of others that may not so be treated and that now need to be considered in this way.

I believe that the health of a nation is critical to its productivity. I believe that we need to have every Barbadian as healthy as they can be in order to work toward a Barbados that can withstand all the shocks of a difficult fiscal position. And therefore I am asking for this complete study and consideration to be given to a basket of goods whereby drugs, medication, supplements and all other supplies be considered for an exemption. And with those few words I shall take my seat.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it is incumbent on me - or it would be incumbent on me - to congratulate the Honourable Member for Christ Church West for presenting the reply on behalf of the opposition in relation to this matter. I am eternally indebted to the Honourable Member for being as focused and as erudite in her presentation, balanced and fair and clearly knowledgeable about what she was speaking of. And we are all the much better for the presentation.

In fact, I will say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this is a matter that really ought not to have detained the House for as long as it had. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition wanted to get a twelfth try at practising her presentation for the upcoming budget and used the opportunity to go through again the iteration of all of the things that we have heard before ad infinitum, repeated and repeated about what is wrong in Barbados and how terrible things are.

In fact, I was intrigued, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition seemed to have been trying to presage - to get ahead of - some press release that the Governor of the Central Bank was going to issue today, and trying to set some tone to pre-empt what he was going to say. I don't know what is in it. I am going to wait like

anybody else, I hear. But it seems as though the Leader of the Opposition knew and decided that it was better to try to make an argument on the one hand that things were so bad in Barbados, or had fallen to such a calamitous extent, that if just perchance the Governor were to say that things were turning around and some parts of the macro economy were looking up and going in a direction that we wanted to go in, that it was so bad that would not make much of a difference. In fact, that was the entire kernel of the Honourable Member's presentation.

And the Honourable Member latched on to this thing that I have heard repeated all of the time - that the Statistical Department has determined through some measure that the economy of Barbados has declined since 2009 by 24 per cent. I have heard it in other quarters as well. I haven't seen the document they are speaking to, but they seem to know more about what was happening in the Statistical Department than the Minister himself. But I leave the experts to judge that and to deal with it. No, it is not a reflection on the Minister. It is a reflection on other things in Barbados. And perhaps, if it is in fact true that they have such a document, how far things have fallen in relation to what goes on in Barbados.

You know, it used to be a funny coy to talk about documents dropping off a truck. People used to walk around and use that as some feather in their back pocket. But it has now reached such a ridiculous level that ordinary business - from the ordinary to the most confidential business - cannot be conducted in a country unless you can read it on the front page. And a lot of the time, a lot of that stuff is incomplete. It is not untrue to the extent that it is incomplete, but yet it finds its way into the media, into newspapers and so forth and so on. And when the truth comes out, when the facts come out, Madam Deputy Speaker, the purveyors of the untruth or the incomplete information do not even have the common decency and courtesy to go back, either to retract or to correct what it is - the mischief that they put out.

I recall only a couple of months ago, a story came out in the newspaper that the Cabinet had taken a decision to shut down certain departments in Barbados, including the Constituency Empowerment Department, and caused unnecessary stress and anguish on the staff of the Ministry of Social Care and Constituency Empowerment - and people all over calling all over the place wanting to know what is going to happen to them and their mortgages and their bank loans and their other commitments and so forth and so on. And it was a tissue of lies, or misrepresentations - better put - because somebody got hold of some document and decided that they could not wait until the authorities gave the proper information, and then proceeded to parade that document all over the place.

In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, I can say right now without fear of contradiction that as I stand here speaking to this House, there are people spreading a rumour in Barbados that the Government of Barbados is intending to cut people's gratuities and pensions. And that I, as Minister of Finance, have taken that decision, framed the policy and signed it to the Honourable Prime Minister and it is on his desk waiting for him to sign off on. That is what is being spread all around Barbados - just in an attempt to destabilise this country, to cause confusion. And you have ordinary public servants, people who are entitled to these benefits constitutionally. And as the Honourable Member for St. James Central knows, we cannot cut salaries and gratuity and pensions - they are considerably part of your dispersed salary. But they like to play games with people's heads because the mission seems to be led by the political megalomaniacs - as they have been determined and called - the people who are in an indecent haste to get office.

These people, taking the cue from them, decide that if they cannot get the Democratic Labour Party out of office by the ballot, they will get it out by bullying us out of office. Nobody is going to bully anybody out of office. We have been elected as a Government. We have taken decisions that we believe are in the best interest of the country and to defend the honour of Barbados's economy and society. And we have always decided governments as part of the democratic process through the ballot box. And that is how it is done. If we communicate our decisions to the public and the public does not feel that the decisions we have taken or are taking are in their best interest, then the opportunity will come for them to do what they have to do when the time comes. But nobody is going to bastardise the process of democracy in Barbados because they cannot wait to get into office or because they believe they are entitled to get into office - no matter how often they change the Leader of Opposition, business in Parliament simply is not going to happen.

And I don't have anything against the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East. She is an elected member like anybody else in this House of Assembly - albeit by seven or eight votes - but she is an elected member like anybody else. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member did not come here in a wheelbarrow. She got elected like anybody else. And it only takes one vote to get here and she got here with seven. So I am not going to trouble the Honourable Member, but that is how this business is now. We have got to get serious.

So when the Leader of the Opposition makes a plaintive case, I want to believe her. I want to believe that she is genuine. I do not want to ascribe any other motives to her - that she wants to work across the aisle to build a national consensus to repair the Barbados economy. That has to be a consistent thread, a common denominator through the behavioural patterns of the Honourable

Member. But it cannot be that you are cherry-picking when it suits you to get up in here - because there are visitors from the University of Manchester or somewhere and we welcome them this morning - to give the impression that there is this broader and very high-level sense of democratic engagement in Barbados, that the opposition is calling on the Government to form this coalition of the willing to be able to repair the Barbados economy. And then you spend all of your time trying to undermine and to break down and to create mischief in the economy of Barbados.

Take for example the Honourable Member's commentary that 60 members of the BRA have applied to go back over to the public service. I mean, how do you make these statements with a degree of seriousness? And then call on me as Minister to verify. But that is the oldest trick in the book. If I tell you that the Honourable Member for the City caused 10 people in town to fall down in bad faith, and I come in here and say I am calling on the Honourable Member to verify whether or not it is true, it immediately casts in the minds of people, first of all, that it is in fact true - that I have information credible to that fact - and I am not asking him to explain what it is that he did. That is the oldest trick in the book. You cannot come in here and play these games and then tell me that you are serious about working with the Government to achieve this thing and building this national consensus.

We have said it - we will work with the opposition where we have to. In fact, we were building up a very good working relationship, I believe, with the last Leader of Opposition Business. They changed them so often now you do not know who it is, but we were working with the last Leader of Opposition Business. In fact, I believe that the Honourable Member for St. James South, the Honourable Minister for International Business, said it on the radio, said it in here - the former Leader of Opposition Business said himself on the radio that he was working with him on a policy for international business. So we were developing these relationships and all of a sudden that thing is now being scuttled.

I know that the Honourable Member for St. James South - I do not know his favour, Madam Deputy Speaker - but I assume that he would relish the opportunity to work with the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East on these matters. But we have got to be consistent in this particular regard.

Then we had this thing by the Honourable Member - the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. And I try to follow the logic, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Honourable Member said the Minister of Finance came in here with this amendment because he is scratching around looking for money. And I am trying to raise money. Yes, I am scratching around looking for money - the Minister of

Finance is looking for revenue. But what is the role of a Minister of Finance? The role of the Minister of Finance is to find revenue to run the country. So do not lament to me on the one hand that I owe X and I owe Y and we owe this body and we owe that body and cannot get the money - and when we come to do an amendment that will close a loophole in the law to assist Government in building back the VAT base legitimately, to earn more revenue to pay the people you say that we owe, then you complain about it.

It is not a whole lot of money - that is the truth. It is not \$100 million or \$40 million that you are going to bring in. But you are ensuring, first of all, that you bring clarity to the law. Secondly, you are ensuring that the will and discretion of the Minister and the will and intent of the statutory instruments that exist within the law for waivers is not bastardised by its own weight and by its own trigger - because the Act gives automaticity to a waiver when that was never intended. That is all this is about. A simple matter. We could have dispensed with this in less than an hour, an hour and a half at the most. And we could have gone on to something else to deal with the management of the Barbados economy.

And I have heard this chatter about growth. Everybody likes to talk about growth. We want growth in the economy. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the deficit, how much expenditure we have, how our revenue is not performing, how we need to close the gap. And I say all of that is true - repeated time and again by myself and others. However, this is the catch, Madam Deputy Speaker. This Government has said what it is going to do and has put the measures in place to ensure that we achieve what we want to achieve. So nobody is in doubt as to what we are doing.

But the opposition - they want their cake and eat it too, because they want to be popular. They want to say: get your deficit down, bring your expenditure and revenue more in line, cut expenditure. But you know what, Madam Deputy Speaker, they will not tell you what to cut. Because if you have to cut jobs, they say don't do that. If you have to cut goods and services, they say don't do that. If you have to cut subsidies and transfers, they say don't do that. If you have to raise the tax, don't do that. If you have to enforce revenue collection, you are killing people. So what is it that you are supposed to do? Because you want to say get your deficit under control but you still want to be popular. So you do not want to find the body. And it is a general disposition that people who are in opposition politics have - this have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too. Now that is a luxury for opposition. But it cannot be a recipe for running government. It cannot be. That is not how government is run. Government is about hard decisions. It is about looking at your resources, looking at your demands, and it is about making live decisions - decisions, yes, that affect the lives of ordinary people and for which

you have to be very, very punctilious and careful when you are doing.

But you have to make a decision. We've made decisions. I administer finance has taken a lot of flack for making decisions and for advising cabinet on certain policy measures. But I know what is important to this country and primary among that is ensuring that we have an adequate stock of our reserves to ensure that this country can participate in the day to day activities of the globe and of the world. Run of the foreign reserves. Game over. Game is over. So priority number one must always be priority number one. And any policy we design in Barbados, you can look at anything, balance of payments, current account, you can look at the fiscal deficit. All those things are important, mightily important, Madam Deputy Speaker, but none of them surpasses in importance the need to have adequate levels of reserves to defend the currency of Barbados on its current peg to the US dollar and to ensure that the day to day transactions of ordinary people, including the Member for Christ Church West, who spoke so eloquently about small businesses having to buy medical supplies and so forth and so on. If there ain't no foreign exchange, you can't buy any because we don't produce them here. We import the majority of them, 90 per cent, 99 per cent. So don't get tied up, as the young people would say. Sorry for using that unfortunate vernacular in the Parliament of Barbados, but don't get nodded thinking that we can go out there doing as we like and watch those reserves dissipate. And then you ain't in the game. You ain't in no game at all. So policy must be anchored against that exchange rate peg and we must work to defend it by having adequate levels of reserves.

That is why last year, when we saw some softness in those reserves, we moved punctiliously immediately to implement a programme to stabilise the reserves of this country. And I am happy to say today that those reserves have been stabilised and that ordinary citizens can now go about their business without having to worry as to whether the central bank is going to have reserves or not.

Your member has a lot of talent and we get to find, misdirected as it is, but we'll find a way to whip it back into line. But that's priority number one. Priority number two, as we said it, to get our deficit going in the right direction, the trajectory - we deal with trends and if the trend is going in the wrong direction, if it is trending the wrong way, then we know we got a problem. So I am not a quarter by quarter person. Every quarter you rush to hear the Central Bank - oh, look at that, gone up and it's gone down. No, no, no, no, no. We are looking to see over a period of time, time series, whether or not this thing is moving in the direction that we want it to look. And I'm satisfied that the report from the Governor of the Central Bank, knowing as I do as Minister of Finance on the finance side, will be able to say that our fiscal measures are

beginning to lock in. Yes, they took a little while before they got going but they're beginning to lock in. And we are seeing those reductions coming about because we have been bold enough as an administration not to put ourselves first, but to put the interest of the country first in taking tough decisions that people have criticised us for, some rightfully, some wrongly. But we have taken the decisions, particularly those decisions to address structural imbalances in this economy that frankly, the time has come to address.

That's why I said in my ministerial statement - and, you know, there are some people who feel they should rush in here at Christmas time with a black box or black bag and announce measures and have a fanfare, because there are some people who went to Miami and bought suits and went to dressers and seamstresses and tailors or whatever and get the frocks made and they buy the hats and they wanted to have parade day down there in Parliament. And apparently I disappointed them when I didn't have a tick. But I ain't operating at that level. I managed in the interest of Barbadians. And we said that there's major structural reform to take place in this economy, particularly on the tax system, and that we need to have a chance to study and do the impact analysis in terms of how these things will behave with individuals, households and businesses. And I mean, you could not want a clearer or more simple reason - and people up in arms, oh, they want a budget, they want a budget and the minister bring no budget and a whole set of hoopla over absolutely nothing at all - except that we are taking our time, doing our reviews, conducting our analysis and ensuring that when we make changes to our tax system, that those changes are appropriate and impactful in a positive way, are not deleterious to the interests of ordinary people and businesses in Barbados.

So that's why I say to my friend from Christ Church West, fear not, my friend, a time is coming when we will look at the VAT. And I said that here in the beginning when I spoke. The VAT is now into the 17th year. The VAT was designed in large part and implemented in whole part by the administration of the last Barbados Labour Party government. Not by the Dems, by the Bees. And we decided when we were in office that there should be a VAT. And the Labour Party completed the process and did all the implementation. And we know from the practice now of 17 years that there are flaws in the VAT. We said that and that they need to be corrected, but we needed to do the empirical analysis first. It's not about responding to emotional comments here or there. It is about doing the analysis first. And we've done that at various levels.

And as the Member has said, one of the major issues, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the issue of refunds. And we know this. I've heard the opposition say that we owe \$300 million in refunds. Absolute rubbish. It is more the other way around - that more than \$300 million is owed to the

VAT and has not been paid in. And I don't make excuses for people who are not paying their taxes, whether it is VAT, income tax, corporation tax, driver's licences or whatever it is, fees - it doesn't matter. We cannot make excuses for that. People have to honour their responsibilities. Government has to honour its responsibilities too. But we are in this system together. And the only way money can flow out for refunds and returns is if money flows in, and if the base of these taxes across the spectrum are eroded.

Look, we just did a study. We didn't need an IMF study for that. We knew it, but they just confirmed it. If we are imposing or if we are assessing total income for income tax purposes, about \$4 billion, and of the assessment of \$4 billion, you're only collecting \$1.3, \$1.4 billion because all the rest is foregone by allowances, deductions and other such credits in the tax system. So when people say that we are over taxed, that all our taxes are high - that may be true in the real sense of the rate. You may say the rate is too high or the incidence of the tax is too high. But you have to do the analysis on the other side of the equation. You have to look at what is foregone, what is given back by deductions, what is given back by allowances, what is given back by tax credits. And you see that a vast majority of the money that is assessed for taxation does not see one bit of tax on it at all.

So when people gripe about how they're getting a tax return of \$8 000 and \$10 000 and they say the government owes them the money - yes, under the law, the government owes them because the government put those things in place and we have to pay. The law is that we have to pay. And if maybe we don't pay for as long as we don't pay, it incurs interest and you have to pay that too. That is why my remit to the BRA is to pay the people their tax returns as soon as the money comes in and there's money - keep paying them. And that is what they have been doing, albeit at a slower pace. But they have done it because that's the law. And I encourage nobody to break the law. I will not be doing that. And people are frankly relying on some of that money to pay bills and to do other things and help their families. And they should get their monies. Yes, but it is all contingent on cash. You have to have cash available to pay these things.

In relation to the VAT, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church West has said, it's a major problem and we've all known this for a number of years - that VAT refund system. And we're going to speak about it when we come to discuss these matters for the tax reform. That VAT refund system needs scrapping altogether because it is causing undue discomfort, particularly to business people, small, medium and large. It is costing a lot of money to administer. We don't have the number of people to be processing all those claims. It has a heavy administrative cost.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please address the Chair.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. I don't meddle in Central Bank stuff. So I'm like everybody else - I see the press release when it comes out like the other Barbadians, or maybe just a couple of hours before it comes out. But the fact is that system needs to be significantly reformed. And we've identified, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a large part of the issue is this question of zero rates and exemptions. We have a whole lot of zero rated items and we need to revisit that because the experts have said to us, if you want to give a benefit, give the benefit - cut out this zero rating thing, just exempt the thing altogether, take it out. There will be no need to collect it and file it in and then claim it back. Just get rid of it. If you want to exempt something, exempt it and leave it at that. Determine what it is you want to exempt and cut out all of that. And that is one thing that this government is going to do. In fact, the two things: the first is to get the money to pay the people that we already owe and then secondly to cut that system off altogether. Just leave it because it is just convoluting the place. It is causing our people distress and we don't need that.

I am going to speak also, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we get to the issue of the basket of goods, because I think this needs exploring. The Member for Christ Church West raised it and yes, there are things that need to be in the basket just as there are things that are in the basket that need to come out. And I can say with some degree of confidence that I was more than shocked when I saw this so-called basket of goods. It is in fact not a basket, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a container of goods. 409 items. 409 items including sirloin steak, tenderloin - yes - pistachio nuts, chocolate. I asked if it was for the hotel sector and the answer was no. And you go through this list - it's a fact - and I had a meeting of the officials and nobody could explain how these 409 items on about 28 spreadsheets, and a whole lot of basmati rice, jasmine rice - I was just totally blown away. It's not a basket of goods, it's a container, and it is not what ordinary folk or even regular folk were using in Barbados, and people have been for the past 17 years getting the benefit - hazelnuts with chocolate and without. You go through the list. It is the most astonishing thing that I have discovered in the Ministry of Finance.

And we're going to have to address that because there's stuff that the Member for Christ Church West quite correctly says should be in that basket that are not - and a whole set of things that are in there that should not even be remotely anywhere near that basket of goods. So it has to be seriously reformed and addressed. I can only assume that the person who put it together, whoever that person is, copied back the tariff head as opposed to going through the entire tariff line and picking out the items they wanted - they copied back the entire tariff head. So if you wanted to

put rice, regular rice, in the basket of goods, the person copied the top tariff head for rice, not knowing or not preferring to know that there are subcategories and various iterations on the leaf of rice, so different tariff headings. So you get everything - basmati, jasmine rice, even dog rice is included in the basket of goods. Smoked salmon - man, do laugh, man. It's a very serious thing. Smoked salmon. I mean, I almost fell off my chair. But I said, this can't be true. This really cannot be true. So clearly somebody dropped the ball and we are going to have to - Honourable Member for Christ Church West, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker - going to have to look at this basket of goods and clean it up.

No, I only now discovered it. That's the truth, because we all assumed that when we heard basket of goods, we all assumed, you know, a little cooking oil, some rice, some sugar, some - you know, the standard things that people would have. We didn't expect that smoked salmon and Scottish cheese - that I don't remember the Member for St. James Central had on an evening when he goes home with a glass of wine - would be in there. We didn't understand that he was getting all that from the supermarket. Merlot, some butternut squash, South African wine. Now that he's a happily married man again, looking all refreshed and rested - no, I'm not going there.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have two minutes left. Don't let it deteriorate to that level.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: No, no, no, we are not going there. We are not going there because, you know, the honourable member is currently in negotiations with me to come over on this side and I am not going to disturb those negotiations. But anyway. I am just joking with him, Madam Deputy Speaker. But we are going to have to look at the fact that we are going to have to do some reform of it and to rebuild its base, but to make the whole thing make sense. And we are going to have to do it with a lot of other taxes too. Excises. We are going to have to look at the excises, we are going to have to look at the income taxes, we are going to look at the corporation taxes as well. All of these things you have to look at in the total reform package. I said we have shared that study with the Opposition. We are hoping that they can send back their comments to us in short order. And if they prefer, we will have a meeting with them to go through to see which ones, what their recommendations are, how they can be fitted in, because I think this should be a national thing. The agencies have responded, the hotels, the Chamber of Commerce, Private Sector Association - everybody has submitted their recommendations and their review and what they feel we should and should not do. So we have to look at those.

So this amendment, Madam Deputy Speaker, is just a piece of housekeeping work that we have to do. And I

want to commend this to the House of Assembly as a responsible thing to do. Whenever we identify that there are issues that were unintended but have arisen through the practice of the implementation of various pieces of legislation and policy in Barbados, it is the responsible thing of government and the Minister to clean those up and to ensure that the intent of Parliament has been carried out to the extent that it has been expressed by the drafters and the policymakers of the law. So with those few words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this bill be read a second time.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that Your Honour do now leave the Chair and that 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.

Clauses 1 - 3, inclusive, were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, Mr. Chairman reported to Her Honour, the DEPUTY SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee without amendment and Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Value Added Tax Amendment Act, 2015.

Mr. CLERK: Order Number Six, Ma'am. In the name of the Honourable Minister of Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management, to move the second reading of the Livestock Control of Strays Amendment Bill, 2015.

ORDER NO. 6 – LIVESTOCK CONTROL OF STRAYS AMENDMENT BILL, 2015

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Livestock Control of Strays Amendment that we seek to do this afternoon is a rather simple matter. But it is a matter that has caused farmers and the non-farming community some measure of distress. And the previous

legislation would not have taken into account four or five areas that we are trying to rectify today.

The areas that were in deficit, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the old legislation would involve, firstly, a deficit where the pound keeper - where livestock strays are impounded - no provisions would have been made as to how many animals could be accumulated within the pound prior to bringing auction to those impounded animals. The previous legislation just spoke to having a provision of auctioning after 10 days of being impounded. The issue with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that what would happen is that the pound keepers would usually wait to accumulate a large number of animals before they moved to execute auction. The issue with that again would be that it adds significant costs because you have to maintain them, you have to feed them, you have to provide veterinary services and at times you would have certain other stress-related problems with those animals. So the old legislation has a deficit in regards to treating to that particular problem. And we intend to provide within the new legislation a set of clauses that ensure that it is not just a matter of a 10-day prescription beyond which the pound keeper can execute auction, but he can execute auction whether you have one animal, two animals or a large number of animals.

In addition to that provision, the previous legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker, did not protect the pound keeper in regards to carrying out his day-to-day activities, and at times they will be subjected to various abuses and at times assault in regards to carrying out their activity of impounding animals that would have strayed away. In addition to that provision being a deficit in the previous legislation, it was drawn to our attention that the previous legislation that we are amending had an error in it in that it allowed for the pound keeper to trespass and would be given the right to go on private property and, in addition to going on to private property, going on to the property of the owner of the stray whilst the animal would have strayed and confiscating the animal as a stray while still on the owner's property. No, that would be an anomaly of the highest order and would be a contravention of the law - that would be trespassing. And as a result, this provision, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are trying to rectify in the new legislation.

And then a fourth one that I think is important - that is the having of animals tied very close to a major road where from time to time we would see fairly large animals being tied at the point where they can actually enter the road if they are staked too close to the road. We are now providing certain penalty provisions in regards to that type of activity in the new legislation. And in addition to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, the only other area of adjustment would be in regards to increasing the penalties so that they would now be dealt with as a summary conviction in those

cases I identified, and a penalty of \$5 000 would be charged.

So in principle then, Madam Deputy Speaker, what we are in fact doing in the amendments would be: one, to allow for the auction of animals irrespective of the number, and secondly, not subject to the discretion of the designated auctioneer as indicated; and also making it an offence for anyone to obstruct the pound keeper from carrying out his impounding responsibilities; and thirdly, making it an offence to have an animal tied too close to the road that can impede traffic and can also cause damage to persons as well as property. And also to ensure that there are penalties, Madam Deputy Speaker, in regards to persons who would ill-treat and abuse animals on their way to the pound or in the possession of a particular pound - that is, not providing proper sustenance, water and food. Those would now be brought into the ambit of the legislation.

So the specific amendments, Madam Deputy Speaker, are attached within the legislation itself that is before us. And I would not want to go into those specific areas because they are there to be read. They are quite simple for anyone to follow. For example, section 5A of the legislation - 5A of Chapter 139A - that deals with livestock being staked up close to roads, where, for example, any person who tethers livestock near a public road or in a public place in a manner that is likely to cause obstruction, damage or injury to any user of the public road is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$5 000 or imprisonment for a term of two years or both, and that is whether the livestock is found tethered near, straying near, or on or lying there. So the sort of specificities are defined within the legislation. I do not think that it is necessary for us to get into those types of specificities in regards to each individual amendment.

And just as I said earlier, the matter of how one treats the animals while they are in the pound - we are providing for damages really once you do not provide for the safekeeping of those animals. And then thirdly, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is in Section 13 and in Section 14, for example, we speak to the ill-treating of impounded animals. And Section 16 in particular is the one that deals with giving the auctioneer the right to effect the auctioning of livestock irrespective of the number of animals in the pound. And then Section 20 amendments speak to obstruction of the pound keeper in carrying out his duties to confiscate animals who are defined as strays.

So Madam Deputy Speaker, these are the amendments that are to be executed in regards to the bill before the House - this Livestock Control of Strays Amendment Bill. And as I said, it is a simple matter but we believe collectively it would bring a number of issues that are now confronting agriculturalists, especially in the area of managing control of strays and protecting people's

property, especially agricultural products, and the risk to life and property on roads by not properly staking our animals and so on. So Madam Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I beg to move that this bill be read a second time.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Madam Deputy Speaker, the opposition we do not have any quarrels with this present amendment. It is indeed important for us at this juncture to modernise the laws as it relates to stray animals. In this case, livestock of animals happens to be. I'm not sure. Well, the original act does define livestock to be, I guess, sheep, goats, pigs, cows, horses and those type of animals. And there are many stories about animals that stray. In fact, in the country area where I lived all my life, there are many stories about persons finding a rope and the story in which a man found a rope and took and walked the rope home only to find that a cow was - and of course he was guilty. He was guilty of stealing a cow. And there are many stories about animals, stray animals walking across our streets.

But when we look at 5A, for example, 5A says that any person who tethers livestock near a public road or public place in a manner that is likely to cause obstruction, damage or injury to any user of the public road is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$5 000 or imprisonment for a term of two years or both. Now, it does not state what it means by near a public road - how many feet, how many metres from a public road. And if you look at a place like Walker, St. George, for example, you'll find that the range of cows may be 2 or 3 metres, 2 metres away from the public road; there is an electric fence where animals cannot go past the fence. But surely in the country area we might find that near a public place may very well - can very well be further defined, because it does not say how many metres away from the public place.

Now, so that is the only contention I have in this particular legislation. Because we know in the public areas in St. George, St. Philip, Christ Church - mainly in rural areas - most farmers today, and those who are into livestock keeping, will have their farms right down to the public road. And we have to look at that very carefully. The other question is what about the town planning department and giving permission to persons to develop the land? For example, in Poole, St. John, where you have just given permission to a number of persons to develop their land in terms of putting houses. I guess when you have a community, you may have very soon - because of the growth of the community - you may have social activity, sporting activity, like a new hard court in St. John; there is a need for community development at Four Roads, for example. But yet you have a farming community. And how far do you expect the farmer to keep his cows away from

the public road? And therefore the town planning department must be aware, when you give permission for development in a farming community, of some of these things.

Because we have found over time, Madam Deputy Speaker, that many new householders go into developments and will want to stop a development that has been in existence for years. In other words, a farmer who has been there all his life may encounter a new housing development, and people now claim, well, the smell of pigs and goats and cows coming near the fence can cause a problem. And we have to be very careful about this one. And I believe it is however a piece of legislation that will help to prevent strays. It also deals with the pound keeper and how many days you can keep the animals impounded. And also it deals with how you displace or auction off these livestock and in what form. So we have no quarrel with this. We only want the government to be aware that in giving permission for development one has to be aware of these new dimensions. We would have loved to see a particular number of metres and so on. But we are happy with the legislation and we are hoping that it could keep a number of our animals off the street.

Now Barbados is noted for not treating the animals carefully. I think Barbadians need to be aware that animals do have some form of rights, in terms of legislation. And often we see from time to time a lot of stray animals being killed in the road. And I wonder from time to time if it is the sanitation department, the environmental department, that is responsible for collecting these dead animals out of the street. And sometimes I don't know which department to call. And quite often we find animals dying in the street and they smell - they are there for a long time and nobody is there to collect them. And I think Barbadians have to be aware that if you own an animal and he dies in the street because of an accident, that it is your duty to collect that dead animal out of the street and bury the animal at some location away from homes. So I believe that we must look carefully at how we keep the animals, how we treat them, how we dispose of them. And of course, the method of selling stray animals is important.

Stealing of animals is also something that we need to look at. There are many persons in Barbados who are not farmers, but for some reason they usually collect these stray animals, especially in rural areas where sometimes it doesn't appear that the land is owned by anyone, but stray animals are grown and tethered on these lands. And many times many persons will go into these hilly areas and slaughter these animals, carrying the produce to Bridgetown or carrying the produce to the market. This is a problem - ordering out pork, ordering the sheep, whatever. This here is causing some problems and we have to look at it. This is nothing new, but it has caused a lot of problems.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Honourable Members, misleading the House when he states that people go into these mountainous areas and then take the meat to Bridgetown. And I am not aware we have any mountains in Barbados, unless the Honourable Member implies that there are people who are doing these things outside of Barbados and then shipping the meat to Barbados.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I've never heard about Mount Hillaby? And also a number of hilly areas. But the truth of the matter is there are many persons in St. Andrew, and in St. George, for example, and St. Philip, and in those areas where they have large plantations and large grass areas, many persons go and slaughter these animals and take the produce either to the market and they sell them without licence. They sell the pork or the beef or the mutton. And people buy them - they call them stray animals. And sometimes these stray animals cause problems. I know of a person who was struck one night with a stray animal running across the road, damaged his vehicle - a cow. I have driven, I think it was one night in St. Philip going to St. John, City Hall Road, and a cow came across the road in the middle of the night. I thought - I was very scared, 1 o'clock, going towards the morning.

But the point is, Madam Deputy Speaker, these stray animals cause problems and they must be controlled. I think the government is trying to control these in this legislation - control how livestock is auctioned off, what the time frame is. And we support this. But I, as I said before, finally, that we definitely - if it was possible to, when you say near a public road, it does not, to my mind, offer any hope to the planter at Walker, St. George, to the livestock owner in St. Philip and Christ Church that must have their fence right down to the street. With those remarks, I think we support this legislation. Thank you.

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

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Just a brief intervention in support of this bill. About two weeks ago, I was at the RSPCA on Saturday morning and I saw two dogs being brought in on a vehicle and I was able to count every rib of each of the two dogs. And I raise that because I was very, very saddened - very, very saddened - that either A, someone could have owned these animals and treated them in such a manner, and or B, that in fact they were captured because indeed they were strays and obviously were in need of nutrition. And as I said, I was very, very, very saddened.

And similarly, I have known a member of the staff - at least I think he is still a member of the staff - of the

RSPCA for many, many years. And I see from time to time pictures that he posts online just to bring to our attention the nature of the cruelty that we as owners of animals bring to these various animals, whether it be dogs, sheep, horses, cows, et cetera. And we really must do better. We really as a people must do better. And I believe that we need to find some methodology to make people accountable and hold people accountable.

One of the things that I notice is fashionable is that when owners of racehorses who can afford to look after them are finished with them, they seem to either sell them or give them to every little fellow around the place, who then parades them around until they realise that in fact there is a real serious challenge in terms of feeding this horse, and then you see the same horses about the place running around wreaking havoc. Again, another area that concerns me and another area that I would hope that the Member for St. Philip West will see how we can address. I don't see anything wrong with a youngster wanting to own a racehorse. But what I do have a problem with is when those who can afford to look after them and ensure that they are properly nurtured - when they have reached the end of their usefulness - then they give them away or they sell them, knowing very well it is most unlikely that the animal would be able to receive the type of care and attention that it really deserves and should have.

So my intervention really is to sensitise Barbadians to the importance of looking after the animals. And certainly the answer cannot be that as soon as the animal has served its usefulness, whether it be as a pet in the yard or as a dog being fought through the hills and gullies - I can't say mountains, because we are just told there are no mountains - but through the hills and valleys of Barbados, that as soon as they are finished with them, you let them loose. I am always angered when I see these dogs in particular with their bruises. And we all see them when we drive around the country. I know I can speak for driving in St. Philip and other places. And you see them beside the streets and you see them crossing the streets, et cetera. We must really do better as a country.

And I'm not sure - because there is a licensing regime and usually these animals are the ones who are not licensed - so maybe we need to have more of a policing regime so that in fact you can go to someone's home and if you see there is an animal there, you can enter and ensure that a licensing regime is in place. But all too often we see them either dead beside the road or we see them malnourished beside the road, and in particular between cane fields when we are driving along. And we also know, and we see from time to time, that those animal pounds - and I use the term loosely - but we know that there are certain establishments, there is one in Woodburn, for example, that collects stray dogs and cats in particular and

looks for homes for them. But indeed, we all know that quite often there is a shortage of homes for these animals.

So the other side of the coin, of course, is that we need to be more sensitive in terms of the breeding of these packs that we have. It really saddens me. And so whilst we are addressing the issue of strays and ensuring that in fact we have a better regime to ensure that when they are collected it can be done with more compassion and does give the relevant authorities certain rights - it is the whole rationale for having to do it to begin with that I am concerned about, because there is a sense of persons not taking ownership of these animals.

To my friend from St. George North who is concerned that the legislation may be defective - as usual, he speaks before he reads the legislation properly. Because the bill clearly states at 5A(1): any person who tethers livestock near a public road or a public place in a manner that is likely to cause obstruction, damage or injury to any user of the public road, et cetera. So the animal can only cause obstruction if it can get onto the road.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: The Honourable Attorney General is misleading the House. The point that I have made - and how he is misleading the House - near the public road causing a nuisance. I am of the view that the word near does not - is not specific enough. Near should have been spelled out. How many feet, how many metres do you want? Near is too loose.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Near a public road. Madam Deputy Speaker, I was merely trying to assist the Member for St. George North. It was impossible for us to specify a distance because you can specify a distance and the person then gives the animal 20 yards of rope so he still crosses the highway. The fact is that the animal needs to be able to cause an obstruction. That is the mischief. That is the mischief.

But seriously, we also know - and this is my final point - we also know the considerable damage that stray animals have caused to farmers across the country. I can think of last year one farmer who I think lost all of her turkeys. We know about sheep in particular, and usually these are small farmers that suffer considerably from these stray animals. It is a difficult issue. It is an issue that, as trivial as a piece of legislation like this may appear on the face of it, is something that is essential because it impacts on the livelihood of many Barbadians, and therefore I unhesitatingly support this bill as presented. Thank you.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to fully support the Honourable Minister of

Agriculture on this particular piece of legislation and of course those who would have spoken in support of it, to add my voice to it, because of course I am an MP of a farming constituency and the farmers of Gibbons and the surrounding areas have had their challenges over the years in dealing with stray animals. And not just stray animals, but animals that roam, that belong to known owners, but they just roam all over the place. And many of the farmers in my area have suffered at times catastrophic loss of their crops.

And it really has caused a lot of distress and disruption in my community because of the contention between farmers and animal owners and so on and so forth. And I applaud the arrival of this amendment to this House because I think that not only the controlling of animals that are loose and stray animals, but one has to be careful that because of the contentions that arise between landowner, farmer and animal owner could also be detrimental to a community in terms of disrupting the community and causing fallout among residents.

Now, as they would say, I arrive from St. Andrew and yes, there are wild animals in St. Andrew, in the hills of St. Andrew - including St. Simon's, Baxters, and all around. And there are a lot of wild goats and sheep and pigs. And the truth is that from time to time the Honourable Member for St. George North is correct in saying that from time to time people slaughter them and they market the meat. And I think that, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is important that we understand that there are risks involved in a poorly managed structure to control these animals.

There is another area as well. There are people who bring exotic pets into the island and then, after a time, cannot feed them any longer or they outgrow their space, and they loose them in the communities. So you have snakes and other types of exotic animals that create hazards for communities. And therefore it is important that we fully support this legislation and that we give those persons in authority to control stray animals the full backing of the law to ensure that they are able to do their jobs. Because from time to time they go to residences where there are animals in distress or stray animals and they run off as though they have no right to go onto these areas and seize these animals. And therefore I fully support the amendment. I think it is something that has to be done. And very often communities are terrorised by these animals. People's projects and properties are held hostage because of these animals.

I want to make a special appeal regarding Waterford, where the Government is trying to execute a project there called the Botanical Gardens.

There are some people in the area who are grazing animals on that project property. We have tried on many

occasions to have them moved off. We have offered them alternative space, and they have simply refused to move their animals from the property because we do not have the power to do it. And that is why this legislation is important, because now I anticipate that we can enforce the law to ensure that these people do not hinder the Government from carrying out its programmes.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have to get to a place in Barbados where those persons who feel that they can flout the law and move on to Government space or private space - and they literally take it over - and then when you seek to reclaim your property, reclaim your land, or to protect your farming products, they want to tell you that you have to find them alternative space when they moved on there of their own accord. And it is a trend developing in Barbados that we have to seriously address. Persons should not be allowed to move in on the Government's property or private property and then tell you as the owner that you cannot get them off unless you find them new space, or you do this or you do that.

And I believe, seriously, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we have to be serious about the enforcement of the law. And if the law is on the books, we should enforce it and enforce it vigorously, without fear or favour, to ensure that the standards of our island and its development are maintained. So I plead for my farmers in the area in Gibbons and Chancery Lane and so on and so forth, and that wherever there are animals that impact upon farmers across the country, that this legislation will now give them a better way, a stronger arm in terms of getting the level of representation and the level of redress that they would certainly deserve and they would certainly need. And therefore, I want to support the Minister of Agriculture fully for bringing this amendment to this House. And that is my contribution.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Madam Deputy Speaker, I also rise to speak on this resolution and make the point that it is a very important resolution. And I am happy to say that we have demonstrated once again the seriousness that we are taking agriculture, ensuring the appreciation between those farmers who farm the lands and also those farmers who keep their animals, whether it be goat, cows, whatever. It shows that we have to be very careful and that we have to ensure that after most persons have farmed the lands that we do not allow stray animals to come and destroy their crops.

As you would know in rural Barbados, this is a complaint that you normally hear and there are some persons who believe that they have rights and other farmers do not have rights. I want to say that I support all farmers -

that is those who would have cows, goats, sheep, et cetera. But they must also appreciate that whereas I support them in rearing their animals, they also have to appreciate that when other farmers spend their money planting their crops and tilling their fields, that they too have rights. So I am happy to see that this Government has taken a serious approach in appreciating that we must feed ourselves and that we must ensure that the rights of other farmers are protected. And that a person just cannot, for the sake of having an animal, allow it to roam the place destroying the efforts of other persons.

And I am hoping that people do not see this as a negative resolution but rather as a resolution protecting the interests of one and all. And we are saying to those persons that we are not speaking about cases where somebody might disturb the animal, it pulls up the iron and runs away as a one-off. But when people deliberately set about not to tie their animals and they stray on other people's property without paying respect to the cost, et cetera - this is what we are dealing with. And I hope that they appreciate the point that we all have to coexist, that the animals - yes, that is part of farming. But those who keep the crops, that is also part of farming.

But I also want to make the point that there is enough grassland that there is no need now for persons to allow their animals to stray. What we need to see is a return to those olden days wherein we farmed - that we are not just looking at a one-off approach, but we can appreciate that agriculture in terms of farming associated with agricultural animals means that you can get the meat, you can get manure, you can get even milk from some animals, and you can also use the leather. I look forward to the day, Madam Deputy Speaker, where we maximise the usage from these animals once more and not just for the sake of a one-off satisfaction, but use the multiple approach in dealing with these animals.

I congratulate the Minister of Agriculture for continuing to push and showing the appreciation that agriculture is still very much strong in Barbados. And to show that we are not here just about planting crops, but we are also here about protecting crops. And we are also saying to those farmers who have the animals that they must also respect the rights of the other farmers.

With those few words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say that I support the Minister of Agriculture and his efforts and that we will continue to impress on Barbadians that we all must start utilising the land we have around us and stop believing that we can just plant grass for the sake of planting grass. There is a value in grass and we must utilise it. And we need to get back to those good old days when we saw the need of utilising the grass - not just for lawnmowers, et cetera, but for feeding ourselves. I thank you.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to add some comments to these amendments, ma'am, and to say to the Minister that I am happy to see that some efforts are being made to deal with untethered animals. And I include stray animals in it as well. I believe it is a very serious matter which requires urgent resolution. And this will be a further step to be able to curtail some of the challenges that we see in our various communities across the length and breadth of Barbados. And perhaps it might be a useful thing if the Honourable Minister and the Ministry of Agriculture would be able to put up some kind of direct hotline for residents, especially in rural Barbados, to be able to make that kind of direct contact. Like ten cows and two horses and quite a few stray dogs are in our villages wreaking havoc on a daily and sometimes more so on a nightly basis. I know that the dangers and the damage are tremendous and also carry very, very high cost. It is not easy to live in a neighbourhood where a pit bull is on the loose. Everybody is afraid.

And the Honourable Members who have spoken so far have made excellent representation regarding those persons who have animals - that they love them as babies, or they love them and they serve a purpose. But when they become old and are no longer able to fulfil the responsible roles that they were serving, they are then let loose in a society. We know of almost every community in Barbados where stray dogs have bitten children, pedestrians and others. They have terrorised communities. They have eaten the pigs, the goats, the sheep, the chickens, the turkeys and so on. And I agree that something must be done as a matter of urgency.

Now, what is really very interesting about these untethered animals, especially the horses and the cows, the very big ones, is that when they are impounded, the owners may come to claim them because they are good, healthy animals and they carry all kinds of fancy stories - when those animals would have destroyed so many crops and created so much havoc. But when the animal is known, it is known whose animal it is, and the owner is contacted, they disagree. So sometimes a car runs across the road, causes an animal - a calf, a cow, a horse - to run across the road, cause a serious accident, or might damage the vehicles, knock out a light and a windscreen and so on. And when that person is called, they deny: that is not my cow, that is not my horse. And the person is then left to take on the responsibility of effecting repairs. And we are lucky that not many people that we know would have lost their lives. But there are some people who have lost their lives as a result of stray animals and other animals crossing the street in dark corners and in areas where people would not expect them to be. And therefore I believe and I support any effort to be able to treat this matter as a matter of urgency.

There are also issues related to dogs and cats in neighbourhoods. And we know, ma'am, of the serious problems with the collection of garbage over the last couple of months. And it is really unfortunate that some persons do not put out their garbage properly. They leave scraps of food and so in the garbage, which will attract any animal, and therefore the tearing of the bags or the knocking down of the garbage bin and the animals taking advantage. But these animals destroy the garbage and scatter it all over the place. And there are some communities where the garbage truck just does not navigate the road so they cannot get in. So there are large amounts of garbage at some corners and on some streets and so on, and then the dogs and the stray cats tear them open. Then, you know, no one person is going to claim that and help to make sure that the streets are cleared and that the garbage is better put away a second time. So I believe that matter needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency in the interests of all in our communities. We do not want any more diseases impacting on our people, as we have seen happening over the years.

Persons are breeding pit bulls that we know are extremely violent. And I believe that an ordinary little fellow or girl in the neighbourhood who can hardly feed him or herself should not have any pit bull, because if you have an animal, you shall have the responsibility of caring for that animal well. And I take this opportunity to praise the persons who work in the dog pound and in that department where, if you no longer want to have your animal, you can call and ask for it to be removed from your premises. They will either put it to sleep if they think that the animal is not worth it because of the condition it may be in - the health condition - or they look after the animals and then turn them over to individuals whom they think, or who indicate, that they can manage and care for them in a better way. Enough of that is not happening and it really is creating quite some challenges.

I want also, ma'am, to refer to cruelty to animals, because I believe that some of these racehorses that we see that have been rejected by their owners - they no longer can win a race, they no longer have any financial benefits to the owners - but you give them to the poor little fellow and girl down the street and they feel elated to have owned an animal. But they have no space to graze them, especially in urban Barbados, no space to graze them. They do not have any control over the animals because the animals were not raised with them. They are riding the animals with no saddle, with no reins or anything. And they are terrorising villages. I saw something on a video with a guy from St. Michael who, when he fell from the horse, it broke his foot. So you could see the bone protruding and the blood all over the place. And the neighbours are yelling. And so I believe that those persons who own animals and the racehorses - that they should be able to call up or to put provision in place. Those horses may have won races and brought in

some funds. They should be able to pay for those animals to be put to sleep and not put them into those poor guys' hands. They are elated to know they own something. But the danger that follows - not only to them, if they ride and break a hand or foot, and God help them the next - but to others in the village.

I do not like a horse to be near to me. I like watching them race. But anything with a mouth bigger than mine, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not want to see it. And that is a fact, because I have had a neighbour who was coming up Ashford Hill in a car and when that horse bolted, that horse kicked the car. Madam Deputy Speaker, if you had seen the damage, it looked as though the car had overturned twice. So my neighbour had a broken hand and the gentleman who was driving had a broken leg and a lot of injury in a short space of time. And they were in a car. Suppose they were pedestrians or cyclists or motorists on foot? What would that horse have done? And therefore I think it is really very significant that Barbadians take responsibility not only for their actions in relation to the things they do that are within the law, but they should take responsibility as well for the animals - those dumb animals that would have been in their care - and dispose of them in the correct way.

Some of the horses these poor fellows have are like sticks and bones and we see them because they do not have the funds to be able to get the feed, to buy it, to put the horse in any condition that would be appropriate. But it really is a cause for concern. What is the point in calling the police when that is happening? The police officers that will come are not the ones who are the mounted police. So they really do not know what to do. They have not got the equipment to be able to take these untethered animals and move them to the pound. So it is a real serious matter and you are seeing it being replicated across Barbados now. It is a matter and I would like to think that this legislation will also treat to this whole matter.

I agree to the impounding, Honourable Minister, and I believe that the sale of these animals should be done in a very transparent manner. And if the owners come and say these are my six black belly sheep, the owner has to pay some money to get them back because the pound would have had to feed them for the two or three days and maybe perhaps a week or two. They would have had to be giving them water - that is a cost. They would have to be giving them nourishing feed - that is a cost. And then the workers would have had to be supervising them. I am tired of the taxpayers having to pay out money and private citizens are coming and reaping the benefits. And some of them do not pay a cent because some farmers do not pay a cent in national insurance. They do not pay any income tax. They just do not come into that band of individuals who take that responsibility. And it would be unfortunate for the government to have to be continuously paying out.

Whenever the sale is to be done, that advertisement should come out and persons who have space and land and have the resources to look after those animals that they purchase and can bid correctly should be able to get those animals.

I believe, ma'am, that the legislation pertaining to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals - the RSPCA - needs to be strengthened to be able to provide a bigger staff, because the problem is becoming bigger by the day with all these animals that are on the loose and a lot more people are doing it now. Some of them have dead consciences, I must tell you. I believe that they should have better equipment to help them to be able to carry out their duties, as well as more vehicles. I do not know how many trucks there are that go to the various communities to pick up those animals that they have been asked to take to the pound, but I know that it requires upgrading and that they need to have that kind of strengthening to help them to effectively and efficiently respond to the animals and their removal.

The matter of untethered animals creating havoc at a high cost to property owners and taxpayers is really very real. And it hurts to see how, when one loses 60 turkeys, 20 black belly sheep, nice braced calves, chickens and all that from stray dogs and other animals, those persons have to suffer the costs. Farmers in Barbados are feeling the pinch. They pay high costs for diesel, they pay high costs for the food and the equipment and the properties. Perhaps some of them are renting or they have a lease or whatever. And I believe that they should get the benefits of their labour. For somebody to come overnight and to destroy their animals, to take them, to kill them, to do whatever - I think it is wrong for Barbadians to be going on that road. That is something that we knew happened in other countries across the world, but Barbadians never. We had such a neighbourly kind of relationship going that Barbadians looked after each other. Nowadays, people are breaking down your fence, cutting the chain and taking away your animals to slaughter.

I know that one of the prized cows from Agrofest in 2013 was stolen from a property and taken to a remote place in St. Thomas and slaughtered. When the owner found out, you could only see the carcass. It happens in St. Andrew as well. It happens in other sections of St. Thomas and therefore it is a painful thing, especially if you have a prize bull or heifer and you know what the monetary benefits are, and then somebody steals it from underneath your nose. And I hope that the legislation, whenever there is another improvement, will be able to accept video recordings of people who are stealing. And the poor farmer now has to go at an additional cost to put in cameras and all kinds of alarms and so on, which is really not Barbadian culture. I believe that needs to be looked at urgently to be able to make a tremendous difference.

The predial larceny effect is really taking a toll on what is happening in Barbados. And an extension of that is associated with the persons who are receiving. I know the Honourable Minister and the Member for St. Michael West Central are forever speaking about it and so are all of us in here, because we have constituents who suffer as a result of it. And if I give my cow a dose of Epsom salts today, Tuesday, and somebody steals my cow tonight, Tuesday night, and slaughters it - or I have had to give it whatever medication, if I see a few ticks or something on my cow - then I do not know how much of it is still in the meat. And the person who steals it and slaughters it sells it to whoever, or the person is a butcher. Because for me, Madam Deputy Speaker, for what we see that is left of the carcass, it is no amateur butcher. It is somebody who knows how to cut the meat in precise amounts. And for the way you see the bones that are left, you can tell it is no newcomer that is doing it. And there may be women who are butchers too - so I am not saying just the males, it could be any of the sexes. But I am saying that tells me that we need to really have that full legislation, and the work is cut out for the Honourable Minister and the Member for St. Michael West Central, because if you are receiving stolen goods, there is a penalty. And when you sell it, there are so many other persons who will be impacted upon, especially when it comes to their health. But you do not even go downtown and hear somebody saying, well, this beef here is for \$2.50 a pound, because they know that they will be picked up easily because you have to pay perhaps eight or ten dollars per pound. So you will have to know that is some kind of stolen meat.

I heard on the news only last night - in China - where persons were arrested for taking animals that are already dead, taking off the skin or whatever, cutting them up and selling it to individuals. And I hope that this never happens in Barbados because we are people very particular, and I know what sadness it will bring about if the animal died from some other disease and then human beings are ingesting it. It is wrong. And for the kinds of things and the deterioration I am seeing in my society, ma'am, I do not know if some persons will go to that extent - that your animal is dead, and rather than go and bury it somewhere, burn it and bury it, you give it to somebody, or you take it and you slaughter it and cut it up in proportions and sell it to others. It is really a wrong thing. And perhaps the Honourable Minister will have to look at that - he and his staff in the Ministry of Agriculture.

I also want, Madam Deputy Speaker, to find out from the Honourable Minister in his future plans what legislation there would be put in place for what I call gamecocks. It is something that is permeating this society. I am not so much of the street to know all of the details or what exactly they are called. But I know that there are animals with some wonderful plumage and they are used for fighting in competition. It is creating a lot of challenges

in our communities. And where we had small communities of young men who perhaps had a cock or two and they would fight with one another, nowadays there is so much suffering of some of those animals where the fights are taking place. Our neighbourhoods are overcome now with many, many vehicles because it is such a popular sport and it brings in so much money to the owners that our villages are now rammed with individuals. And these animals are fighting till they kill the opponent - one kills the other. They are giving them B-complex. I am not going to say to the Minister of Health or the Agriculture Minister or whoever where the B-complex is being obtained from and the other vitamins and so that are given to those animals. But it is a burning shame that we would be so cruel to animals, for persons to be fighting them. And for me, I will call that gambling, ma'am. But it is something that requires attention because guys are fighting now in the territory over this game fowl business. And the last thing we want is any further injury or killing or tension in neighbourhoods as a result of that. But it is becoming very popular, and it is a grave concern to all of us in our communities - not only as persons living there, but as Members of Parliament - because another young life that is lost or maimed or disfigured is another challenge to a family and another stigma on a community in this country. And I think that urgent attention must be given to this grave issue where those animals are suffering, but also are the communities that we are trying to develop.

My final comment, ma'am, is to express my gratitude - and I am sure it is the gratitude of everyone in here - for those persons who are animal lovers that seek to care and protect. So we still have persons in the community who will know that the cow that went loose - not just an untethered animal, but one whose neck rope or chain got broken, or the stake got pulled up and the cow strayed away - a few houses down there are still neighbours who will come to say the cow is loose. I just saw the cow down the street on Sunday morning alone. I made a very important call. I am not praising myself, but I am saying this is what I want neighbours to do - to call up an owner of many horses to say, I am now coming in from church, five or six of your horses are on the outside of the fence to the main road. I must tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, were I to walk in there, I would be a Usain Bolt sister, because I told you already, I do not like anything whose mouth is bigger than mine. And for the experience of my neighbour with that horse - she and her partner were in the car - that is the one.

I do not want to answer the Honourable Member for St. Philip North right now, because if I give him a response, ma'am, I am sure that he will go and get in a ZR and leave here. However, ma'am, I want to be as serious as I possibly can to indicate - yes, and he is talking about having a ram at home. But I know some of the members on that side, and I am not saying that about them, but I know

some of them are called village rams. So the Minister can interrupt me as he so desires, since I am coming to my wrap-up. But I know village rams when I see them, ma'am. And I only have to listen to what the women say to know where the village rams are, whether they are on that side or this side. But I know village rams are not women. However, ma'am, on a serious note, I know that village rams are not women, ma'am. The alma mater, ma'am, may have had experience with a woman who is a village ram - I would not know, I would not want to be there.

But I just want to say, ma'am, in closing, how I am so extremely pleased with humanitarians in this country, whether at the community level or at the business level, who are giving of their time - they are tithing their time and resources - to help to care and protect animals. And so we have got persons who are veterinarians who offer their services at low cost to facilitate persons who have challenges with animals. But we also have sanctuaries and people who get resources, they get funding -

to be able to set up homes where animals that have been picked up as strays or otherwise are put back on their feet and given that extra attention, and then they are sold or given away to others who can protect them. And I think it is very important. That is what the RSPCA is really all about. And I want to laud those Barbadians and the staff at the RSPCA for the excellent work I know they have been doing over the years. And I know that they will want to indicate their joy at this amendment today, Madam Deputy Speaker, and of course, look forward to further amendments that will help to make their jobs easier. But, of course, we will bring about a measure of calm, peace and serenity in the various communities across this island. And therefore, I wish, Madam Deputy Speaker, to thank you and of course, that the Minister will, at the soonest day, have this legislation in operation so that I can pick up the phone and call on a hotline and say what is and what is not, and that staff will be there and deal with it with alacrity so that at the end of the day, we all know that our neighbourhoods are safe and better for us to live and enjoy. I wish to thank you sincerely, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Madam Deputy Speaker, I just would like to make a brief contribution to the debate and want to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture for bringing this particular piece of legislation. I think, though, that on the question of stray animals, certainly the Ministry, I think they do have some incentives there which I think farmers can actually utilise in order to avoid their animals straying. And I think one of the unfortunate things that we have seen developing in Barbados is the fact that when persons keep animals, they do not pay attention to the enclosure. In other words, because we lived in a country in

the past where there was a lot of open spaces, you find that what happened is that animals could have strayed a good distance, at least proving to be a nuisance to the neighbours.

Times, though, have changed, and we need to recognise that. And in that regard, therefore, persons who keep animals now have to recognise that they need to pay attention to where they house the animals. And the issue of the accommodation for the animals and the erection of fences is something, of course, that they need to pay attention to. I know now that the Ministry, of course, they do have incentives for farmers who would like to erect fencing around to help keep the animals in a particular area. There are incentives there for that. And I think that one of the things is that we need to encourage the farmers to take advantage of the current facilities that are being offered by the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure that they keep the animals within an enclosure.

Because one of the things that has happened more recently is that livestock agriculture has changed in particular. Where you find, for instance, in the past, people relied on grazing animals a lot. What you have now is a situation where we have a more - what we call a feedlot concept - being introduced, in which animals are kept in a particular locality. And instead of taking what we call the livestock to the feed, you bring the feed to the animals. So a lot more emphasis is being placed, really, on good pasture management and taking the forage and bringing it to the animals. And I think that from that point of view, farmers need to recognise this and take advantage of those facilities that are being offered by the Ministry of Agriculture.

On another point, though, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that again, I will support the legislation from the point of view of the difficulties that we have seen some farmers experience, where attacks by stray animals, especially dogs, have really created havoc in relation to some poultry operations. And these dogs are extremely clever in that they go after sheep, and especially if they can get into henhouses, they do that. And I think that we need to see, too - I want to say, though, that the legislation in itself is not enough, and we need to see a measure of aggression on the part of those persons who are there to hunt down these stray animals in order to ensure that at least those people who have an investment in terms of livestock can be assured that investment is meaningful, because there are too many instances being reported of attacks being perpetrated on sheep.

And I think that is certainly something that we need to pay attention to. And certainly I think that we need to recognise that, yes, the legislation is something that is necessary, but we also need to ensure that those persons who are supposed to enforce that legislation enforce it with alacrity in order to protect those persons who are actually

doing what they are supposed to do, because there are some people who are actually following best practices, and we need to support those persons in the industry who are actually following best practices as it relates to the management of their entire operation. So those are just brief words I would like to say, and I think again, I would like to support the Minister in terms of his efforts to bring some discipline to the management of our livestock. We need to see at least some kind of discipline being introduced on the part of those persons who are actually doing it. And with that I support the legislation.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Madam Deputy Speaker, let me thank all of those members on both sides who have spoken on this amendment. And I want to, as I said, it being not a contentious issue and one where both sides could agree, it would enhance the opportunities to further manage animals, whether they are stray animals or general livestock in enclosed areas. I would want to just make a reference to the statement raised by the Member for St. Thomas, just to allay her fears that the matter of fighting of cocks - in particular the particular strain that she would have raised - is dealt with under the Prevention of Cruelty legislation. Section 6 of that legislation, where there is a summary conviction to the tune of \$10 000 under the Magistrate Court's jurisdiction, and so that matters can be effectively enforced given the appropriate legislation and the regulatory framework would be in place.

And so what I would also like to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the matter in regards to the issue of distance from the road and so on - that was dealt with by the Member for St. Philip South. Those sorts of definitions are not usually placed within the legislation itself. The critical component is the objective of the legislation, which would be to ensure that you have the animal placed far enough that it does not go in the road. That is the bottom line. Once it cannot get into the road, it cannot damage an individual, it cannot damage vehicles, et cetera. I think that is a critical objective of the legislation. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I beg to move that this bill be read a second time.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move 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.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause one stand part as amended. The amendment, Mr. Chairman, is that of changing the date in the legislation from 2014 to that of 2015.

Clause 1, as amended, was called and passed.

Clauses 2 - 9, inclusive, were called and passed.

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

On the separate motions of Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Livestock Control of Strays Amendment Act, 2015.

Mr. CLERK: Order Number 19. In the name of the Honourable Leader of the House, to move that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the grant of sums of money for the service of this island.

ORDER NO. 19 – SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 2, 2014 – 2015

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

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

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

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee of Supply.

Mr. CLERK: In the name of the Honourable Minister of Tourism and International Transport, to move the passing of a resolution to grant the sum of \$1 306 050 from the Consolidated Fund and to place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 2014 to 2015 as shown in the Supplementary Estimates Number 2,

2014 to 2015, which formed the schedule to the resolution. Maintain Treasury in the amount of \$1 289 110.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Chairman, this matter is an administrative one. It relates to the ongoing construction of the new civil aviation building at Charnocks in Christ Church. Mr. Chairman, members would be aware that it is about a year ago we commenced construction on that structure. The plan always was that it would be financed across financial years. It started in March of 2014, so there would have been some in the vote for that year. And of course, there was a sum for this financial year, 2014–15, \$3.8 million. And then of course, because it goes into the next financial year - so three financial years - it was supposed to come under capital expenditure. Hence why it is under this head, Asset Management Programme 109.

In essence, Mr. Chairman, we started the project with \$4.6 million held in escrow by Gaia Inc., who are the project managers for the project. And along with that \$4.6 million, we had approved \$3.8 million for this financial year, well aware that we would need more funds for next financial year. But it seems as though the cash flow element has worked out such that it is better for us to do a supplementary now and then, of course, less funds will be required for next financial year. So let me make it quite clear: this is about cash flow and project management. It is not about overruns. This is not \$1.2 million in addition to the \$10.9 million allocated for the project. This is about \$1.2 million in this financial year that we will not have to spend in the next financial year.

My information, Mr. Chairman, is that the project is in fact on target. It may go over, I am told, two or three hundred thousand dollars, which is within the acceptable range - the contingencies - because there are some fireproof doors or something that was not originally allowed for and they are quite pricey, and the design alteration, et cetera. But nothing major. The project is on track and on schedule. And I think that will be music to the ears of the officers from the Air Transport Licensing Authority, the Civil Aviation Department. And of course, the Member for St. Philip West will be happy to hear - not because it is in his constituency, but as Minister of Agriculture, the Met officers who will also be housed in that building can look forward to occupying a brand new building in another couple of months.

So, Mr. Chairman, as I said, it is an administrative matter relating to cash flow - why we are doing it this year. Just as a matter of interest, we reckon that we would probably put something in the vicinity of \$2.7 million in next year's estimates. And that will cover not only the construction costs, but of course there are some other costs

that have to be paid for consultants and the like. So that is where we are on this matter. I therefore ask that Head 19 stand part.

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

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Chairman, I thank you. Having heard the Minister of Tourism in relation to this matter, I can say from the outset that it is not contentious on this side. We on this side appreciate that the Honourable Minister is seeking additional financing to be able to advance this particular project in relation to the Civil Aviation Department building. And obviously there were a number of issues in relation to the building being condemned a couple of years ago. So we quite appreciate that the staff had to be moved to a different location temporarily and that the building is being constructed at Charnocks.

What, however, Mr. Chairman, does concern us is that much was said on a previous occasion by the Honourable Minister in relation to the importance of having this new building constructed. And the emphasis was placed on the fact that the new construction of this building and the new Civil Aviation Authority would actually allow Barbados to attain Category 1 status. Because, as you know, we have been downgraded to Category 2 for several years. And the situation is that there are a number of carriers that would not be able to benefit from being able to have their aircraft leave Barbados.

So fundamentally the question for the Minister, Mr. Chairman, through you, would be to ask the Honourable Minister to identify whether we are on track in terms of achieving the Category 1 status, so that persons who are particularly interested in being able to have aircraft leaving Barbados and going into other international territories would be able to plan their business accordingly. Because for a government that makes a great song and dance about how important it is to revive the economy, surely this is an area of critical importance to being able to advance the international transportation sector.

And therefore, Mr. Chairman, I would encourage him to perhaps in his closing engage us in a discussion as to where we are in terms of the requirements that need to be met to achieve the Category 1 status at this stage, and also whether in terms of the amount that had been identified initially - the \$10.9 million identified in relation to this project - whether we are still on track, because we have heard at length in various discussions in this Chamber that we are not on track in a number of other projects across the country. So it is with great concern, I think, that the country would want to be engaged by the Honourable Minister as it relates to whether or not we are on track with this particular project. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I suppose it would be appropriate that I congratulate the Member for St. Michael South East on her promotion and of course wish her well. And I think that her comments are reasonable in terms of asking where we were, or where we are, as far as the attainment of Category 1.

I would want - just for the purposes of enlightenment - I know the word 'downgrade' has become a favourite one in the lexicon of this Opposition, but the Category 2 status that we have is nothing that happened under this Government. That is something that we came and found, and it exists for a number of reasons. Let us understand the categorisation process, which is done by the Federal Aviation Administration of the U.S. It relates to your regulatory environment and not so much your bricks and mortar. So in essence, lest the Member think that somehow I neglected to bring something up to the House that was germane to this matter - you could have the fanciest civil aviation building, the prettiest airport, and yet it means nothing to the categorisation exercise.

This is why, for example, people do not understand when they go to St. Vincent and they hear that St. Vincent has Category 1, but look at Arnos Vale and compare it to Grantley Adams. It has nothing to do with the airports. It is that St. Vincent is part of something called the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority and they have Category 1 for several reasons, including because LIAT is based in that region, et cetera, because all of those things factor in. And so their administrative authority arrangements are in keeping.

I am prepared to again give the last administration some credit for trying. Members on this side would recall when the former Member for St. Michael South used to speak about shooting the birds and so on. All of that was part of getting our administrative arrangements up to scratch. And we are in the process of continuing the exercise. As I said, it was not us that downgraded us from 1 to 2. That happened under a previous government, but we are determined to get us back from 2 to 1.

I alluded to a very important aspect of it and that is the creation of the Civil Aviation Authority. The institutional structures, the navigational services, and the training for the air traffic controllers will remain under a government department. But we are going to set up a Civil Aviation Authority to deal with regulatory aspects, because one of the things that the FAA has flagged - and for that matter ICAO as well, the two are not the same; the International Civil Aviation Organisation is different from the Federal Aviation Administration - but they both dislike the rather unsatisfactory situation that we have where in

essence the air navigational services as well as the inspectorate all come under the Director of Civil Aviation. So, God forbid, if there was a disaster in Barbados and the air traffic controllers had to be investigated, the man who is in charge of investigating is also in charge of those who would have to be investigated. So in essence he would be investigating himself. And that is not anything that is desirable, and it has been flagged, and we are in the process of getting that separated. As a matter of fact, the drafting instructions and so on are with the CPC and we look forward to bringing those arrangements in place.

So I think I would just mention that as some of what is in train. We are also looking at possibly setting up a team. There is a retired aviation person that we are looking at because there are some other issues that have to be dealt with in terms of getting Category 1 - having the right personnel in place, et cetera. And we certainly will want to do that. Now, Category 1 in a nutshell means you can have airlines based there that can fly into the U.S. freely. Now, if you want to build a civil aviation industry, you want to have airlines based here. That of course will be fundamental, but I think that we are on track and of course we are discussing it constantly with the Ministry of Finance in terms of having the capacity to do what needs to be done.

It is also important to understand how we got to this point, because there was some suggestion as well that we were maybe dragging our feet. But one has to understand that in 2003 the Civil Aviation Department was put in an IDC space on top of a garment factory in the Seawell Air Services building. That is where they were operating from - very inappropriate, to say the least. And they were giving the IDC \$232 000 a year for that space too. But of course we decided that was not good enough, and we put plans in place for the Civil Aviation building. Apart from that, as a temporary measure, of course we have moved the offices over to the main airport terminal, and that is where they are at the moment.

And as you know, Mr. Chairman, we are dealing with officers who have had a history of having to take action because of the conditions. And so I think that we have, in light of the circumstances, moved as rapidly as we could, and we certainly look forward to the completion of the building. So I thought a little history in terms of the movement of the department and what we are doing would be useful. And I sincerely hope that I was able to also deal with the regulatory side of things, which is where the Category 1 issue comes in. It is not about the building or buildings. But of course it is still good to appreciate all of those concerns. So once again, Mr. Chairman, I thank the Member for the concerns raised, and I ask that Head 19 stand part.

The question that Head 19 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Mr. CLERK: Head 27 - Ministry of Tourism and International Transport - in the amount of \$16 940.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, this is also an administrative matter. Again, no additional funds are being sought. There is a very small sum - \$16 940 - to facilitate the payment of a shortfall in vacation pay to the retired Director of Civil Aviation and the requisite funds associated with the acting and other allowances payable to the current Director of Civil Aviation and five officers who are impacted. As you know, when you do the acting arrangement there will be some movement. The retired Director of course went on pre-retirement leave in July last year and his retirement took effect on 28th October. Therefore, the Ministry, through the International Transport Division, is asking for this small sum to top up his vacation pay entitlement. I will just mention again that savings have been identified under this financial year to facilitate this expenditure. So nothing additional - just shifting around - in order to make sure that Mr. Beckles can get what he is due. I ask that Head 27 stand part.

The question that Head 27 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. R. L. SEALY, Mr. Chairman reported to Her Honour, the DEPUTY SPEAKER, the passing of one Resolution in Committee of Supply and Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. R. L. SEALY, the Resolution was read a first and a second time and agreed to.

Mr. CLERK: Order No. 17. This is the amendment standing in the name of the Honourable Minister of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development - to move the passing of a resolution that the House concur in the amendments of the Honourable the Senate to the Corporate Miscellaneous Provisions Bill, 2014, noted to the House in a message from the Senate dated the December 17, 2014.

ORDER NO. 17 – CORPORATE MISCELLANEOUS
PROVISIONS BILL, 2014 – SENATE
AMENDMENTS

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Madam Deputy Speaker, this morning the Honourable Speaker would have in messages from the Senate to the Honourable House of Assembly reflected on the fact that the Senate had its sitting on Wednesday, December 17, 2014, in respect of the Corporate Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2014, passed it with an amendment that reflected upon one of the schedules that they felt needed to be reconsidered.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am happy to note that it is our considered opinion on my side that we will concur with that opinion of the Senate, especially in respect of the Schedule. We are therefore going to agree that the Schedule is to be amended by deleting subparagraph 6 of paragraph 1 of the Companies Act Cap. 308, with the consequential renumbering of the subsequent subparagraphs.

The fundamental issue here speaks to the fact that in the Companies Act Cap. 308, it is required - or we were proposing to amend it to require - that the number of directors required for an external company shall be two directors. However, upon further consideration and discussions elsewhere, it is the opinion that we should revert to what exists, and have what stands for an external company be the same as that which stands for a domestic company, and that is to have one director therein. Therefore, by deleting subparagraph 6 of paragraph 1 of the Companies Act as proposed, we would naturally revert to the original position. So we concur with that also.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in light of this and with the passage of time, I am also going to propose that we amend clause 1 of the Bill, and it should now be titled: this Act may be cited as the Corporate Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2015, as opposed to 2014. So those are the two things, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we add. I would therefore wish to move that the Honourable House of Assembly concur with the recommendation of the Honourable Senate in respect of the amendments as proposed in this Corporate Miscellaneous Provisions Bill, now to be cited as 2015. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that a message be sent to the Senate indicating that this House concurs in the amendments proposed by the Senate. I further move that the Senate be asked to concur in the amendment to the short title, and that the title be now the Corporate Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2015.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Madam Deputy Speaker, with that we have come to the end of Government Business for today, and I beg to move that the sitting of the House of Assembly be adjourned until Tuesday, 20th January, at 10.00 in the morning.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The question that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, January 20, 2015 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

Prepared with the transcript; for checking against the recording and the Minutes.

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while 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. The Members listed are those identified from the record; the time of meeting, 10.00 a.m., is as stated in the source. The source's transcription of the prayer is garbled (for example 'Remember the time people have been Travis administrative authority') and is replaced by the formula 'Prayers were read.' Please supply from the Votes and Proceedings.

Q2. Throughout. The bracketed time-checks in the source are out of sequence (for example '[1.00 a.m.]' and '[1.30 a.m.]' during the morning and '[2.00 a.m.]' in the afternoon) and have been omitted.

Q3. Throughout. In the source the Leader of the House appears to second his own motions ('I make a second'; 'I beg to second that, Madam Deputy Speaker') on the luncheon suspension, the motion to go into Committee of Supply, the message to the Senate and the adjournment. The seconding words are printed under AN HON. MEMBER; the seconders are not identified. Please confirm.

Q4. Messages. The source gives the President of the Senate as 'Carrie Ann Ifill'; printed as Kerryann Ifill. The message refers to 'subparagraph 66 of paragraph 1', whereas Hon. D. O'N. Inniss, under Order No. 17, refers to subparagraph 6. Please check against the message.

Q5. First Readings of Bills. Hon. C. P. Sinckler moved the first reading of the 'Value Added Tax Amendment Bill, 2014'; the Clerk's reading of Order No. 18 and the passing give the year as 2015. Please confirm the title.

Q6. Matter of privilege. After Mr. SPEAKER said he would recuse himself, the source records Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER's first words only as '[Inaudible.]'. The line 'Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair' has been supplied; the Clerk thereafter addresses the Deputy Speaker. The heading MATTER OF PRIVILEGE is editorial.

Q7. Order No. 18, Hon. S. A. Lashley. Part 1 of the source ends during the speech of Hon. S. A. Lashley and Part 2 begins with the words 'That the Barbados economy

is on a growth path.' Part of the speech may be missing at this point. Please check against the recording.

Q8. Order No. 18, Hon. C. P. Sinckler. The words 'to that level' were printed in the source at the start of the Minister's next paragraph; they complete Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER's caution 'Don't let it deteriorate' and have been moved to her.

Q9. Suspension. No put of the question is recorded in the source. The Leader of the House moved suspension 'until 2 o'clock this afternoon', and the source then reads '[THE SITTING WAS SUSPENDED FOR LUNCH AT 2.00 P.M.]'. The time of suspension is not known; the formula records suspension until 2.00 p.m. Please confirm.

Q10. Order No. 6, Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe. Headed 'DR. THE HON. ROMEL O. SPRINGER, J.P., M.P. (St. Andrew)' in the source; he was not a Member of the 2013–2018 House. Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER called the Member for Christ Church East, the speaker pleads for 'my farmers in the area in Gibbons and Chancery Lane' and speaks of the Government's Botanical Gardens project at Waterford, so the speech is printed under Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE. The speaker also says 'I arrive from St. Andrew'. Please confirm.

Q11. Order No. 6, Hon. D. St.E. Kellman. Headed 'MR. PETER R. PHILLIPS, J.P., M.P. (St. Lucy)' in the source; he was not a Member of the 2013–2018 House. Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER called the Member for St. Lucy, whose Member in 2015 was Hon. D. St.E. Kellman, and the speaker supports the Government's approach, so the speech is printed under his name. The speaker refers to the Bill as a 'resolution'. Please confirm.

Q12. Order No. 19. The Clerk's reading includes 'Maintain Treasury in the amount of \$1,289,110', apparently the call of Head 19, which the Chairman later puts. Printed as in the source; please check against the Supplementary Estimates.

Q13. Committee; Committee of Supply. Mr. CHAIRMAN is not named in the source; the Chairman of Committees, Mr. J. D. Paul, is presumed for all three Committee stages. The Committee stages are condensed to the Official Report formulae. The Value Added Tax Amendment Bill passed without amendment; in the Livestock Bill clause 1 was amended to change the year from 2014 to 2015. Hon. C. P. Sinckler moved that the Bill be 'cited as the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill, 2015'; printed as the Act.

Q14. Adjournment. Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER was in the Chair when the House adjourned, and the adjournment formula names her accordingly.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 13, 2015, with Mr. SPEAKER presiding. The Minutes of December 16, 2014 were confirmed and Mr. SPEAKER read a message from the Senate returning the Corporate Miscellaneous Provisions Bill, 2014 with an amendment. Papers laid included the Productivity Council Annual Report 2011–2013 and the Police Complaints Authority Annual Report, 2013. Hon. C. P. Sinckler moved the first reading of the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill and Standing Orders were suspended. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw rose on a matter of privilege concerning a judgment entered against the Speaker; Mr. SPEAKER recused himself, and Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER, in the Chair, referred the matter to the Committee of Privileges.

Under Order No. 18 Hon. C. P. Sinckler moved the second reading of the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill, 2015, which inserts the word ‘not’ in section 31(2) so that a waiver of customs duty no longer automatically waives the VAT on that duty; statutory waivers for farmers, tourism and manufacturers were unaffected. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley supported the amendment but said Government revenue had fallen from about \$2.5 billion in 2007 to about \$2.1 billion, raised delayed tax refunds and called for a national group on revenue and expenditure. Hon. S. A. Lashley called for national consensus on taxation and spoke of the Cultural Industries Act. After the luncheon suspension Dr. M. M. Agard raised delays in VAT refunds to small businesses, the VAT borne by medical practitioners and the inclusion of mental health medication in the basket of goods. Replying, Hon. C. P. Sinckler rejected the claim that \$300 million was owed in refunds and said that of some \$4 billion assessed for income tax

only \$1.3 to \$1.4 billion was collected. The Bill passed through Committee without amendment and was read a third time and passed.

Under Order No. 6 Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick moved the second reading of the Livestock Control of Strays Amendment Bill, 2015, which allows impounded animals to be auctioned irrespective of number and makes it an offence to obstruct a pound keeper or to tether livestock too close to a road. Mr. G. A. Clarke questioned the meaning of ‘near a public road’ in section 5A, and Hon. A. D. Brathwaite said a fixed distance could be circumvented. Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe spoke for the farmers of Gibbons and Chancery Lane and of animals grazing on the Waterford Botanical Gardens project, Hon. D. St.E. Kellman on the rights of crop and livestock farmers, Miss C. Y. Forde on a hotline for residents, the RSPCA, predial larceny and gamecocks, and Mr. J. D. Paul on enclosure and the feedlot concept. Clause 1 was amended in Committee to change the year to 2015, and the Bill passed as the Livestock Control of Strays Amendment Act, 2015.

Under Order No. 19 the House went into Committee of Supply on Supplementary Estimates of \$1 306 050. Hon. R. L. Sealy said the sum under Head 19 for the new civil aviation building at Charnocks, Christ Church, was a matter of cash flow, \$1.2 million spent this year instead of next, and not an overrun on the \$10.9 million project; Head 27 provided \$16 940 for vacation pay to the retired Director of Civil Aviation and acting allowances. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw asked whether Barbados was on track for Category 1 status, and the Minister said the Category 2 status predated the Government. The Resolution was agreed to.

Under Order No. 17 Hon. D. O’N. Inniss moved that the House concur in the Senate’s amendment, which keeps one director for external companies, and amended clause 1 so that the Bill is cited as of 2015; this was agreed and a message sent to the Senate. The House adjourned until Tuesday, January 20, 2015 at 10.00 a.m.