
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, June 16, 2015

The House of Assembly resumed at 4.00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 16, 2015, the Sitting of Monday, June 15, 2015 having been suspended.

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)

Hon. R. L. SEALY (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

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

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN

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

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

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

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

RESUMPTION

ORDER NO. 16 – FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND BUDGETARY PROPOSALS FOR THE YEAR 2015

Mr. SPEAKER: Good afternoon, Hon. Members. This session resumes. Honourable Members, yesterday evening when the suspension was taken, we were on Order Number 16. And with that we shall continue. Yes, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It is with a heavy heart, truly.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member. Just a minute. Just to indicate that the allotted television time is 3 hours 58 minutes, I am told. Thank you very much.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: 3 hours and 50 minutes. I don't think I shall need that today, sir. Very well. Thank you. It is with a heavy heart, sir, that I rise to respond to what you have just indicated was 3 hours and 50 minutes of torture yesterday afternoon masquerading as this Government's annual financial statement and budgetary proposals. Even as I drove to the House yesterday, the weather across the country seemed to foreshadow the gloom that enveloped Barbados. It was overcast just as the mood of the people was in anticipation of the speech of the Member for St. Michael North West. In truth, Mr. Speaker, if it were not for the pain inflicted on Barbadians, there would be nothing to comment on in his speech. This budget will be better remembered for the things that it did not say than for the things that it said.

The Minister of Finance has succeeded in surpassing the 2008 budget grab and has dragged from the people of Barbados another \$200 million in taxation from the pockets of a people who are already tax fatigued to the point of despair. And I want to repeat it, sir - \$200 million in taxes coming at a time when people are not in a state to be able to accommodate any further extraction from their pockets. And it was done so with a spirit of callousness which is what makes it all the more reprehensible. While he patted himself on the back with one hand, the other hand was deep in your pocket taking out money by stealth. And it was amazing that the run-up to his speech - if you were to use cricketing terms - didn't start from the 3W stand; it started all the way from the University of the West Indies to come right back up to give himself self-praise, because no one else in the country was prepared to praise him for the last 19 months. There was no strategy, sir - announced self-congratulation. And we all know that self-congratulation cannot be a substitute for sound fiscal and economic policy. There was no strategy to encourage growth, no initiatives to create new jobs, no relief for the most vulnerable among

us. This Government continues to punish the people of Barbados for the failure - their failure - to get it right.

This, Mr. Speaker, is now the sixth attempt at trying to stabilise this economy. And bear with me: the Medium Term Fiscal Strategy in 2010; the revised Medium Term Fiscal Strategy thereafter; the August 2013 budget; the revision to the August 2013 budget in December 2013 when 3 000 people were sent home; the revision to that when additional taxes such as an asset tax on non-bank financial institutions and an increase in excise tax were raised in the Estimates of March 2014; and now today - yesterday - number six to get it right. They keep trying new formulas and going back to old formulas and failing, sir, dismally, again and again.

Tell me, Mr. Speaker, truly tell me - what have the people of Barbados done to this Government other than to put them in power? What have they done? And for putting them in power they are known to be punished year after year by incompetence, lack of vision and the commitment of the Government to a few in this country - no more than five people - in the execution of its policies. This Minister yesterday asked you to pay more to eat in Barbados. This Minister yesterday asked you to pay more to drink milk and to drink juice. This Minister yesterday asked you to pay more to live in your own house. This Minister yesterday asked you to pay to speak on your cell phone. This Minister gloried yesterday in the fact that if anybody owes any back taxes at all, they will not be allowed to work in Barbados to pay off the back taxes in the absence of a tax clearance certificate.

And what has been the record of this Minister in truth and in fact? Let us take one minute to go back. The last budget that this Minister delivered to this Honourable House - he told us, sir, that he was going to get a hundred million dollar loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, a policy-based loan to put tourism on a sound and secure footing. And of that hundred million dollars he was going to pay off \$27 million in arrears that the Barbados Tourism Authority owed to people all across the world. That was the first initiative in the last budget taken by this Honourable Chamber, and we stand here today - there has been no hundred million dollar loan from the IDB, and the Barbados Tourism Management Inc., the successor to the BTA, now owes far more money than the \$27 million to which he referred almost two years ago. That is the record of this Minister.

The Minister told us in that same speech that he was going to establish a Business Facilitation Unit. He didn't tell us that, not wanting to give any funds or posts to the Honourable Minister for Commerce, all he would do was to rename a Trade Facilitation Unit a Business and Trade Facilitation Unit - and that in the 22 months it has had three single meetings. No wonder the people in commerce and

international business continue to believe that it is still difficult to do business in Barbados. And in that first meeting, the Minister of Commerce and the heads of department attended; and at the second and the third, junior officers attended with no power to change anything in the conduct of commerce in this country.

But you know, sir, let us come to yesterday - because the thing that strikes me the most about yesterday is that the Minister either has a short memory, didn't prepare for his speech, or was ill served. Because in 2010 the Minister announced an initiative that he purported to announce again yesterday in this budget. When the fees for shops were raised by the former Prime Minister, this Minister of Finance, in his first budget, came into this Parliament and reduced the fees for retail shops for liquor licences from \$1 000 to \$500. But yet yesterday, sir, we are known to have this announced as another new initiative - having been announced by this Minister for the same beneficiaries in a budget in this country. Who are we fooling? Who are we fooling? So that those who are listening on and are not shopkeepers will feel we don't administer easy shopkeepers - he didn't ease them. He did that three, four years ago and they are still reeling in spite of the reduction of the fee, because of the tyranny of the Bride asking them to produce. You can ask the Member for the City of Bridgetown and the Member for St. Michael South East. When people go now to hold a karaoke, they are being told: don't mind you have an annual liquor licence, you have to pay for an occasional liquor licence, or you have to pay \$100 more for the public entertainment licence. And people in this country are being kept above only because they band together and do some sharp lines, and the profits are being cut into - to the extent that there may be profits - by additional sums that they now have to pay just to be able to hold a shop line or karaoke in this country.

But it isn't only that issue of credibility, because when it comes to the implementation of policy, the business community is well aware of the failure of this Government to follow through. This Minister told the providers of direct tourism services that they would get their VAT reduced to 7.5 per cent. He met with them and indicated that 75 per cent of the earnings of restaurants must come from foreign exchange. They indicated to him that was impractical because there are a lot of tourists who come into Barbados through cruise ships who cannot therefore be counted as those paying in foreign exchange to them, because they pay the foreign exchange to the tour operators. It was agreed since two years ago that 75 per cent of the money would come from tourists. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that those same direct tourism service providers do not have the benefit of being able to have a 7.5 per cent VAT rate today as we speak, and three years have gone? But we are worried about growth in the economy.

And while we are on this subject, sir, about the private sector - this Minister made a big song and dance yesterday about expecting growth in the economy to be led by the private sector. But would you believe, sir, there is virtually nothing in here, in this almost 100 pages, that is intended to facilitate growth in the private sector. And if you don't want, sir, to take the word of the Opposition, take the word of the business community who met in this country this morning. And I believe the Minister of Commerce was present. I was forced to admit that this Government has not distinguished itself in facilitating business for business people in this country. That is what the Minister of Commerce would have said this morning to the private sector of Barbados. One would have expected that after a budget speech coming after none last year, the private sector and others across Barbados could speak with clarity and confidence as to the way forward and the initiatives that have been put in place to trigger growth in this country.

But what did he do instead? The Minister boasted that foreign exchange was up - told you that he achieved objective number one. But you know, sir, what the Minister did not tell you - I don't know if he told the Prime Minister, and if he didn't, Prime Minister, you need to know - that foreign reserves in Barbados at the end of March 2015 were \$34 million less than foreign reserves in March 2014. Can you believe that? The Minister chose to compare March foreign reserves with the quarter ending in December. But the quarter ending in December is always less than the quarter ending in March. But you know, sir, he only repeated what the Governor of the Central Bank did in the Governor's April financial and economic report. He only repeated it. So you were likely to believe objective number one, objective number two, objective number three.

He bragged that the deficit had been reduced by half. But, Mr. Speaker, sir, this is *déjà vu*. We have heard it all before. And not only did we hear it before - in 2012, for 2011, the Minister of Finance at page 12 of his last budget speech reminded us of the 2011 performance. And I quote, sir: in 2011, page 12, "we began to see some progress. Real GDP grew by close to 1 per cent." Does it sound familiar? Like yesterday - real GDP grew by close to 1 per cent, tax revenues improved by nearly 10 per cent, and as a percentage of GDP, the deficit was cut in half. Mr. Speaker, when I heard the Minister of Finance speak yesterday, I did not know whether he was speaking about 2014 or 2011. But what is the truth? That in 2011 the deficit was cut in half because the Government transferred payments to the National Insurance Scheme so it would not reflect on Government's books, would not impact the deficit, and then the Government failed to pay suppliers. But all of us know that the number of suppliers who are in fact owed money in Barbados in 2014 and 2015 far exceeds the number and quantum of arrears that was owed in 2011. So this is what you call an idle boast to impress those who

do not know better, and the facts must be exposed because the run-up was worth nothing at the end of the day.

His final brag about laying the foundation for a return to growth, Mr. Speaker, was a vague pie-in-the-sky promise. And I say to you, sir, let us judge - let us judge the fiscal adjustment strategy for what it is. And I want the House to listen carefully. The current account fiscal deficit is \$215 million worse today than it was at the beginning of the 19-month programme. The current account fiscal deficit has worsened by \$215 million compared to when he started the fiscal adjustment programme in August 2013, asking Barbadians to bear sacrifice for him to carry them home safely. The current account debt service has worsened by \$240 million after the 19-month fiscal consolidation programme. The current account interest cost has worsened by \$98 million after the 19-month programme. The capital account amortisation costs have increased by \$117 million during the 19 months of fiscal consolidation. The cost of short and medium term debt has worsened in Barbados in the last 19 months. Mr. Speaker, if that were the sum of it, you would say mission failed, not mission accomplished.

But it gets worse. The Central Bank of Barbados has printed more money after the 19-month programme has been completed than it printed before the start of the 19-month programme. And as I said just now, sir, the Government of Barbados owes out more money to all and sundry locally and overseas. The growth of the accounts payable has increased during the course of the 19-month programme. And finally, sir, in the course of the 19-month programme the international sovereign debt rating of Barbados decreased. And the Minister of Finance wants this House to congratulate him for failure. That is what yesterday was about - please congratulate me for failure. Well, we will congratulate him for losing weight because he asked for that too. But we cannot congratulate him for the success of any fiscal consolidation programme. Objective one failed - March on March, reserves less. Objective two failed. And objective three - nothing in yesterday's programme to put this country on a growth path. That is what the private sector said this morning. He can ask his colleagues sitting next to him what they said. And they said: not a single initiative.

You know what this budget was about yesterday, sir? This budget yesterday was political sleight of hand - purporting to give out, but really grabbing and taking back more. \$200 million more. And in his speech - and I don't know how the newspapers have failed to publish it for the people of Barbados - page 77. This is not the speech of the Opposition. Look at the table, sir: milk cess revenue, \$5 million; basket of goods from the VAT, \$20 million; VAT on gambling, \$20 million; corporation tax, \$19 million; income tax, \$9 million. But yet he told you he gave you back more. But he is collecting more. Land tax, \$44 million; mobile airtime tax, \$32.7 million; sweetened

beverage tax, \$10 million; fuel cess, \$35 million; SSA tipping fee, \$4 million; Government user fees, \$6 million - bringing to a total, sir, according to the Minister of Finance, \$204.7 million in new taxes, and nothing to do with the use of fees on child care centres and immigration and all other Government departments that are to come in the next few months.

What did he give you back? According to him, a scholarship programme of two and a half million. And I am going to come to the political sleight of hand shortly, sir. And a reduction in registration fees of \$2 million. He gave you back \$4.5 million - leaving a net revenue grab by the Government of Barbados, by the Minister of Finance, of \$200.2 million. Is that a mixed bag, or is that a grab and a drag from people who can take no more pressure, having had seven years of taxes and fees and all kinds and manner and form of money being taken from them?

But sir, let me give you the details of the political sleight of hand. And these measures may come to be regarded as political hush measures to create the space for what I will tell you before I sit down here today, because I have a lot to say in here today, sir. Because this Government is continuing to ask Barbadians to suck salt, to bear sacrifice, and cannot guarantee that they will carry them to safety. But a few people - no more than can be counted on one hand in this country - are to live beyond anything we can contemplate, only to be financed by the sacrifices and hardships of the many.

So yesterday the Minister of Finance told us that land tax was to have new rates. Listen carefully. He said that the new rate for land tax was \$150 000 to be zero-rated. The Minister of Finance forgot to tell the country that this same Minister of Finance - not the one that is no longer with us - in 2011, Mr. Speaker, made all properties under \$190 000 in Barbados exempt from land tax. So he shrugs. That is his response now. Well, it is not the response of a couple or an individual owning a property valued at \$190 000 who will now have to find \$190 in land taxes after yesterday's budget, when for the last four years in Barbados they would not have paid a single cent in land tax in this country. Could he have the decency to let these people know that he was subjecting them to land taxes again? And what does he do just now? Like a joker. Every other Minister of Finance - the Honourable Member, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, and all who served before him - had the decency to let the people of Barbados know when they regrettably had to inflict, or to put, a tax on them to help run the Government affairs of this country. But this Minister comes and by omission leaves it to be deduced that tens of thousands of people - people working as maids, people working in the lower level administrative offices in the public service, in clerical positions, people in my constituency all across Bushfall, all across Codrington Hill - and I can go down one for each of these

constituencies on this side and your side too - who have houses valued at \$170 000, \$180 000, can learn from the Opposition that they are now subject to land taxes in Barbados again. Is this how we do business in this country? I say to you that this Government is not fit to govern, not fit to lead the people of this country.

But that wasn't the only item of stealth yesterday. The Minister told you - and the people of Barbados have to get wise to the style of this Minister and this Government - oh, I am giving you a reduction in rates of income tax, 35 to 33 per cent. Whatever. Anytime the offer is something, lock down everything you have fast. Lock up your bag, lock up your house, lock up the windows. Lock it down fast. Because what does he come and do with the same breath? Then he says: I am taking away from you all of your allowances except the personal allowances, the allowance to trade unions, and the allowance to a charity - one charity.

So what happens now? And it is a serious matter, because I know that the Member for St. Peter will - I can speak to this - that one of the few tools that a Government of Barbados has to influence growth in a country and to influence the behaviour of sections of the country has been the use of fiscal incentives. And the Minister comes in the middle of a low-growth or recessionary period - depending on whether you listen to the Central Bank or the Statistics Services Department - and tries to change a culture. What does he do? He tells you that he is leaving you with these few. He doesn't tell you that you lose mortgage interest. He doesn't tell you that you lose home repairs. He doesn't tell you that you lose credit unions. He doesn't tell you that pensioners are now reeling. I have had no less than 10 calls today from pensioners and from people saving in registered retirement savings plans who do not know where they stand - who made commitments on the understanding that they would get some kind of allowance against their income tax.

Mr. Speaker, you know what was the most classic statement that the Minister told you? That you will have more money in your pockets. But you remember what I just read to you from page 77. How can you, Republic of Barbados, have more money in your pockets, but the Government can collect \$9 million more in revenue from income tax? But this is more than not being good at numbers - this is a magic show. He tells you you will have more money in your pockets, but he tells the people and Parliament that income tax will collect \$9 million more. This is madness in this country. And when I tell you they are not fit to govern, believe what I tell you, sir.

But it doesn't end there. Remember I told you - when he gives you a benefit, lock down and batten down. Because early on in the speech the Minister came and told us that he was giving back \$2 million in reduction of fees.

The businessmen, tradesmen and professionals - their fees were to reduce by \$2 million. And then he turns around before the end of the speech.

Oh, my dear. Oh, my dear. Oh my dear. And tells you Mr. Speaker and I can spend a few minutes on this because this is so insidious, it is not funny. He tells you that if you happen to have some arrears that you cannot come the next time you have to register. Seek to register to do your business. To be an electrician, to be an auto mechanic, to be a lab technician, to be a nurse, to be a doctor, to be a lawyer, to be an engineer, to be a water sports operator. Let me carry you through the list, sir, because I believe that the people of Barbados have no clue the tens of thousands of people that are affected by that policy statement yesterday and are going to come to the implementation of it and implementation capacity, capacity for it.

Chapter 373 of the laws of Barbados, the Profession, Trade and Business Regulations Act at the first schedule, second and third schedule list a number of persons, professions or trades that have to register who are now caught by the minister's statement yesterday. Did the cabinet really see this budget before it came in here? Did they really see it? Because I don't know how the Minister of Commerce can sign off now on the potential implications for tens of thousands of people who may be in arrears from not being able to register and therefore not being able to do their business and to earn money in this country and the implications for their loans at the banks means that the implications at the banks for non-performing loans. The implications for the banks means that any of them going in for a loan between now and the next registration period in January may well not be able to get that without producing the tax clearance certificate to the bank in order to borrow money to clear the same taxes.

Let's hear who we're dealing with. First schedule. Attorneys at law, medical practitioners, specialists, accountants, actuaries, architects, dental practitioners, engineers, land surveyors, quantity surveyors, vets, nurses and midwives, auctioneers, builders, contractors, druggists, master stevedores, real estate agents, town planners, advertising agents, auto body technicians. Bear with me. Auto mechanic, auto parts dealers, chiropractor, chiropodists, commission agents, customs brokers, dental hygienist, dental technicians, draftsmen, embalmers. Well, from midwives to embalmers is from cradle to grave. He got you all. Funeral directors and undertakers, flying instructors, gaugers, interior decorators, freelance journalists. Watch yourself. Medical laboratory technologists, midwives, naturopaths, nurses, both general and psychiatric, occupational therapists, operators of boats - that is to say a person including a company providing excursions, tours, water skiing, parasailing and such other services. So the whole west coast lick up the tourist season.

And most of them tend to be very much independent and itinerant people. Ophthalmic dispensers, optometrists, photographers, podiatrists, professional promoters - that is to say, I'm reading the law - a person engaged in promoting entertainment in fields such as music, dancing, sports, games and spectacles of all kinds. But it must include the government because they're putting on the biggest spectacle in Barbados. Psychologists, physiotherapists, racehorse breeders or trainers, including breeders of studs, radiographers, diagnostic or therapeutic, ship's chandler, water sports instructors - that is to say, a person engaged in giving instructions in scuba diving, parasailing, water skiing and such other water sports. I'm sweating just from that list.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, it ain't done yet. Here's the next list. Antique art or handicraft dealers, handicraft, commercial artists, dressmakers, tailors, designers and the like. Driving instructors all across this country. Employment agency operators, furniture manufacturers, insurance practitioners, jewellers, landscape artists, manufacturers of any type of building material. I suppose people might be forgiven to feel that pre-Congo might be caught in that. But if you get tax concessions and everything, you wouldn't need to have a tax clearance certificate. That worries you. Musicians, singers and entertainers. Nightclub or discotheque operators. Nurseries. Nursery man or plant sellers, nursing assistants, organ builders. So piano man in trouble up by me. Private inquiry agent. Taxis. I want to repeat it. Taxis. Taxi men. Have to make sure. Taxi men. If you don't pay your taxes, none of you can work come February 1st next year. Not one of you. Not the ones for the cruise ship, not the ones opposite Parliament, not the ones in Lower Broad Street, not a single taxi operator who is not registered.

And then this. Above all this is classic because you know there's a Haitian man that comes into Barbados every time there's a trade fair. I think the Minister of Commerce and the Minister of Manufacturing better tell him don't come back to BMEX again. There's wonderful Haitian art selling at BMEX. Anybody who goes will see it. Because the last one is transient traders - that is to say, a person who is not ordinarily resident in Barbados but who visits for the purpose of selling or procuring orders for the sale of or furthering or promoting the sale of goods manufactured or produced outside of Barbados. So we have gone extraterritorial.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's get real. Let me spend two minutes explaining the history of this legislation. This legislation was passed, yes, by Tom Adams, to register so that there would be a register of all businessmen, tradespeople and professionals in the country, so that the conduct of commerce could be carried on with certainty when the legislation was first passed. And the Prime Minister ought to remember this because he claims to be a

man of history. Persons who did not register could not sue in a court of law. Correct. Give Jackie's jacket. They couldn't sue. And the Democratic Labour Party under Errol Barrow in the 1986 election determined that was too high a burden for that list of people that I just called out to carry, that it was perhaps not the best thing to do. And therefore one of the first things that the Democratic Labour Party did in 1986 was to amend the law to remove the restraint on those tradesmen, professionals and businesses being able to sue if they failed to register.

Now, there is no doubt in Barbados that the government has a revenue problem. And there's no doubt in Barbados that people are smelling hell. They have serious cash flow crises. And while there may be some people who may relish the fact of not paying their taxes, the majority of people are prepared to pay taxes in Barbados and they want to. But the cash flow or the desire to keep people employed has precluded some of them from being as prompt in these harsh and difficult economic times. A modern government of Barbados cannot now come and inflict on the people of Barbados a fate that is worse than the fate inflicted by the plantocracy on the workers of Barbados prior to the 1950s.

And what am I saying? That one of the challenges that Grantley Adams had in this country, in this Parliament, from this side, 60 years ago or more, was to pass a piece of legislation called the Protection of Wages Act that removed from the plantocracy and merchants in particular, the ability to deduct willy-nilly from people's salaries, because they understood that whatever else a man has done, however much he owes, a man must be able to pay to live at a basic level, for food and for basic things that he needs to move from day to day. And Grantley Adams goes down in our history books as one of the greatest - the father of democracy - not only for the work he did on universal adult franchise, but for the suite of labour legislation that he passed, central of which was the Protection of Wages Act, to make sure that people could carry home a salary after working. And you know why this was important, sir? Because this was a society that was a slave society where forced labour without pay was its hallmark.

Now, for a government on the eve of the 50th anniversary of independence to now not seek to deduct, as they can do under the laws, through garnishment - because if you owe the state taxes, you can garnish; if you owe the state taxes, the state has other powers under the laws to deal with it - for a minister born after independence in this country to now say that a person should be deprived of the right to work if they cannot get a tax clearance certificate is to reflect a level of callousness that is worse than that of the plantocracy and merchants of the 1950s that Grantley sought to confront.

Mr. Speaker, I have had to say in the last two years, I have never thought that there are some battles that we would have to fight in this country again, but it seems as though we will. And I say to the Prime Minister, if there is one thing that you ought to do is to reflect how an Errol Barrow could amend this legislation to reinstate the right to sue - not to work, to sue. And a government that pretends to hold the legacy of Errol Barrow is going to come now and remove the right to work because somebody may have built up arrears, wicked, innocent or otherwise. The state has powers to deal with it.

But let me also deal with it from the broader societal and economic perspective. I remember as a child going to Trinidad as a teenager and people not being able to do many things in Trinidad because they didn't have tax clearance certificates. I remember that Trinidadians could not even travel in the absence of tax clearance certificates. And the rumours on the ground, sir, I don't want to hear because I cannot believe that this is the Barbados that I know and love. I was shocked four weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, when a 91-year-old woman seeking to send a little tralala to her daughter and granddaughter in England was asked to produce a tax clearance certificate before she could get the foreign exchange. You understand, 91 years old. But you know what's the sad part? Do you know that woman has not worked for more than 50 years in Barbados? And even after she told them that, they told her they still need a tax clearance certificate. What has Barbados come to under this government when I say to you that they are not fit to govern? I am not joking. And the only thing that tax clearance certificates has achieved any part of the world, Mr. Speaker, is black market, informal economy.

How does a minister, how does a Minister of Finance expect anybody to take him seriously about how wealthy and healthy - give me a chance, doc - how healthy and wealthy the reserves are. That's what he wanted us to believe. The reserves are better than they were in December. The reserves are always better in March than December. But yet the actions of the Central Bank are such that they are making it more difficult to access foreign reserves in this country. Do you know, sir, that when he tells you that the reserves are holding, is he telling you that the Central Bank has more than \$110 million in applications for reserves from 2014, 2015? You want me to repeat it, sir? That there's more than \$110 million in applications where people cannot get approvals - some more than six months. And no matter what he says in here, it is those actions that speak louder than his words. Because this was a country where people were accustomed to being able to access foreign exchange without trouble, without injury. And when you go now and compound it, it's bad enough to have the applications - you can understand, boom, you're holding it, you're watching. But you can go now and tell people that they can't access reserves. Or

you're just implementing a law that existed all along. But the law was never implemented. The little 91-year-old lady never had to get a tax clearance certificate to give the grandchild or the daughter a little tralala before. This is what we are reducing the country to.

And as if that were not bad enough, the other political sleight of hand in the budget yesterday wasn't restricted to the \$190 000 property taxes being reintroduced - wasn't restricted to the 2 million. But take back the ability to work for the tradesmen. This Minister of Finance announced a \$2.5 million education, scholarship and grants. The Member for Christ Church East - beg for a little excuse and move with the Member for St. James South and go and sit down and whisper in the ears sweetly and quietly to the Minister of Finance that the \$2.5 million is less than the \$3 million that he gave you after making you take licks for a year for trying to help poor people's children in this country. You could imagine that, Mr. Speaker. You really could imagine that that Minister comes in here having removed the aspirations in his last budget to ordinary Barbadians for tertiary education.

The one thing that defines this country, the one thing that separates the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party - know for sure. And what were the results of that August 2013 announcement of fees at university? That the university numbers dropped, Mr. Speaker, from 9 000 students to 5 000 students - from 9 000 to 5 000 - at a time when people were incentivised to finish second year and third year. What will the numbers be at the university when the second year students and third year students finish in the next two years? And can \$2.5 million this year or \$5 million next year or \$7.5 million the following year replace what was being paid to facilitate 9 000 Barbadian students?

I have no doubt, sir, that there are ways to improve efficiency. But this is not an issue of efficiency. This is an issue of access. And don't tell me about willingness to pay - capacity to pay, sir, because in this country capacity to pay does not equate to willingness to pay, neither here nor any part of the world. So you may have a family that has the capacity on paper, but are going through a divorce and the children are told - children are told not now, can't take it on. You may have a family where somebody else is competing for health care because they can't get the health care at the QEH and they've had to go and send the mother or the father to Bayview. You may have a family where the man is a gambler or the woman is a gambler. On the paper it looks good. Are we now saying that those children must be deprived of opportunities in this country because we want to reintroduce means testing through the back door, sir?

Life is about choices. I'm not saying that a government can afford to pay for everything, but I do know

this, that intrinsic in the Barbados DNA is the ability to allow people to aspire and the ability to allow people to be the best that they can be by giving them education. Even in the dark days of colonialism, this country of 166 square miles had over 200 primary schools in it. This country allowed six or seven secondary schools to be accessible by ordinary Barbadians. All of us came from a train. Some got off a little earlier than others. Some have still not gotten off. And this is the one area in which this country, Mr. Speaker, is competitive above all else. It is the only area in which Barbados stands in the top 15 countries in the world in terms of competitiveness.

And if you don't know how people behave in many instances, some of the families that have been asked to go on bad loans and you carry the forms to them - I have had students come to me and say, I beg my mother to fill out this form. My mother tells me that form hurt in her head. She can't deal with it. She too busy trying to keep things together. She ain't getting no unemployment benefits since it done eight, nine months ago. She can't deal with it. And I'm saying to you, sir, that a minister comes in here and parades that he has done something wonderful. He acknowledges at least the damage to enrolment. He acknowledges the error of his ways with the policy announced. And Prime Minister - Mr. Speaker, through you - I don't know how a Prime Minister can seek to abuse a vice chancellor of the university for simply expressing a view that 90 per cent of Barbadians feel that this policy will decimate working class people, particularly working class women and the aspirations of this country. This policy has to change and it will be changed in the context of fiscal rectitude and fiscal stability.

Because at the end of the day, sir, what are we talking about? A \$35 million problem in a \$4.3 billion government expenditure? \$4.3 billion the government spending. And this is a \$35 million problem. But I can - you want me to tell them where they can find it? You want me to tell them? I know they can find it. Because you're gonna hear about it this evening. Stay tuned. But before I get to that this evening you can stop short and find it with his slot machines. Would you believe, sir, that as the Minister of Finance purported to announce a tax yesterday on betting and gaming - which will really go on the gamblers themselves - that he did not have the courage to tell the country that he has not collected a cent in betting and gaming duties and fees from slot machine holders and arcade owners in Barbados since 2011. I want to repeat it. So as we send students to despair, the minister regrets the decline in enrolment. He gives you a \$2.5 million dollar scholarship programme. That is less than the \$3 million that the Member for Christ Church East Central had - and to the member's credit the member remains steadfast on the need to give out those bursaries. I think he gave eighteen hundred dollars which could not close the gap but helped in some little way.

Could you believe that the Minister of Finance was foregoing \$16 million a year every year for the last four years in slot machine revenue and arcades revenue. And if you are to add the VLT terminals which ought to be paid and cannot use a court case as an excuse not to pay - my view it is an additional six to eight million dollars a year. So a potential \$24 million a year times four. Almost \$100 million in this country, sir, foregone by this government. In increased fees announced by this government - are you telling me that you can't pay \$35 million dollars a year when you foregoing \$24 million for gambling? What madness is that?

I said to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Finance tried to relocate the blame for it yesterday. And I don't even think that the Prime Minister realised that he had done it by telling the country that this responsibility is the Prime Minister's responsibility. Well, I would tell the Prime Minister to tell the Minister that customs responsibility is still his responsibility. \$96 million foregone. I don't know how many of the cabinet colleagues know that. The Member for Christ Church - so says sort of okay, they know all about it. I am glad for the admission and therefore let me tie into the hips because it means that this government has made its choices. Don't collect revenue from a select few. Impose the burden on the many. And I say to you that the irony of this will not be lost on the people of Barbados.

But it wasn't only that. And when you put the \$20 million in the betting and gaming in the VAT on the betting and gaming yesterday, who pays the VAT? It's not arcade fees, it's not slot machine licence fees. You know, he putting it back on the same consumers that he literally bathing with licks - the same consumers. But then you know, sir, what better do you expect from a Minister of Finance who spends a long time telling us that we must fight crime, chronic non-communicable diseases and then places a tax on milk. Places a tax on milk to make milk more expensive. More expensive - other than goat's milk, he says. And I don't know how much goat's milk we produce down St. Andrew. I suppose there'll be some who will be happy.

But you know, sir, it wasn't only milk that is taxed in this country. Can you believe that the Minister of Finance also proposes to tax other vegetables. He intends to tax mincemeat. How many Barbadian families use shepherd's pie? I wonder how many of the gentlemen on the other side know how women stretch food in this country to feed children? No, I really wonder. But you know what is even more - do you believe that so disconnected is this Minister of Finance that on the list of foods that will now attract VAT is frozen flying fish. That this Minister of Finance could not even find it in his heart on the eve of the 50th anniversary of independence to exempt frozen flying fish from taxes in Barbados. You

know, the same fish that are on the coat of arms. But then again, sir, on the coat of arms is two stalks of cane - soon to be replaced on the 50th anniversary by elephant grass and Maya Mossy. The retirement is called it. That's what Barbados has been reduced to under this government. Fish off of the coat of arms. Can't offer the coat of arms. I said fish. For the Member for Christ Church East who hollering his dolphin - I want him to know that frozen fillet of dolphin also getting tax. In fact, the fish that is not getting taxed - get out your knives. For all the young people who don't know how to bone fish, learn to bone it again. Because it is the fish with the head and the tail,

the non filet fish that has been left in the basket. I am not trying to make light of these matters, Mr. Speaker. But the truth is that I am not satisfied that the Minister of Finance has done a sufficiently good job. I accept that there may be some foods that he may want to take out of the basket. I really do. But I do believe that this is a matter where consultation with the people of Barbados would have done him and us well. Because it is ordinary people who have to make ends meet when the year come and when the day come. And we now have a situation, sir, where yesterday's presentation was more about how do I deal with the political humbugs of the last year. The students that curse the government, the people at the hospital that complaining and wanting to strike and not do anything but emergency cases. The waste haulers that stood up their government only to be punished. Now to be told that they too must enter that list. I just thought and will be subject to a tax clearance certificate. And if they don't have it, they can work and carry waste in the country too. They're the only group being added to that group. And the only thing that distinguishes them is the extent to which they stood up to this government and for which they were harassed by being told to produce insurance documents and produce driver's licences. And for which the Monday after one of them went to the town hall meeting or the meeting with the Minister, he was asked and told that he was now to be audited by Brahman. And another one received the Town Planning Enforcement notice. This is the Barbados that we know. Where is the heart? Where is the soul of this country? That accommodates tolerance. That accommodates dissent.

This government has now distinguished itself, Mr. Speaker, that you differ with them as the Vice Chancellor did. You are abused of speaking as if you are on Mount Olympus and conducting two governments that if you criticize them, Mr. Speaker, you are prosecuted. Like the Nation newspaper has been prosecuted or threatened to be prosecuted. Where the member for St. James South, the member for St. Joseph and myself had to go to give a statement at District A on the prosecution of the Nation newspaper or where a teacher who speaks, a reverend who speaks at a People's Assembly, St. James Central. Sorry, not so. It could as well have been south though. St. James

Central. St. James Central. Remember, sir, a priest when he criticizes this government is to be prosecuted under the general orders. A former professor at the university when he criticizes and says this is the worst government, an opinion shared by 90 per cent of Barbadians, again, he should be prosecuted with sedition. These are the kinds of things that cause people in this country to shake their head. And when you put on top of that \$200 million more in taxes, the people want to know what is going on in Barbados. And these people have devalued, devalued what it is to be a politician and a public servant in this country. People long, long for the memories that they have of people who conducted themselves in different ways and want to. You know what they tell you? They said they don't recognize this Democratic Labour Party. That is a bunch, a bunch united by a common purpose of self pursuit. That's what Dems are telling you.

But I want, sir, to tell you, sir, that when you look at the budget yesterday, you really have to wonder. You really have to wonder because as I said, it was political hush measures for the people that disturbed the government. And then on top of that, Mr. Speaker, a few recommendations from the IMF tax study. That's all it was. You know, as I said earlier, there were no measures to stimulate, no measures to deal with any kind of jobs, no measures really for the tourism sector. Again we did hear, sir, that there was to be a divestment of GEMS at a far state and it was already at a far state. But I equally heard that the hoteliers do not know what that far state is in the BHTA. And the Minister says with glee it is not their business. But you know what is the business of the people of Barbados, sir? That the divestment of any state asset ought to be subject of public procurement and transparency. But I suppose, sir, if you have already started to divest state assets without advertising them to the public, the minister can take that glib and callous attitude that it is not the business of the people of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association. Wouldn't you think that there would be hoteliers that might be interested in assets owned by the government and the tourism sector in this country. Are they now to be excluded from being able to bid on properties because a Minister of Finance who is in charge of a procurement project, who is in charge of delivering 40 per cent procurement to the small businesses of this country as this government promised and he's going to get in here and say it's not their business.

Sir, no wonder a multinational corporation has written the Prime Minister complaining about the inability to be offered the opportunity to bid on the sale of Barbados National Terminals Companies Ltd. The result might end up being the same, but the process of transparency must be adhered to. And you know why? Sir, do you know, I don't want the people of Barbados to know this because some people, especially the older ones, will know it. Do you know that you can't get rid of a broken down Land Rover

with four flat tyres from the Ministry of Public Works without doing a board survey? You know what a board of survey is? A board of survey allows for transparency in the disposal of any asset owned by the government of Barbados. But that is for small assets. That's not for the ones up there that are to be reserved for the five people on the list that I talked about earlier who are not the such salt in this country, who are to be given a clear runway path in the name that we need private sector to do things. But when the 20 hotels that he's been promised from the BHTA people go on and get commitments from the bank, they don't take that into account. When the 17 hotels only have taken 18 months to get what Sandals got on November 6, 2013, there's still no level playing field. And Sandals gets it not just for food and beverage, for every single consumable, printers, computers, nails, chemicals, you name it. Call it plants, employees. Do you know that the employees who are not born in Barbados and living in Barbados from Sandals, get duty free cars, get duty free furniture.

So you may have a situation where a person working in the same position as a Barbadian working at the hotel next door to Sandals is working. You spent money as a parent sending the Barbadian to do a bachelor's and a master's in tourism because you feel your child should get the best chance. You want student loans to pay. Sandals sends somebody from Jamaica who may not even have A levels, but who is working in the hotel industry for 16 years - nothing wrong with that. But the two must get the same terms and conditions. So the two - now one can go to what you call it, dwellings and Ashley and get duty free furniture and the other one bustling in at Courts or Standards and trying to get a settee and a dinette set on hire purchase because the Barbadian does not get it duty free. One driving the most luxurious of cars and the other one having to deal with a low end vehicle because they do not get the car duty free. How can you, in a tourism sector of 50 years, seek to create two Barbadoses - not just for the hoteliers and the operators, but now for the employees - so that Barbadians cannot wish for better for their children because that same child on that same salary has now to pay out more money to live in this country than the expat who comes here to work for two or three years. And this what, gentlemen? No, no, no, Mr. Speaker. And I am to hear, hear that what's the big deal? Why should the BHTA know about the sale of assets in the GEMS?

But this is the sale of the public's assets, the taxpayers' assets, the assets of the Crown. However much you may want to distort and contort about GEMS, that's not the issue. The point is that you recognise that there's a value. And if there's a value, let the public of Barbados have a chance to bid on the value. Don't tell us that it is at an advanced stage of conclusion. That is what hurts the people of Barbados. That as you ask them to bear

additional sacrifice, there is a callousness and an arrogance that is attached to it.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I am saying to you, sir, that the additional measures that came in this budget had and bore no relationship to putting this economy back on path. And let me go now to some of the other things in the core of the macroeconomic framework because you know, sir, we have all said - I think there's unanimity - we have been saying on the opposition side now for about three, four years at least that the biggest cost that this government faces is the cost of debt. Debt service. We have been saying, sir, that this government's debt service is ballooning and that there needs to be a recognition that we need to refinance our debt. The estimates debate in this House distinguished itself where the opposition, the independent member and the member for St. Philip West, who has not only spoken to it, but has written letter after letter that we see in the papers distinguishing himself from a failed economic strategy. The member for St. Michael North West. But Barbados is known to be held ransom by a governor of a central bank and his sidekick, Sarah Andorra. And in the face of evidence that is as clear for everyone to see, refuses to do that which other countries have been encouraged by no less a body than the United Nations to do, to refinance and put yourself on a steady footing again, such that you get the fiscal space to do what you have to trigger growth in this country again.

Do you know, sir, ambassadors may not remember because numbers are not something that they keep. Barbados debt service has gone from 2008 to - from \$773 million to this year almost \$1.7 billion, \$1.683 billion. You understand that under this government, debt service has increased by almost a billion. Let me break it down. The interest cost of our loans that a government must bear out of current revenue has gone from \$396 million to almost \$700 million between 2008 and 2015. In seven years, it has doubled virtually. And the amortisation, the principal, has gone from \$505 million to \$985 million. What is sad, sir, is that we have a Minister of Finance coming in here and talking about a primary surplus yesterday and trying to boast about it. But it is pointless to do so, sir, when there is growing debt service driven by both the growing interest charges that I have shown you, sir, annually, and growing amortisation costs annually. Sir, you know that this same minister does not want to let the country know that the debt service growth is lower - that the revenue growth is slower and lower than the debt service growth. So your debt is growing at a quicker rate than your revenue. You can't play catch up. And this country has now a debt to GDP ratio that is in excess of what other countries in the Caribbean had when they chose to deal with their debt problem, when Belize chose to deal with it, when Jamaica chose to deal with it, when Dominica chose to deal with it, when St. Kitts chose to deal with it. And we, like ostriches, burying our heads in the sand.

You have unanimity across the floor of the House. Not the whole government, but at least part of the government. A former prime minister, the entire Barbados Labour Party and everybody can see it for what it is. You cannot spend 69 cents in each dollar in debt service. Let me break it down. You cannot spend \$1.7 billion out of \$2.5 billion. Your wages cost is another \$800 million for central government. Your transfers and subsidies are hovering at a billion dollars. \$1.7 billion and a billion is \$2.7 billion. And \$800 million is \$3.5 billion. You are earning \$2.5 billion. And the dangerous part of the debt is this, that more and more of our debt is short term debt. So that the rollover risk, Mr. Speaker, is considerably increased. The opportunity for a man to say, or an institution to say, I no longer wish to roll over my debt with you - I want to let it go, give me back my money. And the government ignores the significant risk that it puts the whole country to by continuing to bury its head in the sand on a fundamental issue of refinancing. And then tells you about what? That this is a homegrown programme. Which part of homegrown programme? You mean this IMF programme? And taxes that he delivered yesterday. Taxes on small businesses. Sorry, taxes on the registration threshold moving from \$80 000 to \$200 000, heralded as something wonderful for small businesses. Page 8 of the IMF studies uses this as a tax measure that will add to government's revenue. Add to government's revenue. Page eight. And you know why it adds to government's revenue? Because the same small business cannot now claim back the inputs when it now registers at \$200 000 instead of \$80 000 in terms of VAT because they pay VAT on what they buy. And right now at \$80 000 they can claim it back. When it goes to \$200 000, they don't get to claim it back. And therefore government's refunds are reduced. But then again, government ain't paying the refunds either and nothing can change from that. He was told in the IMF tax study to eliminate as many of the same deductions and allowances of which we just spoke earlier in here under the income tax allowances and that should give him significant revenue. Homegrown programme. They mean a home delivered programme, not a homegrown programme. This is an IMF inspired document insofar as it relates to the tax measures that this Minister of Finance introduced.

And why didn't we comment on it? Because when we read it, we realised that the remit given to the IMF was purely to raise revenue, not to trigger economic growth. And we have been consistent in this House by saying that we cannot tax our way out of this recession. And this government is now intending on drawing blood from stone. How can you get more money out of people? You know that 16 000 people went home in the private sector alone. And then we get the 3 000 and the dribbles that are now intended to go. And the minister tells us yesterday, look for more layoffs with the rationalisation of his statutory corporations. We can't rationalise statutory corporations that end up with the same numbers that you had before.

Who are you fooling? But when he's rationalising statutory corporations, is he going to tell his ministerial colleagues, stop moving with the same board chairman when you shift ministerial portfolio - because you got ministers who are tied and wedded to the same chairman as if they're in their hip pocket for some reason unknown to us? Is that going to be part of the reform of the statutory enterprises? This is not a homegrown programme. This is tutelage from the towers. And this is the IMF telling you what to do for revenue, not growth. And other people from within the Fund and other people from within Washington readily acknowledge that this programme had a remit for people to tell you just how to get as much revenue, not to look at the whole picture of the economy.

And the minister, instead of stepping back and recognising - you say, and we don't necessarily agree, we're not disputing it, because I am tired of the numbers now, the numbers change according to the day, just like the tourism numbers came back down yesterday from being the best in 25 years now to the best since 2008. I am tired of the numbers. I have a simple thing. Show me the real economy. Show me the impact on households. Show me the impact on businesses. Because when you have a situation where the numbers can be as questioned as they are in the last IMF Article 4 study and as different as between the Central Bank and the Barbados Statistical Service, then we have a real problem. And what is it, Mr. Speaker? The Central Bank's numbers say that this economy has only declined in real terms by 3 per cent since 2007. And the Barbados Statistical Service says that this economy - the Barbados Statistical Service, the only entity authorised by law to collect statistics in Barbados, says that this economy has declined by more than 24 per cent. This is 3 per cent or 4 per cent, or 3 per cent and 5 per cent. You know, this isn't 22 per cent and 24 per cent. How can a Minister of Finance know that? The people who report to him as Minister of Economic Affairs view that this economy has declined by 24 per cent. And the Central Bank governor says that the economy has only declined by 3 per cent. And the Prime Minister and the Cabinet are not calling for a major investigation for how two sets of entities supported and accountable to the government of Barbados can provide data eight times different from one another in the middle of a recession. It is scandalous. And I say that this government is not fit to lead. It's not fit to preside over the affairs of Barbadians at this stage. How can you plan for the future if you cannot even understand the scale of the decline, the depth of the decline?

Growth only comes from households and enterprises, existing ones expanding or new ones being created in terms of businesses. But instead, we are now to impose \$200 million in new taxes on households and businesses that are tottering, tottering. I say to you, sir, that this is unacceptable. And when we look at the real issue facing the Barbados economy, we can solve it in this

debate, you know, we really can. But what does the Minister of Finance do instead? In pejorative language, in callous dismissal language? I hope the Minister of Agriculture heard him because he wasn't here yesterday to have to endure the pain that we did. I don't know why he was absent yesterday, but he perhaps knew that the sentence was coming that accused him of being on a frolic. You don't understand that the Minister of Finance told the country that the Minister of Agriculture is on a frolic when he writes 20 and 30 page letters to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet about refinancing. But the sight of the Minister of Agriculture with his girth being on a frolic would have to be a sight to behold. If he said to me that the member for Christ Church East Central was on a frolic, I might more believe it. But the Minister of Agriculture on a frolic - he said that he was like a train moving through. I could understand, Mr. Speaker. No, I ain't joking anymore. These matters are too serious. Too serious.

You know what makes it really bad, sir? This is not academic debate, you know. This is real people. Yesterday I had a lady who came to see me since last week come back to me. She has been diagnosed with stage three rectal cancer. She has been told in this country, where traditionally people have been able to expect that they can be treated at the hospital, that she can only get certain amounts of the chemotherapy at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and that she must now find - yes, she must now find \$1 200 every two weeks for the next six months. And this woman works at the bottom of the public service in terms of salary scale, Mr. Speaker. The woman is 52 years old. The woman has two children and tears came to my eyes. And I have committed to helping her raise the funds for it. Because nobody in Barbados at 52 should be given a death sentence because they can't find \$1 200 every two weeks for chemotherapy. Nobody. And this is not - I know that the habit has developed in this House for people to come in here and give speculative cases. This isn't a speculative case because when she first came to me last week, I mentioned it to the member for St. James Central. You know what I'm saying? Yes, yes, you know her. But it is like the family also. And with their permission, I received permission from them to speak about it. I'm not going to speak about the minor details, but they came to me as a result of an incident with the police that caused them, through the member for City of Bridgetown, to come and see me.

When a family comes to you, husband and wife, they're together first thing. The youngest child that they have accompanies them. One is 29 and one is 30. The member for St. Philip North should know them because they went to you. The member for St. Lucy should know them because they went to you. The former member for St. George South, who is the Minister of Labour, should know them because they went to her. And these people produced documents to me, Mr. Speaker, showing that the house that

they live in, in town, has been condemned since 2009 by the Health Service people, has not complied with the regulation in terms of garbage and has not complied with the regulations in terms of the prevention of rodents. This family has three children now, but they had four. One child died at the age of 22 months old from a stroke. The mother has had to stop working in this country because the oldest son is in continuous problems medically. And anybody who knows the area of town from which they come - you have a heavy rainfall below sea level out there, floods, as the member for the City will tell you - and having gone to four ministers, husband working, you know, trying the best, and the government building all these housing units. And for six years these people cannot get access. A husband and wife, three children, one other child dead and banding together as a family. How often do you see young people come to you as a family, sticking together like that? This is what this debate is about.

So when I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to allow me to speak to the urgent need for refinancing of the debt it is because the government of Barbados must have fiscal space again to respond to the needs of those two people that I just spoke about. The government of Barbados must have fiscal space to deliver affordable access to universal healthcare in this country. The government of Barbados must have fiscal space to guarantee the aspirations of ordinary people for their children to be better than they can be in terms of tertiary education. The government of Barbados must have fiscal space to do the things that which it must

do to keep this country safe, to keep the public health of this country in good order to stop chikungunya from arising and affecting an entire nation because the first people sent home were the bushes or people working in drainage. That is what this debate is about when we talk about the need for refinancing, sir. And it is nothing different than we do in our personal lives. Hitherto, the notion of refinancing as opposed to restructuring, both refinancing and restructuring carried negative connotations. But the United Nations had a special summit because it recognized that where countries have a significant debt overhang that countries have to be in a position, Mr. Speaker, to be able to deal with it. I say to the Prime Minister through you, Mr. Speaker, the position taken by the Minister of Agriculture, the right honourable Member for St. Peter and myself and others on this side. I have been talking about it for four years. There is nothing nefarious about it. The Barbados Labour Party will still beat the Democratic Labour Party in the next election. We will but do the right thing now for the right reasons. I am not frightened for that. And I know deep down the Prime Minister, you may not be an economist, but you have a governor of the Central Bank carrying this country down the wrong road and the wrong path. At 70 years old, you have given him - this government has given him a five-year

contract again. And if you pull some of the same board members at the Central Bank and talk to them quietly, they will tell you that the country will face its [Inaudible.]. There was refinancing but a Minister of Finance. Who can otherwise tell me. I really thought that we would have had a joint committee to deal. And even the thought of a committee, to my mind, is too late for that - to deal with the issue of refinancing. But having heard his language yesterday where he was prepared to throw the Minister of Agriculture to the wolves by talking about the frolic that the Minister of Agriculture was on for producing a 30-page paper arguing for refinancing and educating people on the difference between refinancing and restructuring. I know he couldn't be talking about me on a frolic and I know he couldn't be talking about the Member for St. Peter on a frolic. So he could only be talking about the Member for St. Philip West. Couldn't be, because he has no jurisdiction on anyone on this side at all. So I know he couldn't be talking about me. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the time has come for the nonsense to stop. Barbados must act as one in protecting the fiscal affairs of this country and the fiscal stability of this country. If the patient is bleeding, you have to stop the bleeding.

You cannot spend 69 cents in each dollar, and I say it with all sincerity, you cannot spend 69 cents in each dollar of every revenue you earn on debt. You cannot even pay wages with the money left back, so you are borrowing to pay salaries. You cannot even send money to the statutory corporations with the money left back, so you are borrowing to send transfers. You cannot buy a paper, a pen, a litre of gas, a catheter, an IV, a piece of paper. You cannot buy a single thing with the money left back. So you are borrowing. That is like a household - the household borrowing to pay rent, the household borrowing to buy food, the household borrowing to put gas in the car, the household borrowing to do everything. Not one Barbadian would submit themselves to that frolic and folly. That is where the frolic and folly is. But the problem is that if the Minister of Finance were the only body to face the consequences - or this government the only body to face the consequences - you say, well, leave him alone. But the people I just referred to and every other person across this country are the ones who are going to have to face the consequences.

And there comes a time when economic decline is no longer being triggered by economic reasons. It starts to be triggered also by social implosion. When garbage stops being collected and the attendant calls for public health. When people start to worry and the blood pressure goes up, or they get strokes. When violence starts to become more regular, as we have been seeing regrettably in this country - you will notice that the opposition has not been playing politics with it. And I want the Attorney General to note that because we will not play politics with crime in this country. When people are making decisions to go overseas

and live because they do not believe that they can see a way out for themselves in this country, when those social reasons become endemic, that triggers further economic decline that cannot be solved by economic reasons. A government cannot make a man who has had a stroke walk straight again by wishing them so or by the government changing. A government cannot cause a family that has emigrated to return because there is a change of government all of a sudden, because the people have settled. A government cannot deal with the brutal human cost of rampant violence in small societies and bullets going to the wrong place and hitting the wrong people, as happened with the shots that went through the Orleans two Saturdays ago. So when I say to the Prime Minister that we need to pause and fix and stop the bleeding, we need to have a national consensus.

There are people outside of this Parliament. There are people in this Parliament. And this country is being held to ransom by a Governor of the Central Bank who believes that Barbados must not refinance, as he told us in a newspaper article as recent as less than a week ago. I say to you, sir, that we have reached a point where this Governor of the Central Bank - we have to start asking ourselves questions about him. Because this is the same Governor who no longer gives us an economic review anymore. What he gives us now is political propaganda. Anybody who pulls the Central Bank quarterly report from five, six, seven years ago and one from recently will see that there is no review of the productive sectors of the country or the macro economy. He tells you about what projects - and we should have known it from the time he tried to tell us about the prison of \$800 million. He is a political propagandist. This is the same Governor of the Central Bank that bans the Nation newspaper - or purports to ban the Nation newspaper - last year from coming to press conferences. This is the same Governor of the Central Bank that, Mr. Speaker, fails now to provide current data. And I invite the Prime Minister to go and pull the last few economic reviews and look at Table 1. I see wherever there is a blank space for current economic data, but the data all of a sudden miraculously appears because the people in the Central Bank cannot believe that the Governor is presiding over this kind of tyranny - suppression of information for a country that is accustomed to accessing information and for a government that promised freedom of information as one of the things on which it was to be elected in this country.

This is the same Governor of the Central Bank that has presided over losses of the Central Bank year after year after year. Indeed, sir, since 2008, the Central Bank has only made money once. We would have thought that yesterday's budget was to be about the Minister coming to tell us how he is going to deal with the accumulated losses of the Central Bank. That is what I would have expected the Minister of Finance to address in here yesterday. But maybe he did not want to tell the country that the Central

Bank will now record another loss of \$7.3 million in last year, 2014. Loss after loss. And the loss last year becomes more insidious and wearisome because, Mr. Speaker - and I want Members to listen to this - the Governor of the Central Bank chose to make two decisions that led to losses of \$11 million between the two decisions, hence the overall loss of \$7.3 million for the bank.

One: holding over \$400 million in treasury bills, the Governor of the Central Bank chose to roll over those treasury bills at 1 per cent instead of 3 per cent, causing a loss of \$8 million on the interest that would otherwise be earned by those treasury bills. The Governor of the Central Bank also chose to change the exchange rate in dealing with commercial banks to encourage the commercial banks to bring the foreign exchange to the Central Bank. As a result of that decision, the Central Bank did not achieve the desired outcome, but it led to a further \$3 million in losses at the Central Bank. So that his own intervention, against the best advice of people, the Governor has presided over \$11 million in losses from those two decisions. And the overall losses of the bank last year were \$7.3 million. And what makes this worse, sir, is that these are accumulated losses. The Governor is the one advocating the laying off of one third of the staff of the Central Bank - a man who has reached 70, gotten a five-year contract, and is telling people in the Central Bank they are too old to remain in the Central Bank on career paths. What really have we come to, sir? What really have we come to?

And, sir, when he went to the bank insistent on removing one third of the staff from deputy governors right back down, the board told him to get an independent review. But do you know that the staff of the Central Bank are walking about nervous, Mr. Speaker, for the last few weeks, because the independent review is to go to the board of the Central Bank next week? People do not know whether they will continue to have a job at an institution with which they have worked for 20 and 30 years and 15 years. This is not how we do business in this country, sir. The Minister of Finance did not even address the issue of the recapitalisation of the Central Bank. But yet he spoke for almost four hours. Nothing on tourism for jobs, nothing for international business, nothing for manufacturing other than to put a lash in them through the sweet drinks tax and other things that of course will affect them. Nothing. Nothing on the Central Bank's losses and the urgent need for recapitalisation.

I say to you, sir, that Barbados needs to wake up and to recognise that it is being held hostage by a Governor of the Central Bank. But you know, sir, I am going to talk later in this debate about an action that is even more insidious than anything I have said so far in relation to the Governor of the Central Bank. Just stay tuned. Just stay tuned.

You then have the situation, sir, of Customs and the Barbados Revenue Authority. The Minister did not address it in any detail. The private sector in this country have been complaining that their goods cannot be cleared because of things being held up because of the appropriate concern of the Customs Department in Barbados. The Minister let us know that the Central Revenue Agency was a baby of the right honourable Member for St. Peter. But while he was doing it, why didn't he tell you that the right honourable Member for St. Peter had a policy paper that determined that Customs was not to be part of the Central Revenue Authority and that is still the position of the Barbados Labour Party? You understand, sir, it is the half statements - I cannot say half truths because it will be unparliamentary - the half statements that continue to hurt.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hate to interrupt you, but don't go there. You know you are not permitted to do that. They are half truths - half truths whether or not you say you cannot say them. So please withdraw the comments.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The inability to tell us the full facts of that cabinet paper - that would suggest that it was not only authored by the Member for St. Peter but that the Member for St. Peter had intended that the Customs Department would never become a member of any Barbados Revenue or Central Revenue Agency. In fact, it is significant that the Member for St. Peter referred to it as a Central Revenue Authority and not as a Barbados Revenue Authority - to use the unfortunate word that women are wondering why they are being treated unfairly by people talking negatively about bras all the time. The Attorney General would love that, because that is the only language you understand.

Let us get serious, sir. You know what is so bad about this process, and the public needs to hear this. Do you know, sir, that the Customs officers are yet to be given a paper telling them what are the posts that they are supposed to go to? Any job descriptions? Do you know that the Customs officers were handed a paper telling them what happened at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital? Do you know that all of the documentation thus far relates to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital - a hospital that went to a board - and not to a Customs officer going to the Barbados Revenue Authority? But then you are trying to harass people and tell them they must meet a July 1 deadline when you are not even ready. When you have them coming into an agency where the senior leadership does not understand the role of Customs, where you have a board that is politically handpicked by a minister. And I am not talking negatively about this board now, but it is our view that to the extent that the Barbados Revenue Authority must have a board, it ought to reflect the board of the National Insurance Scheme - that is reflective of labour, capital, and the government - but must not be handpicked by any minister. That side, this side, any side. It is wrong because

revenue matters are confidential matters and there is nothing, as this minister will find out, that will hurt people more than the notion that politicians have access to their business. This is a small society and those are the dangers that we face in the management of entities within a small society.

But I go further. The Customs Agency has a responsibility also for border security and Customs has been left in an invidious position. I am so shattered when I look at what was really happening at Customs. Do you know that between the Controller, the Deputy Controller, the Controller One and the Controller Two, if they got 25 to 30 per cent of the people appointed at Customs, you got a lot? In fact, the Customs officers are now referring to Customs as Collywood. You know, you have Bollywood, Hollywood and Nollywood for all of the acting. They now refer to Customs in Barbados as Collywood because everybody who is a Customs officer in Barbados is acting. And they feel - between the guards and themselves - that they have not had a fair hearing as to why this is not appropriate. They have argued with legitimacy and cogency that the Customs Department of Canada was initially included in Revenue Canada and had to be taken back out because there are serious reasons as to purpose and as to why it cannot work in a Revenue Authority. When I say to the Customs officers, the Barbados Labour Party has not changed its policy. We still believe that Customs should not be included in a Revenue Authority in this country.

Sir, I want to deal with some of the other measures in this budget because, as I said, they come largely from the IMF tax agenda. The private sector commented this morning on the likely impact of the measures related to group and corporation taxes and the changing of the carrying forward of losses from nine years to seven years. People do not know how to implement it, people do not know how to move, and people fear that it may well lead to others seeking to redomicile their groups of companies from here because we are making ourselves less attractive. So when I say with sincerity that the Minister did not have measures for growth in this budget, it is because it simply is not here.

And we go through the rest of them. Sir, I spoke about the VAT registration threshold moving from \$80 000 to \$200 000 and the unfortunate impact on the small businesses who will not now be able to claim VAT and who will be affected negatively. I speak, sir, about something that is not in this budget but that is equally worrisome to people in the renewable energy sector. This government continues to argue that it is trumpeting renewable energy, forgetting that the Barbados Labour Party in 2007 had a green paper on the same matter. They are not breaking new ground. And while we support renewable energy together, what we cannot support is how

this government has unfolded its whole programme with renewable energy and the likely impact on the sector.

A programme has been announced for persons to be able to deal with applications and licence fees. I am looking for the fees in relation to renewable energy. Mr. Speaker, I believe it was the Minister of Tourism who might have introduced the measures in here a few months ago. People with photovoltaics have been told that they have to have a licence and have to renew this licence fee every year. And look at the table here, Mr. Speaker. There is an application fee for everything above 100 kilowatt hours - \$100. A \$1 000 issuing fee for everything above 1 000 kilowatt hours - \$250, with the exception of that over 20 000 to 30 000 kilowatts, which is \$450. But it is the current annual fee that matters - and these are all non-domestic photovoltaics. You are affecting the cost of doing business. And it ranges from \$7 000 at the lower end to \$130 000 that persons must pay per year to have photovoltaics installed in their businesses. This is it here. Do not look surprised. And then there is something called a renewal fee. And people do not know the difference between the current annual fee and the renewal fee. And the current annual fee runs \$6 000, \$8 000, \$10 000. And the proposed annual fee is to be reduced in part if the private sector have their way. But you know what is the most insidious thing about all of that, sir? Since February, nobody knows where to go and pay this licence fee. They do not know to whom they pay the licence fee and they do not know where to pay the licence fee. And government says it is short of money. It is unbelievable, sir, the level of incompetence.

But we are not to be surprised, sir, because as I said, this government is so busy trying to make as if - that it does not spend its time dealing with the things that it needs to deal with. And that is why the state of small business and international business and all other productive sectors in this country is what it is. I would like the Minister of International Business to tell me whether he has persuaded the Prime Minister to invest Barbados under his portfolio or not. I know that the Prime Minister travels for environmental matters and other things, but I have not seen the Prime Minister travelling for investment promotion. But Barbados needs it. And Barbados cannot have in the estimates an amount being put for investment promotion for Invest Barbados that only covers wages. Yet international business is responsible for generating a level of taxation under corporate taxation in this country that used to keep our corporation taxes healthy. And if you look at government's revenue, the real decline has come in the decline of corporation taxes, which we were earning over \$532 million when we left government in 2007, which is now earning the country less than \$200 million in corporation taxes. It has been a veritable implosion. And a large part of that is not only Barbadian businesses not

earning profits, but it is also the international business sector and the changing environment.

We would have thought that a Minister of Finance would have come here yesterday and spoken to us about our date with destiny with the WTO at the end of this year. And I expect others in this debate to speak about it. Because Barbados will lose the right to be able to support fiscal incentives and export allowances for the export of goods because it will now be in conflict with WTO rules. And to his credit, the Member for St. Peter has spoken about it over and over and over. But it reminds me of 1994 all over again. Because in 1994 a Minister of Finance came into this House and within weeks of signing with the WTO and committing to the dismantling of non-tariff barriers and quotas in this country, he said not a word in the budget - gave us a bus fare and lunch money budget - and never told the country that he had committed to a process of dismantling tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and quotas that led the Labour Party as a government to have to find tens of millions of dollars to try to support a flagging manufacturing sector at the end of the 1990s in this country going into the 21st century. Not a word from a Minister of Finance on those matters. Not a word from the Minister of Finance as to the need for a national tourism refurbishment fund in order to make sure the hotels that need refurbishment in this country can be appropriately refurbished such that they can command the average daily rates in Barbados that they need to be commanding.

We have had years and years now of the underperformance of the tourism sector in this country. But we know that it is the first sector that can truly lead the way. But it is not going to lead the way in which this government has been proceeding. We left tourism earning \$2.5 billion in revenue. Prices have gone up by 35 per cent in Barbados in the seven years. So if the tourism revenue was just to stay constant, tourism should be earning for this country \$3.3 billion. But instead, tourism earned for Barbados last year \$1.9 billion. I want to repeat it. Tourism earned for Barbados \$1.9 billion instead of \$3.3 billion. If it was to be to Barbados today what it was to Barbados in 2007, operating costs continue to increase in this country and yesterday's budget will only lead to additional costs.

I have already spoken about the lack of equity between Sandals and [Inaudible.]. Nobody has a problem with Sandals. What we have a problem with is a lack of a level playing field. And the government can choose to hide behind that, or it can confront the reality that Barbadian hoteliers are hurting. They are hurting. And if we look at the increases - stop talking about numbers increasing. Let us talk about the real value. Show me the money. Show me the jobs. Show me the increase in reserves. Show me the increase in service charge. How can Barbados hotel tourism be rebounding if Sandy Lane Hotel cannot pay and will not pay a 3 per cent increase to workers agreed to since

2010? How can Barbados tourism be rebounding when hoteliers are still saying they cannot pay for any increase this year? In spite of the fact that the Minister of Tourism correctly - and we correctly - have said that the workers must be allowed to bear some of the improvements in their salaries to reflect the increases that the government is boasting about. Whether this is the best ever tourist season in seven years, 25 years, whatever years, then the workers must be compensated. But instead, stories of Sandals on a 35-hour work week because the numbers obviously cannot support staff on a 40-hour work week. Mixed signals.

And when you look at the 2014 numbers, sir, the biggest increase in length of stay in the arrivals coming to Barbados last year was in people spending 24 hours or less. You understand what I say? There was a 75 per cent increase in people spending 24 hours or less. We are glad for the airlift and I am sure the Minister of Tourism will tell you that them coming through here will help command his ability to keep those planes flying. But for the rest of the country and for the Minister of Finance and others, the only benefit Barbados got was perhaps a roti and a drink during that 24 hours from them. And if they were health conscious, a piece of chicken and some salad from Chefette. That is what a 75 per cent increase would have led to us getting last year from the tourists who came. So that the increased operating

cost and the low rates of return continue to be a significant bugbear for Barbados tourism industry. We have said that we need to set ourselves a target of 4 billion in earning of tourism and we need to set ourselves a target as to how we can get there. There are some things that I do not feel should divide a country and some of the strategic issues for building capacity. Since 2012, I stood in this parliament and called for our national tourism refurbishment fund to be able to have help our people have access. The Barbados Labour Party set up a small hotels tourism fund and a tourism development fund, Small hotel investment fund and a tourism loan fund. We put \$35 million in a small hotel investment fund and \$30 million in the tourism loan fund. And by the time this government came to office they were both in need of capitalisation. A request of \$20 million was needed to cover and replenish the small hotel investment fund and indeed \$27 million for the tourism loan fund. I say to the Minister of Tourism, while I believe that a national tourism refurbishment fund is where we must go, at least replenish those funds and allow hoteliers to be able to put up their stuff, Sir. And to do what they have to do.

Sir. I am not going to talk at length today on energy prices other than to say that the cess which the government is now purporting to use to go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. First of all, the legality of the issue has to be satisfied because I don't know how BNOC can collect excess on gas from every consumer and that money is then

to go to finance the hospital. And even if it were legal and to go to the hospital is only being guaranteed of that cess for one year. So the Minister of Finance has in no way resolved the issues of health care financing in this country or the sustainability thereof of it. Similarly, the twenty million dollar capital fund - do not have a difficulty with a twenty million dollar health endowment fund, but to take it from the catastrophe fund at the beginning of hurricane season requires a level of extraordinary faith or folly on the part of the Minister of Finance. And then to say that it is because the catastrophe fund was not set up correctly is to tell us that he is interested in politics and details rather than protecting the people of Barbados who may become victims of floods or hurricanes. In this hurricane season, you don't collapse something that was intended to protect ordinary Barbadians. And the regional catastrophe mechanism to which he referred is a mechanism that benefits the government. The catastrophe fund was intended to benefit individuals in this country and we know what it is. But then again, this is a Minister of Finance who announced the groundbreaking of Sam Lord's on the anniversary of Hurricane Janet in September, on the 22nd of September, this year. That's what he did yesterday. So you are now to collapse a catastrophe fund to put money for the hospital. Well, those who are cute might say that this government has presided over the hospital becoming a catastrophe and hence it meets the criterion. That's the truth.

So that we have a situation, Sir, that the actions continue to befuddle all of us. And I say simply that the promises made to the doctors at the hospital and to the other healthcare providers that they were to be discussing health care funding since the beginning of the year has not come to pass. And in truth, and in fact, they are being promised yet again late in the year that they are to be discussing health care funding, Sir, in relation to the other social services and institutional aspect of this country. It is our contention that this government has done nothing to address issues that are causing us to be more and more uncompetitive. You cannot have a court system that is giving people court dates 18 months from now and expect to promote Barbados as a domicile for doing business. You can't get business done through the court system in this country. But then again, this government has presided over the institutional decay of this country - over the court system, over the police. You have an acting - you have a Commissioner of Police on leave now for two years. You have police officers who brought cases against the Service Commission who were told last year we are going to bypass you with promotions. Don't mind. All you are doing is to exercise your legitimate right under the constitution to bring cases against the Police Service Commission for bias and judicial review because they were recommended for promotion by the substantive commissioner. And all of a sudden recommendations coming from an officer junior to the commissioner were

given prominence by a Police Service Commission. This government has presided over the political tribalisation of The Royal Barbados Police Force. And it is to the country's detriment. It is a fact and everybody knows it. And you know what is sad? You cannot take a chairman of a public Police Service Commission - I have a person appointed who left at a junior rank, four or five ranks over which he now has to supervise. Because it goes beyond politics then.

But it isn't only there. The level of labour unrest in Barbados is now hurting the country and its competitiveness. From light and power to Sandy Lane, which is obviously going to be on the horizon again. To customs, which continues to remain unsettled. To the psychiatric hospital where the Minister of Health is yet to give this country a satisfactory explanation for the conditions under which people are functioning. Under the psychiatric hospital, food must be brought from the geriatric hospital every day. Sometimes breakfast gets there at 11 o'clock. The member for Christ Church West produced pictures in this House, remember, for St. Thomas. The member for St. Michael South East. You have conditions that you would not even expect slaves living in the 17th or 18th century in the most dismal of Barbados to be subject to. And all because nobody goes down there often enough to see them. And then the staff have to work in those conditions. Well, I'm happy to hear the NUPW has finally started to make some noise on their behalf because nobody should be made to either live or work under those conditions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the industrial unrest is affecting this country and there is a callousness. You could imagine that a whole Transport Board strike one morning because a minister sends a cousin to work in circumstances where the government sends home hundreds of people from the Transport Board. I mean, how can we accept that as being legitimate? And these are what the workers are saying, you know. But you have a situation, Sir. Let us look at it. This government - the social partnership of Barbados has not met in full since July 2014. But up and down the academic world, up and down the Commonwealth, up and down the region, people hold up Barbados as having a social partnership. A good thing for governance - and a government in the midst of recession, in the midst of societal turbulence, does not meet with the social partnership. Now for 11 months as a full social partnership. Can this government really be fit to lead Bajans?

And then there's the National Insurance Scheme. I want to issue a warning here today to the directors of the National Insurance Fund because they need to remember that they have a fiduciary duty not to the government of Barbados, but to the National Insurance Fund by law. And the Barbados Labour Party regards it as a serious fiduciary duty. This government has been allowed to accumulate

\$220 million in arrears. \$220 million in arrears to the National Insurance Scheme. For what? For contributions, for reimbursement of non-contributory pensions which central government ought and will normally reimburse them for. For non-contributory pensioners. For the rental of buildings. Two buildings that the government made the National Insurance Scheme build since 2008 for which they have paid probably only one month's rent for each in spite of occupying them for years. And they want to stop people from working in this country because they owe tax arrears when the government is the biggest defaulter, the biggest body in Barbados owing people money. But if that were the case, then the Minister of Finance and every member of Cabinet should not work from next month. If we were to apply the same measurement to them.

And then the National Insurance Fund scheme is compounded by this government forcing them to take up Government paper. We left the national insurance scheme holding \$1.4 billion in government paper in 2007. Would you believe that the National Insurance Scheme has more than doubled that amount of Government paper - now holds over \$3 billion in government paper for the Government of Barbados in seven years. And [Inaudible.] showing confidence. What confidence? The same National Insurance Scheme that is not allowed to invest in anything outside of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, the old people told us, do not put all your eggs in one basket. If, God forbid, Barbados was to face a disaster of some type, the National Insurance Fund would be at risk because it would suffer a lot of collateral damage as a result of the damage to assets in Barbados. And while I accept that the National Insurance Fund must help to bring about development in this country by being a source of funding for development, there still has to be some balance. You can't preclude them from investing overseas. And we believe that the time has come for a relook of the investment guidelines of the National Insurance Fund to help trigger growth in this country. Not just to finance government projects, but to also have projects financed within the private sector that can bear the commercial rate of return. That makes the Board feel comfortable with investing in those projects.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe that the human resources of the National Insurance Scheme must not be subject to the Public Service Commission. Part of the reason why Barbadians are having difficulties getting their cheques is because decisions are made as to the allocation of staff without reference to the needs of the National Insurance Fund which manages over \$4 billion. You can't take up people and move them willy-nilly like if you move them from one government department to the next without there being consequences. And I'm saying to you that the government has a person as Minister of Labour in charge of National Insurance who is literally out of her depth, way, way out of her depth and who is more interested in the fanciful things of life than in the substantive realities. The

National Insurance Fund remaining stable. Now, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I'm not being unfair because the person is not a person I dislike, but the person is not up to the task of managing the National Insurance Fund or scheme or being accountable for it.

Look, something as simple as a heart. I would expect that a doctor has a heart. Pensioners cannot get cheques for weeks, four months. Pensioners. And would you expect that the most natural thing for the National Insurance Department to do would be to pick up the phone and call the utility companies and tell them hold strain on the people who have not gotten their pension cheques? Would you not expect that the same natural thing for a minister to do who had a heart would be to speak to the minister in charge of welfare and try and put some interim mechanism in place - as we call for - for food stamps or food vouchers or something, if they had a heart. But first thing I learned Sunday, people bombard me again and tell me that they didn't get the pension since last Thursday. And this is not a case of a person who got two and three accounts. These are people who are living from cheque to cheque to cheque. And when these things happen, they lose faith and confidence in the institution. And that is what we mean by institutional decay.

But you know, Sir, I say to you that what more do you expect from a government that is not focused on the delivery of Barbadians to safety, that is not focused on the revitalisation of the productive sectors, but that is focused instead, instead, Mr. Speaker, on ensuring that each of them can survive how they may, wherever they may. I know what makes this difficult to take - that yesterday the Minister of Finance said to Barbados, in spite of all the evidence that we are disposed to help a few in this country, I am still going to put \$200 million in taxes on the majority of the Barbadian population who can't take it. In spite of all of the questions about how contracts are awarded in this country, about how ministers all of a sudden have an apparent callous disregard to conflict of interest. I know what is amazing is that I wonder where the rest of the society is. Where are the voices of the church? Where are the voices of civil society? Things can happen in this country and nobody says anything because they are frightened to say - are they affected by the sociology of smallness, which is that they don't want to offend? Well, I have come to the conclusion, Sir, that the suffering in Barbados is too great. And I need now to speak to a few issues and to ask for a few answers. And I want to ask the Prime Minister for the answers because it is he, and only he, who is responsible for the conduct of this government as a whole.

The notion that a few people can do well - no more than five. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. You can pick the names. Mark my words, mark them. But it doesn't start and end there. I have heard ministers ignore comments on this side. The member

for St. Joseph raised it in a political meeting I think we had in your constituency, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this year - that we were forced to have in St. Michael West to address matters known to you and the rest of us, to which I will not refer now. And the member for St. Joseph asked about how it is possible for two ministers to be driving cars owned by a company called TransTech, who all of a sudden is receiving more and more work, contractual work, from the Sanitation Services Authority and from the Transport Board. From the Transport Board at a time when UCAL is still owed close to 20, 22 million dollars. And the people from UCAL had cheques bounced to them from the Transport Board up to last week. Transport Board bounced cheques to UCAL last week.

The member for Christ Church East is showing me a piece of paper and opening it as if he is causing somebody to be scared or intimidated. But I hope that he couldn't mean me because I have learned in this country that I will do my duty. And the number XG10 is driven into this parliament every week. And MM110 is not owned by TransTech. And let us get it straight. I expect every member of this government to curse me from hell to high water tomorrow when I am done in the next 45 minutes. Stay tuned. Because what is at stake here is not whether I like the Archbishop or not. And he's not an archbishop of a church, as we already know. That's not what is at stake here. What is at stake here is the exercise of public duty. There is not a single member on this side who holds the ministerial responsibility in the executive of Barbados. There is not a single member who appoints boards. There is not a single member who is responsible for trying to influence how boards give contracts.

A previous board member of the Sanitation Services Authority before the last election wrote a letter complaining about how the Minister of Environment interfered. The member for St. James Central spoke about it at length before the last election. But what we have today now is a company that is purporting to fix transmissions. I don't have anything against the company, but what I have something against is the lack of appearance of the right thing. You know, if it was a case that was just as simple as that, I would keep writing on.

He can talk about all he wants about St. Lucy. Let me tell you that today is June 16, 2015. This is the Government of Barbados. Mr. Speaker. I am not intimidated by an Archbishop.

Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker. As much as the member wants to interrupt the debate, he cannot change the fact. Anybody who is getting hungry at home or here, go and get a little something to eat. Because it has not started. It now starts. Mr. Speaker, the member for Christ Church East is worried about something. His voice now is becoming as

annoying as a Doberman with dentures. As annoying as a Doberman with dentures.

Mr. Speaker, transmissions are replaced by that company called TransTech. Let the same minister who is making so much noise ask and tell this parliament before tomorrow night - what is the price paid for the replacement of each transmission in each Sanitation Service truck and for each Transport Board bus? The Minister of Housing - sorry, Transport. No, I'm sorry. Housing. He's no Minister of Transport. His licence number has changed to PA826. But both of them are registered to TransTech. Now, I don't want to hear that TransTech is offering them finance. Because finance is not available to other Barbadians at TransTech for companies across the board. But what I do know is that I want them to understand that if there is nothing untoward, then come out and clear the situation.

Mr. Speaker. It does not bother me that he wants to attack me. Because he can want to attack me more by the time I finish. I am only laying the foundation, Sir. I would hope that you do remember. Mr. Speaker. The public of Barbados can hear the response of a man who professes to have a doctorate in theology. They can hear him. Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member. Before you proceed though, just a word of caution. I refer you to Standing Order 28(10). The reference may be made in debate to the character or conduct of any person except in their official and public capacity. And in those circumstances, 28(8)(b) says any member who desires to refer in debate to the character or conduct of any person in his official capacity must deliver to the Speaker written prior notice of the proposed reference. The notice must set out the facts on which such reference will be based and must be signed by the member giving it. I am just cautioning at this point because I think you are coming very close to offending that.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I am aware, sir. I am fundamentally aware of that. And I thank you for reminding me, sir. But I just want the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of Housing to tell us what is the cost paid by the Transport Board and the Sanitation Service Authority, respectively, for the repairing of transmissions. Minister of Public Works and Administrative Environment. Sorry. For the cost of transmissions repaired at the Sanitation Service Authority and at the Transport Board.

If it is, sir, that the cost is \$35 000 to \$40 000 a transmission, sir, can the ministers equally tell us whether it is true that the quotation we have received from Recton International in Miami, who are the agents for Allison Transmission, who build transmissions and who have determined that the cost of 500 series transmissions for use in an SSA Freightliner garbage truck or Transport Board

bus should cost no more than \$3 800 US or \$7 600 Barbados? And that when you add the \$400 to \$500 to it, that price should be no more before profit of \$8 000 and certainly not after profit at \$35 000 and \$40 000.

So I am not getting into any fight. This is a matter of the public funds of this country. And the Member for St. Joseph, as well as the person who sits in the other place who is in the constituency of the Member for Christ Church East, have raised this matter publicly. But you see, sir, politics in this country has descended to the point where matters legitimately raised of the expenditure of public funds are to be treated through abuse.

Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker. I can understand that a man that was confronted by me on the television screens in 2003 as not having a doctorate from an institution that does not produce doctorates for what he said he had, would feel that he needs to attack me for my qualifications as a lawyer. I was recommended to attend the London School of Economics by no less a person than the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, a former leader of the Democratic Labour Party. I have nothing more to say about the academic career.

Mr. SPEAKER: All right. The decorum across the floor, sir.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I wonder what the Member for Christ Church East will say when I move on. Because let me now move, sir, to the other things that are affecting the quality of governance in this country and why a Minister of Finance would have to come and inflict tax after tax to the tune of \$200 million yesterday such that people in this country do not know how they will face next week or next month. I know the sad part of it. Half the Cabinet do not even know. That is the sad part of it, sir.

In this country a few persons have been allowed to benefit, Mr. Speaker, from extraordinary concessions and from extraordinary payments that others have not benefited from. Mark my words. Mark my words. We have a situation, sir, where the same contractor has benefited at a time when nobody else in Barbados in the aftermath of the last election could get their bills paid in full. One contractor, Preconco, gets \$23.8 or \$23.5 million for the sale of Valerie.

For the construction of Valerie, a low income housing project built. And I am sure that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Tourism whose constituency it is and the Prime Minister whose constituency it is next to could not justify the cost of \$548 per square foot for the construction of low income housing in this country. This is not construction on the west coast on the Platinum Coast. This is construction that would not otherwise cost more than \$200 a square foot to build. But what is even more is

that you don't only get the construction being done but when nobody else in Barbados can get their bills paid. When companies are sucking salt trying to get their bills paid to be able to find money to keep employees employed. And one company gets \$23.8 million. Not just the sum of money due and owing but three months' interest. You can't find, Mr. Speaker, people in Barbados happy because they can't get the income tax refunds. They can't get the VAT refunds. And one company can carry home that amount.

But it doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. This is the same company that is building out Berth 5, of which the Minister of Sport spoke yesterday. This is the same company, or a related company, Mr. Speaker, that as recently as two or three months ago - and I need an explanation for this - could receive \$24.7 million. \$24.215 million, sorry. For building the Grotto housing project, once again at exorbitant rates in excess of \$540 a square foot for low income housing again. But what is more is that a memorandum goes from the Ministry of Finance to the Accountant General telling the Accountant General on 31st March of this year - half the Cabinet don't know about this - you know, the 31st of March of this year, that Finance is directed to inform the Accountant General, and listen carefully, that the Housing Credit Fund managed by the Central Bank of Barbados has declared a dividend of \$25 million to pay this contractor through the National Housing Corporation. Now, how does a housing credit fund that is a revolving fund established to on-lend mortgages to persons, to provide mortgages - a financial intermediary - how does a housing credit fund that is a revolving fund declare a dividend?

Mr. Speaker, tell the Member for Christ Church East that the only thing he does is to offend my eyesight by purporting to be an archbishop. He cannot intimidate me any time of the day or night. Mr. Speaker, I want to make a document of the House - because you know the Housing Credit Fund is an entity established in the early 1980s. Indeed, I think the Member for St. Peter and two former Permanent Secretaries in this country were responsible for taking that money from USAID and establishing a fund to allow Barbadians to access mortgages at a time when mortgages were not accessible in this country. Mr. Speaker, tell this gentleman from Christ Church East this package is his. Hold tight. You see how thick it is. Hold tight. And all incoming in here today because I will have my night at Haggett Hall too.

Mr. Speaker, a letter was written on February 26, 2015 by the legal counsel of the Central Bank of Barbados, written to the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister. Further to our discussions with the Financial Controller of the Central Bank on the caption matter, I now submit a draft of the proposed amendment to the trust deed to make provision for the National Housing Corporation to be an approved institution within the parameters of the said deed

of the Housing Credit Fund. Please be aware that the advice of the Solicitor General must be sought and obtained with the Central Bank's proposed solution to this issue and that Cabinet approval must also be sought and obtained prior to the execution of the supplemental trust deed. I would like to know today whether Cabinet approval was given to amend the Housing Credit Fund to declare a dividend of \$25 million, \$24.2 million of which was to go to Preconco for the work at Valerie.

I would like to know, sir, whether last week Monday - not two weeks ago Monday, not three weeks ago Monday, but whether last week Monday - whether the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance wrote the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Lands. Not the Minister, the Permanent Secretary - don't get worried. Directing them that the Ministry of Finance has now approved another \$3.635 million to Preconco Ltd., which represents the balance due on the \$24.2 million paid two or three months prior. So you understand that a hospital cannot get catheters, a hospital cannot buy IVs, a hospital is down to non-essential surgeries. And one company in Barbados this year, in less than two months, can draw \$24.2 million and then \$3.6 million for low income housing that should cost no more than \$200 a square foot to build. Why do you feel that Barbadians feel aggrieved at \$200 million in taxes on their backs yesterday? Because they feel that what money the Government has is being diverted to support the benefit of a few - pensions and gratuities. That is what this country has now come down to.

Mr. Speaker, were that the only case, you might say, well, maybe I should stop there. You might say I should stop there. But you know, Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. James Central took a lot of lashes 18 months ago when he spoke about molasses tanks in this country. And I need to recall the details for the benefit of this Parliament and for the people of Barbados. The Government of Barbados had two proposals before it. One was for \$3 million by a company to build one tank and to refurbish two. They then received a proposal - and I shall now for the first time make this a document of the House - a proposal for the provision and lease of precast concrete tanks for the storage of molasses at the Barbados Port. Mr. Speaker, this document says clearly that an entity called Preconco Limited or its nominee is - please - this is the same Preconco Limited that got \$24.3 million, \$24.2 million plus \$3.8 million recently, \$23.4 million last year. If this is their money coming from the private sector, why wouldn't Kerry be happy for them? Why wouldn't the leading Barbadian companies go to Latin America and Central America? But when it comes from the taxpayers' money, when you cannot pay VAT refunds, when you cannot pay income tax refunds, when you cannot give public servants in this country a salary increase, when the Minister of Education has had to take licks - and I can defend him on this one - in relation to the bursaries.

Mr. Speaker, believe you me, the Government gets this proposal from Preconco. I want you to listen carefully. I want you to listen carefully. And this proposal from Preconco, sir, provided that it was to lease land from the Barbados Agricultural Management Company, who was leasing land from the Barbados Port Inc. But you know, sir, what was even more amazing about the proposal - what was the Minister of Finance doing being a party to the proposal? Why is the Minister of Finance a party? He hasn't provided a letter of comfort. He hasn't provided a guarantee. He is a party. Signature within that blue box. His own signature. And what does this contract say? First of all, I don't know how the Minister of Finance could apply his name to anything that doesn't have a date. So it should be a fiction. Because this agreement is made and entered into in the blank day of blank 2012, but is signed by the Minister of Finance and witnessed - you can't sign nothing that you ain't date. I make sure I date. But then it goes further at paragraph 10. The Minister of Finance - and I quote - has agreed to be joined as a party to this agreement and to the equipment lease for the purposes of confirming its irrevocable commitment. I want to repeat it. For confirming its irrevocable commitment to pay any shortfall due by the BAMC for the equipment lease.

Sir, does anybody in Barbados have an irrevocable commitment from the Minister of Finance to get an income tax refund? Anybody else got one? Anybody else out there got an irrevocable commitment from the Minister of Finance to a VAT refund? I want to spell the word: I-R-R-E-V-O-C-A-B-L-E, irrevocable. But as if that were not enough - and I have been practising law for over 25 years - in this lease there is a reference to it being a non-cancellable lease. Member for St. Andrew, have you ever seen a lease being a non-cancellable lease? Is it because this was in 2012 on the eve of an election? Was there a fear that this lease might become the subject of further investigation because of the commentary of the Member for St. James Central? Were they worried that when, Mr. Speaker, they looked at clause two, that the 33 103 square feet of land for which tanks A and B are located - and we don't know what the land is for the non-cancellable land lease - BAMC will give a written undertaking to enter into a non-cancellable land lease with Storage Solutions within two months from the date of this agreement for the area of tank C. Well, in that lies a story.

But for the 33 103 square feet - could you guess, in the port - could you guess, Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister know that the price for which 33 000 square feet of land was leased to Preconco's subsidiary Storage Solutions works out to less than 3 cents a square foot a year? \$1 200 a year. So the Government, through its entity the BAMC, is only to receive \$1 200 a year for almost an acre of land. 3 cents a square foot. But then, Mr. Speaker, let us go to what the Government is to pay the company for the molasses tanks. Mr. Speaker, at appendix three - and I

am making these documents of the House because every member - I know there are members of the Cabinet who have not seen these documents - and I want to give you the first chance to see them before you speak. FIFA taught us that everything comes to a head one day or another. It really does, you know. \$2.15 million a year for 20 years is what BAMC is to pay Preconco.

But it gets worse. Because those who understand this clause will understand that here is what is written here. Notwithstanding anything contained in clause 2 hereof, should Storage Solutions be registered as a VAT exempt entity under the provisions of the VAT Act, it will not be entitled to recovery of value added taxes paid on the purchase of the tanks and as such, Storage Solutions - sir, I can understand why the Member for Christ Church East does not want the public of Barbados to hear these matters, but they are going to hear it - that Storage Solutions reserves the right to increase the lease price from \$2.15 million per year to \$2.28 million per year. I want to repeat it. If Storage Solutions is deemed to be an exempt entity, it is to increase - it has the right to increase the lease price to \$2.28 million a year so as to enable Storage Solutions, Preconco, to recover the value added tax incurred. Such increase will be retroactive to the commencement date of the lease. You understand what I said, Member, that it will be retroactive to the commencement date of the lease.

I want to know in this debate, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Prime Minister who protects the public interest of the people of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, you know it gets worse. I am not even going to talk about the initial cracks because I think they have managed to sort that out. But I say this, that any attempt by Storage Solutions or Preconco to distance themselves from the structural integrity or the design of these tanks - because molasses is nothing to play with. There was a great molasses flood in Boston in 1919 that carried away the lives of tens of people and injured others. So this is a serious matter. But the third tank is yet to be built. I want the Minister of Finance, who is a party to both agreements - to the lease and to the equipment lease, both undated agreements - to tell us whether he was a party to an agreement with the BAMC where it was purported to lease land that the BAMC does not own or have control of under its lease, and whether there are any liens from any other entities in Barbados who say that land was leased to them beforehand and therefore BAMC could not lease the land for that third tank to Storage Solutions.

So not only are we faced with the inordinate, excessive, unfair negotiations that have the Government carrying the bag, but then we are to find out - and we need to know - whether they have been incompetent in purporting to lease land over which they have no control. So do you understand, Mr. Speaker, that what went before the Government of Barbados was a solution for tanks at \$3

million, or a solution that would cost the taxpayers of Barbados \$46 million - and it will turn out to be more because they are entitled to increase for inflation as well. What is more, these contracts provide that the contractor is to be able to draw down the lease payments within one year of the commencement of construction, even if the construction of the tanks is not completed; that he can draw down the first lease payment before the tanks are completed, and that allows him to go and repay the bank such that he does not have to carry financing costs for the project. This is as sweet as molasses, as sweet as sugar. There is no sweeter project in Barbados, because for a man to have real costs of 5, 6 or 7 million dollars - because he says it can cost him 12 million to build, but by the time you take out all of the other things and deleverage it and benefit from that early payment, it can't cost him no more than six or seven million to build - but he is going to recover \$46 million over 20 years.

And people on that side can sit down in here and watch a Minister of Finance meet them at 1 o'clock yesterday and purport to lash people with more taxes, knowing full well that you take a housing credit fund and you use it in a way that it was not intended to be used, that you allow people to build on the taxpayers of this country for \$540 per square foot. But you know, sir - [Interruption.] - the same company? The same company. The same company. The same one doing the advertising on the highway? The same one at Coverley where the Government of Barbados, through the National Housing Corporation, on a \$300 000 house can only get \$3 a square foot for the land and 1.5 per cent of the purchase price of the house. So if the house costs \$300 000, the most the Government of Barbados gets for giving them the land - 3 000 square feet - is \$9 000 for the land and then \$4 500 for the house. So the National Housing Corporation, which is bankrupt and insolvent according to its annual reports, that is now paying wages from the General Workers' Loan Fund in spite of the layoffs, has given away its land - given away its land - to receive only \$13 500 on a \$300 000 purchase.

I want the Minister of Finance to tell us how the Housing Credit Fund can be amended and used in this way. But then again, sir, we should not be surprised, because the Government has also issued a directive causing the Central Bank to issue a dividend from the Industrial Credit Fund of \$20 million to support the Government's cash flow. I want to repeat it: that the Industrial Credit Fund managed by the Central Bank, that should be providing money for the manufacturers under the Member for St. James South's ministry, has now issued a \$20 million dividend to support a profligate Government that is in here boasting that it is out of the woods. If you are out of the woods, why are you not using the \$20 million in the Industrial Credit Fund for manufacturers in this country? It was set up for that purpose. But there is a fundamental point. The Housing

Credit Fund and the Industrial Credit Fund, Mr. Speaker, are not profit-making entities. They should not be declaring dividends in that way.

It was bad enough when this Government insisted on the Barbados National Oil Company declaring dividends of \$25 million two years in a row, cashing out \$50 million from the Barbados National Oil Company to help Government pay its bills. They didn't bother to tell you about the other \$22 million in bonds that were issued to the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., to the BAMC, to the Transport Board. That is how the 2011 deficit started to look good. That is why he is able to reduce the deficit to 6.6 per cent - I said it is smoke and mirrors, and the only body going up in fire is the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, this is enough. And I am saying to you that you cannot sell out this country like this over and over again. And if members take - because I don't want to - I really don't want to pray on Parliament's time by speaking for too long. But I got a whole envelope to deal with now. I really don't. But there are members on this side who will speak in more detail to those leases of the molasses tanks. And there are members on this side who will actually make a document of the House the Ministry of Transport and Works licence and authority documents showing the ownership of X SC810 and PA826, and who will show also the cost of transmissions when you bring the real cost that you are paying. Sanitation is paying for those things.

Mr. Speaker, I really prayed on this next one. I really prayed on it, and I prayed on it because this in my view reflects this country at its worst. It is the worst since Cabinet government has been introduced into Barbados. It is the worst since persons born in independent Barbados have had the responsibility to hold public office in the executive. And sir, the only reason I have now had to agree to speak to it is because on Sunday gone a Minister of the Environment appeared on page three next to a picture of a series of people in respect of a project that is to be built in the constituency of St. Thomas by a company called Cahill Energy. And we were alerted in that article by the principal of Cahill Energy that the project is now to start in September of this year. The consequences potentially for the country financially and environmentally are of such serious proportion that the whole of Barbados must now pause and have a conversation. The implications for the breaches of governance are such that unlike any time since Cabinet government has been introduced in this country, there has been a situation where four Ministers of Government have been on - I don't even know what to call it; I don't want to use the word frolic because it has been abused yesterday - have been on a path that potentially has now exposed this country to millions, tens or hundreds of millions - dependent on when the Prime Minister can produce the documents for the people of this country - of dollars in liability. And I don't know if the Prime Minister

knows about it, because I am not prepared to address and fear the Prime Minister. But if he doesn't know about it, he has a duty now to investigate and deal with it before this debate is finished.

On the March 15, 2014 in this Chamber - sorry - two days before the Estimates debates were scheduled to start in this Chamber, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Government of Barbados through four Ministers of the Crown and a company called Cahill Energy. The story was touted all on the Sunday and Monday to coincide with the speech of the Minister of Finance at the commencement of Estimates, that things were turning around and things were getting better. And look how we have even attracted international investors for whom there are stories on Bloomberg. And the stories on Bloomberg were made documents of this House, I believe, subject to my memory, but they were certainly referred to. We were told that Cahill was investing \$420 million Barbados dollars - \$480 million Barbados dollars, sorry - in a waste-to-energy project at [Inaudible.], and it was cutting-edge technology, plasma gasification, and that it would bring significant benefits to the people of Barbados and to the economy of Barbados.

Sir, in that same debate, after lunch, I rose where I am and where I stand now. And I indicated to this country that the company was only formed in August 2012, not even two years before the date on which we were speaking in the Estimates. And secondly, that it was simply a nameplate company in Guernsey.

You know what a nameplate company is? A shell company that you couldn't knock and open the door and go and see anybody. That all you see is a plate, a bronze plate, a plastic plate, some kind of plate on a wall. And its directors are people who serve as directors for many companies, as happened in most jurisdictions of international business. I was attacked and the opposition was attacked. We said then that we thought that Barbados should not be a guinea pig for any cutting edge technology that was not commercially viable for more than 10 years across this world, any part of the globe. We were attacked. So be it. Member for St. Thomas and others attended a town hall meeting later in the year at St. Thomas Parish Church. Indeed, sir, what was the first amazing thing to us was that it became evident that memorandum of understanding breaching the first rule of governance saw four ministers of the Crown sign that memorandum of understanding to the credit of the Attorney General, without his signature or without his sign off that it was appropriate for the four ministers of the Crown to sign it and to bind the government of Barbados into anything. And the Solicitor General also did not sign off on that memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I told you I had to pray on this because this is a public debate and this is not the Barbados that the people of the world know. That have been described as punching above its weight. Mr. Speaker, sir, it was another two months, I am told, before anything went to the Cabinet of Barbados. So the announcement is made in the Parliament of Barbados on the 17th of March. But nothing goes to the Cabinet until May of 2014. And on that occasion the Cabinet is invited to rescind a previous decision to go out to public tender and request for proposals for waste to energy plants. So here is the Cabinet going down the right course to be able to bring people to the table. The Cabinet also on that date for that paper agrees only not to enter into contract with Cahill. But the Cabinet amends its decision. The decision requested of it by the Minister and says that the most they will agree is that the Sanitation Services Authority should enter into negotiations. Now a memorandum of understanding done sign two months before. The most amazing thing is that the memorandum of understanding was not even delivered to the Cabinet for its sight. So the Cabinet does not see the memorandum of understanding. But the Cabinet agrees that the SSA should enter into negotiations. And I'm going to make this fact sheet available as a document of the House and to all of Barbados when I finish. As well as the documents.

Mr. Speaker, since that time the town hall meeting took place in July 2014 that I said that member for St. Thomas attended. And do you believe that the principal of Cahill also attended a meeting of a waste to energy plant? And this is public information on the Internet now at Tees Valley in England on July 10th, 2014 where she stated among other things the following. I listened to what the lady told the people in England. And that's where my belly start to hurt me from now. She said it cannot get any better than getting paid to take other people's garbage. That's the first thing she tells the people. She then says that Cahill has been written into the laws in Barbados as having the legal claim to all of Barbados municipal wastes, municipal hospital, shipping and sugar. Now I am a legislator as is everybody else in this Parliament. None of us has had the privilege of being briefed, far less to write into law anything for the benefit of any company called Cahill Energy Guernsey Company. As she is purporting to tell the people at another waste to energy plant in Teesside in England on 10 July 2014. At that stage she says that the plant for Barbados is intended to be a 650 ton plant a day. And all of a sudden she says to the people they are expected to receive cash flows of 3.7 billion Barbados dollars over a 30 year period. The cash flows, virtually all of which come from the government of Barbados. Three point seven billion dollars over 30 years. This is public source information on the Internet, Mr. Speaker, sir. 3.4 billion. And that, Mr. Speaker, it was expected then, according to her, to have an approved rate of return. They expected a rate of return of about 19 per cent at the time.

Well, you know, sir, the truth is that on that date it was no longer a \$480 million project. All of a sudden it was a \$512 million project. Then in May of this year, the project was being sold by members of this government as a \$600 million project. And the slides that the Barbados Light and Power presented to the Barbados Chamber of Commerce about this project had it then sold as a \$650 million project. This thing is moving faster than a roller coaster. Mr. Speaker, lo and behold, Sunday morning at about midnight I get my Nation newspaper on my iPad. Low, low, low and behold, I get my Nation newspaper and I now see on page three that this is now a \$700 million project. In 15 months it has gone from \$480 million and 650 tons per day to \$700 million. Hold tight, star, you're jumping ahead of the gun. A \$700 million project with a thousand tons per day.

Mr. Speaker, in the same article, I began to wonder whether the Minister of Environment and the principal of Cahill was talking about the same project. Because on the left side of the page or to the centre of the page, she said that Cahill has had difficulties raising the investment for the project because of the constant downgrading of the Barbados sovereign credit rating. And that in truth and in fact, as soon as we signed the agreement, Barbados' credit ratings dropped not once but several times. Same thing we've been saying over here, by the way. And we would have had investors that were very, very interested. But by the time that there was a third credit rating drop, they were not interested anymore and we would have to start again with new investors. She said that a flurry of investors started to arrive, that Americans have come and Chinese are due in another two weeks. How opportune is it for these visitors to be taking place on the eve - all of a sudden now - of a budget? Remember, it was announced on the eve of a major estimates debate and now it is on the eve of a budget. She said that the deal was expected to be closed on 15 August 2015 and that construction would start in September 2015. None of us have seen any environmental impact assessment. But then again the Minister of Finance said that the Hyatt will start in August of this year. And there is no environmental impact assessment for the Hyatt available yet. And equally there is none for this major project at Vacluse.

In the same newspaper, the Minister of Environment said these words and if I quote from my notes, it is an expensive endeavour and they have been going through a number of investors. They now have a team of investors who have agreed to finance the project. Pause. Remember, the lady said they are looking to conclude investment. And the minister is saying they have a team that have agreed to finance. And he then goes on to say that over the next couple of weeks they will be meeting now with the engineers, one of whom is on the ground already, and that we will be going through the final logistical issues to get ready for groundbreaking and construction. So the principal

is looking for money. And the minister said the funding is there. He says, you know, it is amazing. We know that we were on a schedule and you are working in a volatile economic environment. For example, today somebody can say that they are interested in helping to fund projects and tomorrow they might come back and say you had a downgrade, so we are not interested anymore. So at least the minister is candid about the impact of downgrades on this government's capacity to run the country. And a plant at that level, he admits at that level and at that cost requires a lot of work even to get to the point of construction. And I'm pleased to say we have been able to scale a lot of those hurdles and we will continue to get the groundbreaking. Groundbreaking in September, groundbreaking in September, groundbreaking in August. That's what this government is about.

One problem, sir. One real, real little problem. You would believe it and I would believe it. I really would. You could believe, Mr. Speaker, after all of that - signing an MOU that Cabinet didn't know about, that the AG didn't sign off on or the SG - waiting and giving this company a licence to shop because it is a shell company. If you had given the same gearbox that the member for Christ Church East talked about yesterday, the licence that this company has been given, they could go anywhere and raise money. Technically, because the government is the source of the funding and the supply of the raw materials. Funding through the commitment to purchase electricity and commitment to supply garbage and pay for the garbage to be supplied at that to the waste to energy plant.

To my horror, Mr. Speaker, I learned that Cahill Energy had hired a company called Jacob Securities, a company in the business with a mergers and acquisitions division. And that the same Cahill Energy that the Government rushed to sign a MOU with - and we are now learning from these documents - have also signed, according to these documents, a power purchase agreement and an implementation agreement between the government of Barbados and Cahill Energy. Now, if what these documents say is true, and I'm asking the Prime Minister through you, Mr. Speaker, to bring to this chamber before this debate is finished, copies of the power purchase agreement, which Cabinet has not seen yet, and copies of the implementation agreement, which Cabinet has not seen yet, but which I am told the Sanitation Service Authority has paid legal fees in excess of \$700 000 for local lawyers.

Mr. Speaker, this document from Jacob Securities - and for those who know anything about the law would know that when a company is seeking to sell, it does things such as a private placement memorandum or confidential information memorandum, known as a CIM. And a confidential information memorandum was prepared on behalf of Cahill Energy by Jacob Securities because all of a sudden, having gotten a licence to shop and fish off of the

backs of the taxpayers of Barbados, could you believe that Cahill Energy, nameplate company, is now for sale. Now for sale. And I want to carry you through the details because the confidential information memorandum is written in both Mandarin - and I'm not purporting to learn Mandarin at this stage of my life - so I asked the Prime Minister to produce both the Mandarin one and the English one.

And what does it say? There is a cover letter from the head of mergers and acquisitions - and I'm respecting your will, sir, not to call names - from the head of mergers and acquisitions of Cahill Energy. A two-page cover letter. And this is what it says in the first paragraph, sir: Cahill's first project - first sentence - located in the little town of Vacluse, St. Thomas. I am happy to hear that. Vacluse is now a little town. Cahill's first, not second, not third - its first project located in the little town of Vacluse, St. Thomas. Only somebody not knowing nothing about Barbados could start writing a document to hear so. But if that were the limit of it, we would laugh and move on. It says at the end of that first paragraph, since the project, it tells you how the company is supported fully by the government of Barbados. That the company has a flexible disposition. But then it goes on - halfway you get there - that Cahill has chosen the sale of Cahill Energy Barbados and listen carefully: to use the funds raised to promote its own project development business. So the government and taxpayers of Barbados were to be their opportunity to build a business. And four ministers facilitated it - the member for St. Michael North West, the member for Christ Church East, the member for St. Lucy dragged along, and the proxy for [Inaudible.] who is not in this chamber.

Four ministers. And then - and I want you to hold your belly now because this is what bothers me. After I have been advised by scientists independent of my party and independent of Barbados. Cahill Energy Barbados Agreement - and I quote - with the government of Barbados provides that it will build a plasma gasification plant, hereafter PG plant. However, the protocol itself does not provide for the project to comply with any specific environmental standards. Mr. Speaker, the beginning of the second paragraph of a covering letter tells the purchasers: come as you may, come as you will, do what you like. This country Barbados will not and is not enforcing for a technology that is untried any part of the world at this scale. Do you understand that there is nowhere from China to Timbuktu, from Alaska to Antarctica to wherever, that this project has ever been done as a 75 megawatt at this scale. And worse than that, no part of the globe where it has ever been done on a coral island that depends on water through the coral system at any size whatsoever.

What is plasma gasification for the benefit of Barbadians? There's a lot more to come. Plasma gasification, Mr. Speaker, is burning at 5 000 degrees

centigrade or more - above where the country earns its income from the hotels that the Minister of Tourism is intent on making sure contributes to this country's tourism GDP. In the constituency of St. James Central, St. Thomas and St. James North, where tourism is generated, income is generated, and you are now going to put a plant to burn garbage at 5 000 degrees centigrade.

But it gets worse because the confidential information memorandum says that this is now all of a sudden to have an internal rate of return of 24 per cent, 21 per cent once deleveraged. So after debt, 21 per cent. And I can go through - because everybody can get copies - because no, this is too much. It then says at section 4 - section 2 deals with investment highlights, section 3 deals with overview of Barbados, section 4 project highlights, section 5 Cahill and plasma gasification, section 6 the gasification project financial analysis, which all those who have a fascination with numbers would love to look at to see the extent to which they are increasing the price of the sale of electricity year by year on the backs of the agents through the government.

What does section 4 stand and reflect as project highlights? Section 4 says that the Government of Barbados signed two contracts with Cahill and Cahill Energy for 30 years each. Let me put that in context, sir. When these plants are due to be built and delivered, the last year of the contract I will be 83 years old. 83 years old. Because these four ministers have bound this country until the year 2048 with this project. And as I said, the Cabinet don't know, you know. And if they know, they need now to be held accountable. But I don't believe they know because there's no record of any of them. In fact, they were all horrified when they read - some of them - the story on Sunday in the papers, based on their responses yesterday in this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, sir, the two contracts signed were: one, an implementation agreement; and two, a power purchase agreement. Part one of the implementation agreement, sir, provides for the development, construction, operation and maintenance of the project. And part two of an implementation agreement provides for the arrangements for the supply of waste for the project. Those are typical in an implementation agreement. There is no contract of that type that should be signed by any minister of the Crown without being signed off by the government of Barbados through its Cabinet. It hasn't been signed off by the Attorney General and the Solicitor General even if only - even if they were selling out everything and giving away everything, that would be their decision as a Cabinet to do it. But the Attorney General would say this is appropriate for signature, which has not happened.

And what does that agreement now say? And let me go through it very clearly and comprehensively for you.

Part one of the implementation agreement says that Cahill Energy now has the exclusive right for all waste to energy plants in Barbados hereinafter. So the gentleman who was on the back page of the Nation asking for waste energy plants on Saturday - you better go to Guernsey and look for the nameplate to find the lady to beg for permission to build a plant in Barbados. Because not anybody from the Prime Minister back down in this government, or any future government that we will constitute, will have the power to award a waste to energy plant to anybody in this country. Because these four ministers have gone off on a frolic to give Cahill Energy the exclusive right to develop waste to energy plants in Barbados.

Two, Cahill is exempt from all taxation. No corporation tax - hear me, Barbadians. No value added tax - hear me, Barbadians. No capital gains tax - hear me, Barbadians. No transfer tax on shares of property. No withholding tax on interest and dividends. And listen to this one please, Barbadians: no import duties on the importation of waste tyres and other supply items. Do you know that the Minister of Environment in April, when the solid waste debate was being debated in here in April 2013, denied that there would be any need to import garbage or tyres into this country for this project. But these four ministers - and I think they dragged along a fifth minister; when we come to the biomass we can see how he got dragged along - this document summarises the implementation agreement that has been signed in the name of the people of this country, in our names. And it is now being purported that the government is not agreeing to charge them any import duties on the importation of waste tyres and other supply items. And there's a further clause later down that expects that it can import stacks of tyres now being located in other Caribbean islands. Barbados is known to become the garbage capital of the Americas under this government. How low can we go? How low can we go?

Mr. Speaker, it goes further and I expect every possible denial. You know, I really do. But what you can't deny is the confidential information memorandum set out by Jacob Securities. You heard it, not written by us. Well, Jacob Securities and the people with whom you are doing business have to be the utmost liars. In which case the government should repudiate relationships with them tomorrow before this debate is over. Because if people are prepared to lie on ministers of the Crown then I will stand shoulder to shoulder with the ministers of the Crown to repudiate any contract on which they have been lied. They must not lie against us. And so, if they are lying, then Prime Minister, count me in with you. Count me in with you.

But it doesn't stop there, sir. Under this agreement it says that the implementation agreement - the government must compulsorily acquire the land at Vaucluse for the

project site. Well, we knew that from the Cabinet decision that the government has to acquire the land from Eastern Land Developments, one of their subsidiaries. 27 acres. So the taxpayers of Barbados will pay for the acquisition of that land. And the member for St. Thomas can get houses for her constituents. Or the member for St. George North or St. George South. Or worse than that, the member for St. Andrew can get his constituents fixed properly in St. Andrew - the problems of White Hill. But the government is committing to buy 27 acres and give a contractor in this country to develop a plant that the government is going to give them all of their cost free and then buy all that they have to sell.

I come to the pollution last because that is the one that caused me to speak tonight. Cahill must be allowed to drill water wells on the land and that must be done without charge or tax, and that the permission - as I understand it - is permission that can only be given by the Barbados Water Authority for people to drill water wells. But it then goes on to say that the government must supply the infrastructure, the water pipelines and the commissioning of all water pipelines to the plant.

Cahill must be allowed to not only drill wells but to establish rainwater lagoons. Rainwater lagoons in St. Thomas. And anybody who has lived or visited Jamaica knows that the spectacle and presence of lagoons and the use of caustic soda - which is one of the expense items in this document referred to - portends severe issues that we have to have answered. For a country that has a water situation where our water comes through groundwater through a coral island, this is madness. Then it goes -

on that guess who is to deliver the environmental impact assessment. We were getting ready to use Cahill. You know the government of Barbados agreed to do the own to do the environmental impact assessment. That is what the old people would call salt in the wound. So somebody bringing something to you that is potentially deleterious to your people and you will turn around and do the environmental impact assessment and pay for it. But then put taxes on top of that on the people of Barbados yesterday to the tune of 200 million. You understand why I tell you that this government is for the benefit of a few. Then the government of Barbados must represent and warrant. Once again lawyers know that language because any breach of representation or warranties is the basis for damages. To provide that the government of Barbados will deliver 550 tons per day of municipal solid waste and then 450 tons per day of biomass. You understand that we can't even deliver to SBRC? The government cannot deliver to SBRC every year the 360 000 tons a year that promised them and now is committing to a company to deliver another thousand tons a day. No wonder you're going to have to import garbage and tires.

Mr. Speaker, sir. They no longer will take sugar cane. They have agreed and this is how the Minister of Agriculture gets drawn in - that they will now take what they call elephant grass. What they call king grass. That grass that grows at the side of the road. So Barbados is now to become the country of biomass and elephant grass. Grass, not cane. The Minister of Finance spends 15 minutes on milk yesterday. And less than 60 seconds on the sugarcane industry. Which is facing its most critical path and future for the first time in centuries in this country. And that is what we are to be treated to in a budget.

Mr. Speaker. There are then tipping fee costs in here. I could tell you the tipping fee cost for a ton of municipal, industrial and commercial waste is to be \$60 a ton. For tires, \$100 a ton. For hazardous waste, \$500 a ton. And listen to this part. If the quality of the waste drops below a certain calorific value, those ministers agreed - if this document is to be believed - that Cahill Energy is allowed to increase their rate processing fee from 5 per cent to 13 per cent. If the quality of garbage is not of a certain quality. So make sure it is dry, make sure it is perfumed and make sure it looks a certain way. If not, the people of Barbados are going to get taxed more. Do you know that the government must also bear the cost for the commissioning and the debugging of the electricity at the plant when it is finished too. The government must come in and carry the cost for that too.

This government has sold away - sorry - these four ministers have sold away everything possible to sell away. I can't call it the mother of all sellouts. Because that is unfair to mothers. So this would have to be the horror of all sellouts.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't end there. The handling costs are to increase every three years to reflect the operational and maintenance costs of Cahill. Nothing to do with the government of Barbados. Nothing to protect us. And any delays to the project will not affect the revenue earnings of Cahill. The government has to establish a reserve account from now when the financing is in place. And will not finish that six months reserve account and hold it for three years until the construction is finished and the plant is ready. You can hold up whatever document you want to hold up.

The government also has an obligation, sir, to make whole - to make whole any default under this project. So even if the government is to walk away from this project now, the liability of the taxpayers of Barbados is going to be in the tens and hundreds of millions potentially. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Prime Minister, this implementation agreement has to be brought to the people of Barbados before this debate is over. Because this project is intended to start construction in September. And I can speak on behalf of the Barbados

Labour Party and the Members of Parliament who represent the area and the surrounding areas. And we can tell you, not boast here, this will carry us to a new level in this country. If four ministers believe that they can sell out the interests financially and environmentally and the well-being of citizens of Barbados in the way in which this is done.

Mr. Speaker, the power purchase agreement provides for a capacity payment and a fixed price payment. Suffice it to say that the government cannot sign any power purchase agreement without sending it to the Fair Trading Commission as it would have the lighting power due. But what it is agreed to in this document is to pay 45 cents Barbados per unit hour, which we believe to be per kilowatt hour, in addition to something known as a capacity payment, which is effectively to ensure that the company has the capacity to deliver at any time.

Mr. Speaker, I asked others to do some numbers for me. They told me that this electricity, if generated in the initial years, will cost \$90 million more. It will cost \$150 million as opposed to \$60 million on the part of Light and Power. So you would be foisting almost \$100 million more per year in electricity prices on the people of Barbados. So it is not even a least cost solution. So you are building a size plant for more garbage than you have and you are seeking now to force on the back of Barbadians electricity at prices that go beyond anything that Barbadians can now access, even with other renewables in this country. And what is more, sir, the Government of Barbados in the power purchase agreement agrees that this electricity is better than any other form and must enjoy the right of priority scheduling. Do you understand the principle of being unequally yoked? But this was as if four ministers had their hands behind their back, their legs cut off, their mouths shut up, mouths taped off, their eyes closed and their ears blocked. They either had to have that or this was some kind of amazing revelation that they saw when they sat across the table from Cahill. That is unknown to the rest of us.

Mr. Speaker, the environmental concerns. There are two byproducts of gasification. Syngas from the organic waste and slag from the inorganic waste like glass, concrete and metal. Sir, one of the problems that we have to worry about in Barbados, and I say this genuinely, is that the importation of tires may cause particular problems for the Ministry of Environment and for the Department of Environmental Health and the Ministry of Health because it is likely to import mosquito-borne diseases including malaria and yellow fever. This is a country that got over Chikungunya last year. The laws and international conventions do not allow for the importation of garbage easily into a country for very good reasons and in fact garbage from airplanes and garbage from boats cannot be mixed or allowed to leave our seaport or airport. Now what

would Barbados - that punches above its weight, that is the Platinum course that takes the best of the best in terms of tourism that the government boasts about - what would we be doing importing garbage to support the project interest for the sake of a company that is a shell company in this country?

I asked the Prime Minister. We are not bystanders or aliens. If contracts have been signed there can be no further proper business in this country given a September construction date by Cahill than for the people of Barbados to be produced with the facts. If you don't know, Prime Minister, you need to know. I can understand the member for Christ Church South - he has been too busy travelling recently. He hasn't even been here for power meetings that have been held in Barbados. I can understand. The member for Christ Church East - his night rest is being interrupted regularly. So he may not have had the chance to be able to review it. The member for St. Philip West - well, the member for St. Philip West is what you know as the victim of a perpetration. He didn't know that they were on a frolic with him. The member for St. Philip South - from day one he said no. No, no. He says no. From day one he said no. The member for St. Michael Central is too busy acting as Minister of Foreign Affairs because the Minister of Foreign Affairs is never here and that gives him his sense of well-being. So we're not going to worry with that. And the member for St. James South is too busy trying to put out every fire for the Democratic Labour Party across the length and breadth of Barbados. I don't know whether he's going to put out this fire. If he knows what is good for him, he should stay down in West Terrace and not worry about the vocals. And the member for Christ Church West Central - he is waiting out in the outfield because he figures when three or four knock out he is the last one there to try and catch a double hop or triple hop. I don't even go to the back bench because in fairness the back bench has been treated as if they are apostrophes and irrelevant considerations to what is going on at the front bench.

St. John - the member for St. John has had to make a case for a polyclinic that I will not speak about today. But it is now over 100 per cent overruns and is only existing because the government has brought in a project manager to pay the contractor. But more on that another day. And the member for St. Michael West Central - poor fellow trying to make a case. Every time he raises his head for agriculture, the government knocks it down by giving somebody else duty-free imports and duty-free things. He really ought to go to a seminary now and join the priesthood and follow his brother.

Mr. Speaker, if this were not so tragic, it would be funny. Barbados is 166 square miles. We cannot recover financially, easily or environmentally. If this project indeed has been signed, if these people have lied to the government and people of Barbados and to the

international community, then let us put it to rest. But if this confidential information memorandum which I have - and there are other documents which I have by the way too, that I will not release today - a halt must now be brought to this in the name of Barbados and in the name of Barbadians.

You know, sir, I feel strongly that the time has come for people to speak out for Barbados. And when I said, sir, that there is a need for persons of goodwill to say that things must be done the right way, it's not because I am trying to be invidious. The truth is, sir, that you have a situation where in the sociology of smallness, people get frightened to talk truth to power and people get frightened to call a spade a spade. But as I said last year in July, before we went on the road, we have a duty. And I will act by my duty. And my duty tells me that we have to defend the interests of ordinary Barbadians. Particularly when those ordinary Barbadians are being made victims of more taxes for the benefit of a few. For gratuities and pensions by a few. And I say to you, sir, that there are some on that side who I ask tonight - do you have a conscience? You see the suffering of ordinary Barbadians. You have now seen the expenditure that has been reckless and wasteful and consolidating wealth in the hands of that very few at the expense of ordinary Barbadians. Can you stand idly by on that side, some of you? And allow this to continue.

And Prime Minister, I say to you, elections will come and elections will go. But there must always be a Barbados. And there must always be Barbadians. And life is precious as you know, and I have already expressed my sympathy. Barbados cannot be made a victim of this. And in the name of the people of this country, in the name of the party which I have the honour to represent, I say to you, let us bring an end to two things today, tonight. One, let us get the refinancing of our debt right so that we can put this country back on a stable footing. And two, let us stop the madness that allows the consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few. Especially when it is to sell out the interests of Barbadians, born and unborn. And especially when it is to lead to consequences environmental and bankruptcy-wise. The town of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania filed bankruptcy because of waste - because an incineration plant went bankrupt with them. \$300 million. So it is not unknown for people to do it. Ottawa cancelled a gasification plant the other day. These things are untried technology. Our country is too sweet and too precious to be anybody's guinea pig.

And to the rest of us in this country, I ask you to bear strain. I ask you to be vigilant in the same way that we have had to be vigilant on this side. That we give you the commitment - I give you the commitment - that we in the Barbados Labour Party will stand in the breach to protect your interests. We don't pretend that things will be great overnight. But we do know that better is demanded of us

and that we are capable of better as a country. And we do know we are on the wrong path. And that's why I ask for us to meet on the refinance. Because when people die or when people get stricken with a stroke or when people emigrate, you are now having social problems compounding economic problems. And you carry us into an abyss that makes it more difficult for us to recover.

I say to you, to the people of Barbados, that there is nothing so wrong with Barbados other than a broken government. That's what's wrong with Barbados. The sky is still blue, the sand is still there. The sea is still wonderful, the people are still great. The old ladies selling in the market still have a twinkle in the eye and joke with you when you go to buy stuff from them. The fellows on the block are the same way. The girls working in the aesthetics place and working in town. Everybody just wants better for themselves. And ultimately this country can only be rebuilt when 70 or 80 per cent of the country and the population recognise that this is the plan that will pull us out and pull us back together. But you know, sir, in that recognition, it means that Barbadians have to keep hope alive. And I ask Bajans that in spite of all the lashes and the licks you are taking, do not give up hope on this country. This country has been good to us. This country has given us a quality of life that most other countries could not have given us on 166 square miles. And it is unfortunate that many more are not prepared to stand up and bat for Barbados at this difficult day.

This is not because of global international conditions. This is because a government continues to make the wrong decisions over and over, over-taxing a population in 2008 to bring it back to growth. And you come last night again and double the level of taxation to bring it back to growth. And when you see the extent to which persons are being asked to carry the load and others are being given a free ride to heaven, then you begin to wonder, can there be justice in this country anymore? Well, I say to you that there is justice ahead of us with the Barbados Labour Party. And I say to you that for some of you this may appear to be a horror series, a mini horror series. But you know, at 8 minutes to 8 tonight, I tell you that by tomorrow night the current episode in this series shall come to an end. And the final episode in the final series will come to an end in June of 2018. Unless, of course, like with most television series that no longer enjoy the ratings and popularity of the public, a decision is taken to cancel the series mid-season. And that is in the hands of the public.

But suffice it to say that whenever the series comes to an end, Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party shall be ready and able. Because what is required of us is to stand in the breach. To return the soul to a country, to return stability to a country, to return pride to a people. And above all else, sir, to allow people to believe in public

officials again - that they can be held by their word. And for those on the other side who, like me, feel it difficult to participate in a public environment where the stench is now so high that we have gone so low, I say to you, simply hold on. Hold on and keep hope alive. Because this is the only country we have and there is nothing wrong with it other than a broken government. Good day. Good night.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for St. Michael.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Only yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we had the financial statement and budgetary proposals for 2015 presented to this House, appropriately subtitled *Completing the Job, An Agenda for Fiscal Reform, Debt Sustainability and Economic Growth*. Mr. Speaker, I want to start, of course, by commending the Minister of Finance for presenting a balanced and thorough set of proposals to continue the work and to complete the job of restructuring this economy. Mr. Speaker, we are not totally out of the woods, but considering what this country has been through, I think we need to in essence report progress and ask leave to continue to work harder. Again, if I can paraphrase the parliamentary jargon, I think that in essence the indicators are showing that the economy is growing once again, investors are investing once again, unemployment is coming down once again, and our deficit is now going in the right direction. And in essence, I would like to also commend the member for St. Michael North West, not only for his presentation yesterday, but in essence for the level of industry that he has displayed in navigating us through these waters, facing at times some very harsh and uncharitable criticisms. And I want to commend him for staying the course. And I am actually quite proud to be part of this government that has been able to make these adjustments. We hear that the fiscal deficit to GDP ratio is now less than 6 per cent. It was over 11 per cent up to about a year and some ago. And in essence, we have stabilised that situation. And you know, that is really fundamental in terms of what it is that we are about.

Mr. Speaker, you heard a presentation just now from the Leader of the Opposition. And in essence, the Opposition Leader started out making a couple of points and then after that it was all about muck-raking, basically. I think that what I am saying - I am saying this in a very measured way - we had the Estimates Debate at the end of March. The Opposition Leader had two and a half months to come in here and answer a simple question. If you are saying that you do not approve of the way we are managing the economy, what would you do differently? There is a \$1.7 billion deficit that we have to finance. That is what this budget is about. How would you do it? Your energy policy is basically to wreck being out to subsidise electricity. You are saying you are going to pay the students all they want and you are going to do everything under the sun, but yet you are not going to increase any

taxes on anyone at all. I find it very interesting. So how are we going to do it? And these vague, opaque references to let us refinance the debt - I have no problem with that. But give particulars as to how you are going to do this. And I think a lot of that energy that we saw, the rant, the raving, the misbehaving, jumping up and dancing up and down - some of that energy could have been spent answering that simple, straightforward question. You are saying you do not approve of our approach. What is your approach? And I would like to think that would be an answer that everyone in Barbados would want to hear.

I was amused, for example, that a great song and dance about land tax to persons with low incomes accused the Minister of Finance of misleading the Chamber - when the Minister read what is in black and white in a document. If up to \$150 000 in value, you pay no land tax. If it goes between \$150 000 and up to \$300 000, you pay 0.1 per cent. So if you have a property valued at \$190 000, you are paying 0.1 per cent on \$40 000. So we are being told that we have misled the House for asking for the grand sum of \$40 from somebody. And we have misled the House. A big song and dance - the Minister should resign, the government is unfit - because of \$40. So you understand, if your property is valued at \$186 000, it is \$3 a month - three silver dollars a month - we are asking people to pay in order to help this thing. We have misled, we have misled the country. But that is just a representative sample of just how desperate this member was to basically carry on for four hours. This tax clearance issue as well - now, I understand it is going to probably be the subject of the law courts' attention, but again, what is your approach? I mean, I would like to think that you believe that people who are self-employed should also pay their fair share. They enjoy the benefits of everything else and in essence they should pay their fair share. And I do not think we are going to get away again with just carrying on about people not being able to practise because they cannot get a clearance certificate. I always understood that agencies will provide those clearance certificates once you provide proof of being on some sort of payment plan. It is not about preventing people from being able to function. But you have to pay your taxes. That is all it is. I do not think the member for St. Michael North East will want to encourage people not to pay tax. I am not going to get into that. But again, 30 minutes carrying on about asking simply self-employed people to pay their fair share - that is all that we are saying.

And you know the whole song and dance - the member is going outside. I would like to give her a copy. The health services thing about smoking in public places - well, take it with her when she goes out there. But anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I am staying on course and saying what I have to say because there is noise in the channel. You know, national television - and me and her do not agree. Last night she stopped talking to me. Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I am saying take it easy. You know, you and I do

not agree on national TV too. I am going to talk about serious business here. It is not about kidnapping and mashing up roads. Take it easy. Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I know the member for St. Michael North East also sought to deal with the issue of the workers at Sandy Lane not receiving their increases for 2010 that were negotiated for them between the Barbados Workers' Union and the BHTA - Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association. I welcome - a member actually said she is supporting me on this one. It is the very first time that I have been in here that I have heard any Barbados Labour Party parliamentarian take a pro-labour position where tourism is concerned. They normally are quick to apologise and represent the position of capital, the hotel association and the hoteliers. So I am happy to hear of this newfound love for the workers of Sandy Lane.

That situation is an unfortunate one and it is one that I sincerely hope will be properly resolved. But let me make it clear. The BHTA, who negotiated, must also do what they have to do to make sure that their member does what it has to do. They negotiated with the union for the sector. One of their members has for whatever reason decided that they are not going to pay the increase. I think that they need to be drawn into the loop as well and they need to be taken to task. The union of course is obviously upset on the matter and my position is very clear. As the member said, I do not apologise. I think the workers have held strain and they should get their due. Sandy Lane workers are among the best paid in the sector. But that does not absolve anyone from having to do what they are supposed to do. And therefore I look forward to seeing how this thing will be resolved.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think that again we have to give the member for St. Michael North West all credit for ensuring that our economic situation is put on a firmer and sustainable footing by deliberate, interventionist, surgically applied measures. And I guess in this document that is so comprehensive, we touch on the state-owned enterprises, but we try to facilitate private sector enterprises as well. We deal with the productive sectors as well. We deal with trying to promote investment in various ways. And let me give you just a little example. I think the initiative to help our local producers of fresh milk - as simple as it may seem, the dairy is a small subsector, a relatively small subsector in agriculture - but it is the principle of being able to save a sector and at the same time not only save the jobs and so on, but have a nutritious product made available for the citizens of Barbados. And I want to commend not only the member for St. Michael North West, but the member for St. Philip West as well, for the energy that they personally put in to ensuring that we are able to save the dairy industry. It is not about the \$1.17 per kg subsidy and the cess that will now come on the imports. But again, it is an example of exactly what this government has been about - skilfully and carefully moving in and

dealing with issues in a surgical way so that we can assure their sustainability for generations to come.

Another fine example of that, of course, would be what we have done in education. Now, in education, we have of course put a plan in place to see that students who fall below a certain income range - households in a certain below-income range - will be given assistance, a scholarship grant programme that will be graduated. Not only does it not stay at \$2.5 million, it escalates up. Of course, that minor point was missed by the Leader of the Opposition. But let it not be said that the Democratic Labour Party is not the education party, because we are doing what we have to do to ensure that those who deserve it are given an opportunity to pursue an education. You know, telling half of the story - so we hear about the fall in enrolment at Cave Hill, but we are not going to hear that the UWI Online School actually has 24 000 people who are participating in it - more than any other campus - and many of that 24 000 are Barbadians. So the UWI will be fine. The University of the West Indies will be fine. We had to, in essence, ask students to contribute in order to ensure the sustainability of the university system. We would like to think that when those same students indeed have their own families down the road, the integrity of the whole school system is intact. And also, what is wrong with asking those who can genuinely afford it to invest a little in their education? I think there is nothing wrong with that. And therefore I think that we are totally on track in that regard, Mr. Speaker.

So we really and truly say - we like to say that there is not much difference between the two political parties - but there is actually a substantial difference in regard to where we are taking the future of Barbados. Because had we not made those difficult decisions, we could have imperilled the very future of Barbados. We could have mortgaged the future of Barbados, asking future generations to possibly live under poor living standards. We asked the people to bear with us and it is working. The other side, of course, has a shopping list of promises that costs through the ceiling and we do not know how it is going to be financed. We have pulled things around to the point - Mr. Speaker, a very significant point was made yesterday that I think needs to be repeated - we have a primary surplus on our current account for the first time in many years, only \$85 million, but coming from a deficit of \$385 million. And it simply means - and I thought the Leader of the Opposition would have mentioned that, because on and on the Opposition Leader is able to tell you, oh, we are not able to pay wages, we are borrowing money to pay wages - here it is: we have pulled things around to the point that we now do not have to borrow money to meet our current expenses. We still need to borrow some to pay interest, but we are going to get, as the next stop, a primary surplus and then a secondary surplus, which means you will have enough money on the current account that you

can even pay the interest as well that you have to pay on your loans. So there is a process involved here and I think that credit needs to go again to the Ministry of Finance and the government for getting us through this very difficult period. When everyone said we would fail, we were told we would fail, and we have been able to accomplish it.

So let us not get caught up in the rabid utterances of the Leader of the Opposition - of course, talking about utterances that cannot be weaved together in any sensible way to make any sense. And of course your answer to the fiscal crisis is let us refinance the debt, without any sort of details, in a four-hour presentation. You know, Mr. Speaker, ample time to tell the people of Barbados this is where the Democratic Labour Party government is going and this is where I would go. But we are still waiting for that. And clearly we cannot take those chances. We need to give credit where credit is due and we need to accept that we have indeed come a very long way in terms of bringing us back from those challenges that we had to go through. Because remember, Mr. Speaker, we are not totally out of the woods in terms of the international situation. You will note that when we hear the observers, as well as government practitioners from the different North Atlantic countries, they still talk about being cautiously optimistic and not being out of the woods. Even for the first quarter of this year, the US said they thought their growth was disappointing. So we are still wobbling our way out of this crisis situation. And again, I think for the party to be in a position to report progress and to redouble our efforts at making sure we still remain disciplined - I do not have a problem with the taxation measures.

I heard this suggestion that we were soaking \$200 million in taxes from the people. But let us be frank. If you want to gamble, you have to pay some more taxes. If you want to use your cell phone that you probably should not be using so regularly, well, you pay some more taxes. If you want to drink sweet drinks that you probably should not be drinking anyhow - these are discretionary activities. As far as VAT is concerned, the basket of goods - again, I do not think there should be any argument there. Cashew nuts and Brussels sprouts and so on - I do not know how that could get into a basket of basic needs for anyone. And we needed to clean that up. And I think that we did the right thing. And in essence, the \$200 million in taxes that we are seeking, in my opinion, is again surgically applied and in keeping with the overall long-term plan that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we cannot really divorce what is happening with the economy from what is going on in tourism. Obviously, what we have been really trying to do as far as our tourism development is concerned is create sufficient capacity so that we will not, in essence, have to worry about growth in the sector. And by growth, I mean value added. I mean arrivals are up now - that is true. But

at the same time, it is important that we start to think down the road, because the absence of proper planning is what really and truly hurt our tourism industry to a very large extent. If we have to reflect - for example, Mr. Speaker, when we came to office in 2008, the room stock that once was nearly 7 000 in 1980 had gone down to about 5 900 rooms. Rooms were leaving - hotels were being converted to condominiums - in a situation where even though your arrivals were climbing, you were in essence watching the sector being undermined in terms of its very basis. So what we have in fact decided to do as a government is to ensure that the capacity is there, by not only the government itself getting involved in some hotel projects, but facilitating the private sector to get involved. The concessions that we made - or should I say the amendments to the Tourism Development Act for the sector to be treated as an export - have been fundamental in driving up investor confidence, not only among foreign investors but domestic investors as well. And that is what we are about: looking at the long-run picture.

So we are happy to report that, for example, what was once Amaryllis has now been rebranded and that hotel is in construction. We are also happy to hear about Sandy Bay - this is construction, this is not projects about to start. This is Barbadian investors investing and building out the room stock of Barbados because of the investor-friendly policies of this Democratic Labour Party government. Mr. Odle is well known to members on the other side, and what we did because of his condo-hotel concept is that we actually, through BTI, made a very modest investment in one of the units. Now, the other side would probably tell me I should do like what they did with HRL and then we have to look for \$150 million to pay back. But by working with sensible, creative investors like Mr. Odle, we made a small investment in his project and facilitated it, and now Sandy Beach will be coming back as Sandy Bay because of the Democratic Labour Party. And I congratulate those principals.

But indeed beyond that, Mr. Speaker, we are also working as well to see that the old Sam Lord's Castle comes on stream. We have completed the negotiations with the People's Republic of China Exim Bank and we anticipate that those rooms will come back - 450 luxury suites and amenity activities - and it will be managed by Wyndham, the world's largest hotel company. PR Beach Resort at Foul Bay will also see an additional 309 rooms. Those are to be completed as well by 2019. And by the way, by 2019 to 2020, if we get these projects all going on stream, we should have an additional thousand rooms. And that in fact will facilitate not only a whole set of investment in Barbados - investment to the tune of US\$540 million annually in terms of visitor receipts - but we should also be well on the way, by the time we get into phase two with the developments in Carlisle Bay and Needhams Point, towards full employment. When you think about all of the

ancillary and vicarious operations that will benefit from seeing so many hotel rooms - the agriculturalists will benefit, the manufacturers will benefit, service providers will benefit. And we have to work towards a scenario where we see jobs. Ideally, we would like to see full employment in Barbados and it is achievable if we stick with this investment plan that we have for tourism. We are talking that by the year 2020 we could have 10 000 hotel rooms and the unemployment level would be at what economists would call full employment - where it is basically negligible. It is not literally full employment, but you will always have a few people looking for a job and so on. I believe the correct definition is where the non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment is at that level - that level of unemployment is called full employment - and we can get there. And the Ministries of Finance and Tourism are working towards that, not by happenstance, but by carefully planned policies and programmes with respect to our tourism industry.

So I would like to think that gone would be the days where a Minister of Tourism would have to get up and talk about a 2 per cent here, 3 per cent yonder, 4 per cent there. I mean, I would really like to see us go past that and start to look at the bigger picture and the important numbers - level of investment, level of tourism receipts, number of people employed - and not get into these arguments that I find quite tiresome. The bits and pieces of statistical gossip that sometimes I have to endure in here. Little ends of arithmetic being thrown around - well, this one is up, but that number is down, and this one is up here but we are down there and all that kind of foolishness. But let us look at a global plan to see how we can resuscitate the industry. So let me explain to you the sort of thinking that we are talking about. The fact is that we have a scenario where during the high season 80 per cent of the rooms in Barbados are usually full. During the off season that can go down to 40 to 60 per cent. What do we do about that capacity? Well, we have to look for appropriate plant that can utilise it. Families tend to travel during the summer. Summer travel tends to be stronger out of the US. So our airlift strategy and our investment strategy have to be dovetailed so that the all-inclusive product that families prefer - that we focus on getting some of that. As it stands now, maybe 14 per cent of our product is all-inclusive. So we have to have the right, judicious mix of AI and EP so that we can still see that kind of business coming in, so we can get away from this feast-and-famine approach to tourism, where there is a high season and a low season, hotel workers have to go home, they have to go on short weeks. And we would like to see that eliminated. But it is not going to be eliminated if we get up in here during a response to a budget and say abracadabra and it finishes. You have to have a strategy that understands that and focuses on that.

We speak about broadening the stakeholdership base of the sector. And this is exactly what we are doing when we look to the eastern part of the island, the parish of St. Philip - our largest parish - to have more of the opportunities out there for touristic projects expanded upon. 50 per cent of our room stock is on the South Coast, 48 per cent is on the West Coast. So we need to develop Carlisle Bay and the peninsula. We need to develop St. Philip and in essence not only bring more economic activity to Barbados and more jobs, but have them spread out among more communities. More communities are impacted and affected in a positive manner. And that is the nature of the work that is going on at the Ministry of Tourism - trying to complete an investment strategy and making sure that the airlift scenario fits in with that. Because that is what makes sense, Mr. Speaker, not simply just doing things in a chance manner. This idea of running a special for the next season - when I came into this job, the whole structure of Barbados tourism was wrong. As I said, we were losing rooms. We had a scenario where the Barbados Tourism Authority, as it was termed then, was subsidising programmes like Best of Barbados. We had to move off of that - it was not sustainable - and improve our product such that it could drive demand. And in essence, we set up the Product Authority for that. And so we have an investment strategy, a product development strategy and a marketing strategy that are all working well. And so the increases that you have seen so far for this year, Mr. Speaker, it is part of a continuum, a trajectory that will see us going in an upward direction with increased arrivals until we get to that optimum point. And I am determined that if nothing else, my successor will not inherit what I did. Because a lot of what I am doing now, I will probably not see the benefit of it in terms of the arrivals - someone else will. But the point is to have the right strategy for the future of Barbados. That is why we are here - not for the short run. And it is a little difficult sometimes when you try to have a serious debate on tourism at that level, and sometimes it is not always forthcoming.

So I want to again not only say that I support the measures in here and what they are doing to promote investment, but also what they are in the context of investor confidence and what is happening, and everyone who has contributed to that. I said, Mr. Speaker, there were a few things as well I wanted to touch on with respect to the actual budget speech. But before I get there, I need, of course, to thank the people of St. Michael South Central for making it possible for me to be here. And I have chosen to do this at this time and -

not at the beginning for a very good reason. I really wanted to especially say thank you to the people of Britain's Hill who are occupying the Valerie housing project, because I can only imagine how they must feel. If the member for St. Michael North East wants to blame anybody for Valerie, blame me. I will take full

responsibility for the Valerie project. I stood up in this House between 2003. I ain't making apology for Grotto neither. But I can talk about Valerie, though, because I have a personal interest in this one. I will talk about Valerie and Stewart's Lodge. Between 2003 and 2008, when I was in opposition, I could not get a brick moved in St. Michael South Central to get housing done. I got roads, don't worry. I got roads from St. George North. You pave a road for me? Yes, you pave a road. I ain't getting nothing from housing. And I lobbied hard. We have had housing projects built since the 1940s in Barbados. Sears Court, Pine Grisettes and Hainsville were built in the late 40s and not one housing project was in St. Michael South Central. So I made sure after we came to office in 2008, I lobbied hard for a project in Carrington Village, Sturts Lodge I went. The unfortunate fire of the Valerie Greyhouse. I lobbied hard to get one in Valerie as well. So blame me.

And if it cost \$500 a square foot to put people in houses, poor people who had been meandering from pillar to post couldn't get any housing solution. Renting rooms and all kind of things under the Barbados Labour Party had all the money, people living in shanties and so on, and now they have the pride of having their own home. I went to every single one of those 80 units in Valerie. It is a fact people are there. This is not hardwood housing that we don't know anything about. This is a history house. You can go up there and see the two Valerie Towers. And don't forget the one for the physically challenged people. The member for St. Michael South East knows the place very well because she took one of her constituents there that had a house fire. They're living there. Yes, it knows very well the housing. It is there.

We build, we build, we build. And yet here it is we are going to be attacked basically because we spend some money on subsidised housing. That is what a housing authority is there for. It is there to provide subsidised housing. The member for St. George North agrees with me very well because he was the one when he saw how much money they were spending on Hotel and Resorts Ltd. He said if he had that he could build a wash pan of houses. Yes. After attending a church service, the launch of Road Safety Week, I think it was or something. He said if he had it, he would have built a whole set of houses. He was right. So it is clear to me, Mr. Speaker, I said it when I was in opposition. Now that I'm in government, urbanisation is the way to go. We have to go up in the air, given the density of our population and the scarce amount of land we have. I'm not saying that we can't tweak things and learn from the Grotto and Valerie experience and do it better on the next one. It is something new to Barbados.

So Valerie is a fact. I went and I saw the people. There are real human beings living in Valerie. It's not make-believe people and they deserve to think. I mean, you know, St. Michael South as well, where Grotto is - no

houses built probably since the 50s. I mean at least they're better than South Central. We ain't had none at all. But here it is. You finally decide to rectify that. There are about 40 housing areas in Barbados, you know, there are quite a few and more than half of them are in St. Michael. So it is interesting that you can have constituencies that haven't benefited at all. And so I think that we need to put things in proper perspective. And that is why I not only thank the people of St. Michael South Central for being here, but I also thank them for their forbearance because it wasn't easy not having anything at all going in your direction. And we've got past that and indeed we need to be thankful that has been the case and encourage the government to continue to find housing solutions for all the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I think that again, we have come a long way. We have done extremely well given the circumstances. And to have maintained in essence our public services and social cohesion while having to make difficult decisions says a lot for this country. We know where we are going, Mr. Speaker, and we are determined as we approach our 50th year of independence to see that we can have a society of course, that is environmentally sound, economically viable, socially balanced and of course always undergirded, characterised by good governance, good and transparent governance. We've done extremely well given all that we've had to work against, Mr. Speaker. And I think this government should be complimented for staying the course and for not abandoning the mission at all midstream.

I do not agree with the Leader of the Opposition at all that in essence this government hasn't done a good job. It's done an excellent job and I think it is fair to say that. Mr. Speaker, I note the member for St. Michael North East quoted from the IMF report. But let me also quote from the same IMF report. This is the words of the IMF. It said the government has made strides in its adjustment programme and a tourism-led recovery is underway. Real GDP is estimated to have grown and is projected to rise further driven by stronger tourism inflows. That is the fact that we are dealing with a government that came to the people of Barbados and said, bear with us, let us get through this difficult period and you will start to see success.

Mr. Speaker, I can only say one more thing - that when I reflect on what we heard today, I thank God that when this country started to go through difficult periods, it has been a Democratic Labour Party government who has been in office. That what we heard in here today would ruin this country. You have to be able to make a tough and unpopular decision sometimes. And that is what we have done. We have stayed the course and now the country is on the rebound. I'm obliged to you, Mr. Speaker. God bless you.

SUSPENSION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the House.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the sitting be suspended for dinner until 9:30 this evening.

The question that the House be suspended until 9.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Members, the sitting of the House will resume. The suspension has been taken. We were at Order Number 16 and with that we shall continue. Yes, Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to bring this debate back to reality after hearing the speech of the Honourable Member who just spoke. I want to begin by congratulating the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East for an excellent presentation that dealt with all the issues and also would have served to alert the public of Barbados to a number of issues in relation to the morality associated with governance in this country at this time that they were perhaps, Mr. Speaker, not have been aware of.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to begin by saying really that this Government has engaged in a very painful and failed tax experiment with this country, beginning with the budget of 2008, that has taken a toll on individuals, households and businesses. So, Mr. Speaker, since 2008, we have seen in this country an increasing VAT. We have seen new draconian taxes being introduced. We have seen personal allowances being taxed. We have seen licences and fees on virtually every artisan being increased. In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have seen - if we were in any doubt before - we have seen that education now is certainly not free. Health care costs have increased, unemployment has increased, food prices have increased exponentially. Even violence, Mr. Speaker, has increased in this country. Everything has increased in this country except people's wages and salaries. And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, there has been no corresponding increase in the welfare vote to protect and assist those people who most need to cope with the unprecedented and sustained rise in the cost of living in this country. So the safety net has not been adjusted to protect the poor and vulnerable.

In Barbados yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance continued in this same vein. He put an additional \$200 million in taxes on everybody. Everybody has been burnt. So we now have, among other things, a direct

increase in income taxes, an increase in corporation taxes, an increase in land taxes by more than we took last year in relation to the municipal solid waste tax. A heavy tax - the second highest levied in the budget yesterday - has been put on the use of airtime, the use of cell phones, so that now when a young child goes to the cinema with a few friends and the movie is finished and she takes up the cell phone to call and say, "Mommy, the movie is now finished, you can come and collect me and my friends," she has to pay a tax for doing that. They have increased, Mr. Speaker, taxes on what people drink. And I know what else was done yesterday. After the Minister of Finance said that the stabilisation and recovery plan that he had introduced was working - after this plan was working - these things were then done. Well, if it is really true that a plan that is working results in the Minister of Finance doing this, then I would hate to see what he will do if he were to encounter full recovery.

But Mr. Speaker, this is almost twice as much taxation as was inflicted on the population in 2008 when times were better. And to make it worse, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister, after increasing taxes on artisans, went one step further and announced that now, to renew a licence to be able to legally carry on their business as tradesmen, they cannot do that unless they punctually pay every cent that is due in taxation and produce a valid tax certificate. This is unconscionable, Mr. Speaker. No one is saying that people should not pay taxes. We already have systems and laws in place to deal with people who do not pay taxes. But this is really a situation where now a Government is saying to workers: I will determine if and when I, the Government, will pay you what we owe you. But you make sure that when you owe us, you pay us by the due date, or we are going to restrict and prevent you from engaging in your lawful trade.

The point, Mr. Speaker, is that there is taxation and there is taxation, and it is a failed experiment. Barbados, Mr. Speaker, will have to determine how they are going to respond to this. But the fact is that this economy is not going to grow and develop, nor will there be any shared prosperity in this country, by the use of the dagger of taxation. Taxation is merely bleeding and starving this economy. And Mr. Speaker, I just want to interject here. I went personally and complimented the Minister of Finance for deciding to take stock of his appearance. But the fact that he has decided to curb his self-confessed gluttony does not mean that he has to starve everybody else. If he is determined that he needs to starve, he can go ahead. But he does not have to starve everybody else, Mr. Speaker. But that is what he has done.

People have to be able to pay their bills. People who want jobs have to be able to get jobs. People who want to invest in businesses have to be able to invest in businesses if shared prosperity is to be enjoyed across this country. I

am far from seeing the dagger of taxation as the answer. This Government should be seeking to facilitate the expansion of existing businesses and the creation of new businesses. This is a must-do for Barbados - indeed for any economy that wishes to grow. But Mr. Speaker, that is not the case, because Barbados is not even in the top 100 countries when it comes to the ease of doing business. According to the latest World Bank Doing Business 2015 report, as at June 1, 2014, Barbados ranks 106 out of 189 economies on the ease of doing business. And this represents a slide downward by three positions from the 103rd position that it previously occupied the year before. So, Mr. Speaker, Barbados is moving in the wrong direction.

But significant also is that in relation to perhaps the major indicator - which is getting a business started, the ease of getting a business started - there were five other countries from the region that were presented alongside Barbados in the report, and every single one of them did better than Barbados. In the category of how easy it is to get a business started, Barbados was in 94th position, down from the 86th position. Mr. Speaker, little Grenada, Jamaica, little St. Kitts and Nevis, little St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago - all of those countries scored better than Barbados when it came to the ease of doing business. And in addition, in getting the business started in other jurisdictions, Barbados was in 94th position again, down from the 86th position that it had occupied previously. The Minister of Finance yesterday paid lip service to his intention to suddenly do something about this. But that is not going to matter, because when you extract - as was done in this budget - \$200-plus million from people and you cut out that disposable income and curb that spending power, it is going to put pressure, of course, on the viability of businesses. It will really just bludgeon a sector that is already lathered in blood. But this Government, Mr. Speaker, seems to be getting it wrong at every turn.

It is in that context that I wish to turn to the tourism sector, where, as in the case, Mr. Speaker, of managing the economy generally, poor planning, incompetence and false assumptions have become the order of the day in relation to our major sector in this economy. And I want to begin by asking the Minister of Tourism - who, you could tell from the disjointed nature of his speech, was obviously in a hurry to go and watch the basketball game - I want to know, to begin with, where is the tourism master plan that we were promised since 2008? Only in March this year, the Minister of Tourism gave us the assurance that his master plan was ready. Barbados has spent millions of dollars - and you have to spend millions of dollars to secure a proper master plan - but where is it? It is a master plan for 2014-2023. We are in 2015. So an entire year has gone already of the tenure and term of this tourism master plan and it still has not been brought into use. It has not been brought to this Chamber. It cannot be a secret document. And Mr.

Speaker, I want to know where it is and how soon, as a Parliament and as a country, we are going to get to see this plan and be able to make our views known.

Why did it take so long - 10 months to be exact - to put in place and appoint a CEO of the product development company, a splinter of the Barbados Tourism Authority? Ten months. We are saying in Barbados that the major issue, or one of the major issues in our tourism, is our product. You have a company set up to deal exclusively with that issue - to assist prospective investors, come up with ideas, innovation, all sorts of things in relation to product - and it takes you 10 months to put a CEO in place. And I want to know also what salary levels are being paid out at these new tourism entities. It was a fact that the new CEO actually declined the sum of \$150 000 because an officer junior to that position was earning more, and therefore she could not decide to settle for \$150 000 and be earning less than a junior-level officer. I want to know what kind of salaries are being paid at these institutions.

Mr. Speaker, it has also been said - and I have to touch on the issue of numbers - because it has been said recently that arrival numbers are up for the first quarter of this year when compared to the first quarter last year, and that this represents some kind of record. Well, if we can put aside the fact that industry players themselves are questioning these numbers - so that hoteliers themselves are saying that these numbers are not being reflected in their bottom line or in their occupancy levels, and therefore you have industry players themselves questioning the figures - if we can first of all overlook that, then certainly, Mr. Speaker, we must also put aside the fact that different numbers are coming from different arms of Government. Because you have a situation where the Minister of Finance, the Governor of the Central Bank and their offices put out their numbers, such as the ones referenced by the Minister of Finance yesterday. On the other hand, you have the Minister of Tourism and the Barbados Tourism Management Inc. using their own numbers. And therefore what we are seeing is a total lack of integrity in the numbers coming forward.

But if we can somehow overcome the issue of the discrepancy and the lack of integrity in the numbers, if we can put that aside, and if we can put aside the fact that this is not the first quarter that started out with a bang only to fall flat later on, if we can put aside all of those and settle on a figure that can be used, that has integrity, and it is a figure that is a genuine increase - if we can do all that - then I am prepared to say, quite frankly, it is about time. It is about time that we see some growth in the tourism sector. We have lost seven straight years in tourism. Seven years of decline in every area of tourism - whether it is arrival numbers, whether it is revenue, whether it is investment. However you looked at it, whatever numbers you decided to examine in relation to tourism, we had lost

seven years. So it is about time. Being at the bottom of the ladder vis-à-vis all of our competitors in the region while they are experiencing growth, we are experiencing a decline in every area of tourism. It is about time, Mr. Speaker, that we start to see some little hope at the end of the tunnel.

But I caution the Minister that there is no necessary connection between growth in arrivals and contribution to gross domestic product. I caution the Minister that it takes about 6 per cent growth - not in arrivals, but in tourism value added - to bring about a 1 per cent growth in gross domestic product. And I further caution the Minister that a 1 per cent growth in gross domestic product because of tourism, at a time when all of your other sectors are down, will do nothing whatsoever to get Barbados and this economy out of the depths to which we have descended. If you are in a cesspit ten feet deep and you manage to climb out two feet, you are still in deep, deep trouble. And that, Mr. Speaker, is where we are.

The Minister also needs to understand - and I grapple with the fact - that Barbados as a tourism destination is no longer competing on the basis of quality. We are no longer a quality destination. We are simply now competing solely on the basis of discounted prices - strictly discounted prices - to get tourists to come to Barbados. Which is why, even if more tourists did in fact come, our foreign exchange reserves still fell in the first quarter. And the hotel sector, including the mighty Sandals, is now putting workers in the sector on a reduced work week.

The Minister also talked about airlift and securing capacity. And the truth must also be told about that, because the Minister knows - I should tell all of us, because I know as well - that almost every single airline that is coming to Barbados at this time, including most of the newly announced airlines and even the long-established carriers like British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, are only coming to Barbados because our marketing agency is giving them minimum revenue guarantees. That is the only reason that they are coming. Can you imagine it? It has been the last five or six years, so it is not new. Goal, the Brazilian airline, even after it has begun to share the service with Trinidad from the 20th of February this year, is just as dependent on minimum revenue guarantees as it was four or five years ago when the service started. Still cannot function coming to Barbados without a minimum revenue guarantee. Can you imagine that a long-standing carrier like British Airways - one with whom we have partnered all through the decades - has threatened that it was going to take off two of its 12 services next winter because the yields were not to their satisfaction? And the only reason that we are going to maintain those two services is because Barbados has agreed to pay British Airways to continue flying those services. Come next winter, Virgin - the same thing. And these are long-

standing partners with Barbados. All this money that we are paying to these airlines - is it really being offset by the money paid for a very seriously discounted product? Our foreign reserves do not reflect it.

But Mr. Speaker, I want to go deeper into tourism, because it is in this sector that there is perhaps the greatest consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few people than anywhere else. The Member for St. Michael North spoke about it in relation to Pre-Concord and certain activities and Cahill. But tourism has its fair share of consolidation of wealth. So if you start by looking at the cruise sub-sector, you will see that big tour operators are the ones out there eating the whole hub, while small operators - especially taxi men - are eating the crumbs. These big tour operators are so large and in charge of the sector that they meet the people directly as they get off the cruise ship, they take them out on tours, they take them to their hotels for meals, and then they take them back down to the cruise ships. And this consolidation of wealth is continuing on a daily basis in this sector. Only recently, Harrison's Cave - the most popular onshore attraction in Barbados - has gone to a big tour company. And nobody at all has come forward to say that they ever saw one single advertisement in the paper inviting tenders for Harrison's Cave. Not one. But a big tour operator, Mr. Speaker.

So what? This Government professes and pretends to be interested in entrepreneurship, professes to be interested. But what is happening with the several thousand others - potential entrepreneurs and smaller operators out there? They are not good enough. They are just not good enough. But Mr. Speaker, I want to get to Sandals, because the most glaring case of the consolidation of wealth in this country, in my view, is Sandals. In fact, the way in which this Government has treated Sandals has created an animal farm in this country. All players, Mr. Speaker - all people - are equal. But some, particularly one, is more equal than others. There is a hotel that has been allowed to come into Barbados practically for free. This order - the Sandals order, they call it - which incidentally was only gazetted on March 19, 2015 after Sandals had already officially opened since January, has exempted them from paying for practically anything at all under the sun. This year in this budget, Barbadians have been called upon to fork out \$200 million in taxes. Well, Sandals does not have to pay one single cent in taxes, levies, fees, VAT, licences - nothing of the sort.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, Sandals generates all of its revenues overseas and does not have to bring one single cent into Barbados if it does not feel like it. And that is okay with this Government. It obviously has a lot of muscle, power, reach and control. They can be given the dominant position, Mr. Speaker, way ahead of all the other industry players - people that built this country. People that built this country. And all they have to show for it is the

fact that they have been given more promises and more assurances about getting concessions than Sandals has got in actual concessions. That is all they have to show. A very dominant company. It can build groins in the heart of the tourist season, affecting the enjoyment of adjoining properties. Nobody says anything about it. It can send out letters to restaurants saying, "We can refer guests to you, but we will tell you how much you have to charge for your dinners." Despite the concessions, it can still decide its charging rates as high as US\$800 per night per person per room. And all that money, Mr. Speaker, can stay overseas, because that is where all the bookings take place. All Sandals brings into Barbados is money to pay its expenses - namely salaries and operating expenses. That is all Barbados gets out of Sandals. That is all, Mr. Speaker.

So dominant, Mr. Speaker, that after getting all these concessions and finding that in real terms the cost of labour to them is cheaper than anywhere else, they have decided to cut working hours for staff. After only four or five months of operations - Sandals was held up as the saviour of Barbados, a model hotel, a model operator - and after only four or five months, it can put people on short weeks. And this Government dare not go and even say to Sandals, use a little moral suasion and say, "Well, we have just given you a wash of concessions. Good God, man, at least you can hold some strain and keep these people at the original employment levels." The Government cannot even go and say that. And I wonder why the Government cannot go and say that - because everyone else knows that Sandals will finally blurt out the truth about these concessions and how they got them. But the Government dare not say a word to aggravate Sandals. And as the Member for St. Michael North said, wherever you look in this country - newspapers, whichever sector you look in, tourism, any major projects, the Barbados Port Authority - you are seeing the same few faces. Only a few people have all the talent, Mr. Speaker. Only a few people have all the talent.

Mr. Speaker, I see the time is going, but I really want to get to the Barbados Port Authority, because people have to know in this country how money is being spent. Because early in this year, when people were struggling to pay bills and the like - which you all know about - the Minister of Tourism called upon all of us to pay increased fees and charges to do business at the Barbados Port Authority. And I want you all to listen to this story very carefully. It may not be as bad as the story outlined by the Member for St. Michael North East, but it is pretty rotten too, because you will see how unfair it is for you to have been called upon to pay increased charges and taxes.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that the Barbados Port Authority sold two tugs for \$8.6 million to an overseas operator? Sold two tugs for \$8.6 million. And then the same Port Authority turned around and leased back those same tugs from the same people that they sold them to, for

the sum of US\$3 600 per day - US\$3 600 per day. The Port Authority leased back the same tugs that they just sold, at \$7 200 Barbados dollars per day for the same tugs that they just sold. Now a lot of people, Mr. Speaker, do not even see \$7 200 in a year, but the Port Authority can lease back tugs for \$7 200 per day. Let us do the maths, Mr. Speaker, because this was sanctioned and authorised by the Minister of Tourism. Let us do the maths: \$7 200 per day, by 365 days in a year, by 15 years, equals \$39 420 000 over 15 years. That is what the Port Authority did - sold tugs and leased back the same tugs from the same people for \$7 200 per day, for \$39 420 000 over 15 years.

But that is not all, Mr. Speaker, because it is a dry lease. It is not that the Port sold the tugs and transferred all the headaches to the new owners. All the maintenance costs, the labour costs, when the tugs go on dry dock - all the costs are still at the Port. So add up all these to the near \$40 million and see what it comes to over 15 years. The Minister said that he got into this arrangement because you would not have to worry about buying a new tug down the road for \$30 million. I do not know how the Port could sell two tugs for \$8 million and now say that down the road we have to buy one for \$30 million. I do not know how that maths would work out. But this Port is going to be spending well over \$40 million - perhaps twice that amount - down the road. And the Port is 100 per cent Government-owned. So this is the people's money that is being spent down there, Mr. Speaker. That is over 40 million reasons why people have to pay more for health care, cannot get money from the Welfare Department, and have to pay more in land taxes.

But that is not all at the Port, Mr. Speaker, because in the year 2012 - a very significant year when election money had to be secured - the Port made sure that it made a payment of US\$10 million as its portion to an individual, a friend of the Democratic Labour Party, or at least at the time, US\$10 million as its share of the cost of having design work done in relation to a project that was supposed to consist of a whole set of fancy piers, hotels, a new terminal, an offshore island - all fancy stuff. A project about which a study done had said that its economic viability had not been established.

But will spend \$250 million. But they made sure on the year before election they got a US\$10 000 payment. Also deport to an individual US\$10 million. A project that is a total waste of time makes no sense at all. \$20 million. Mr. Speaker, to this day the project has not gotten off the ground and I doubt that it ever will. But \$20 million tied up now in that project. 20 million more reasons why we don't have to pay university fees, increased VAT on food and a tax for using your mobile cell phone.

But that isn't all, Mr. Speaker. Because it's also the \$60 million US that was put into the Four Seasons project.

Minister of Finance, correct me if I'm wrong. I didn't hear him mention the Four Seasons project yesterday at all. But up to now I guarantee that the government should not have given a guarantee in relation to that project. We are now still, as I speak to you, that is still a debt owing by Barbadians because we guaranteed a project, a private sector project. Things fell through and the guarantee was called - \$120 million as I speak to you is still owed, Mr. Speaker. So that's a further 120 million reasons why income taxes have gone up, corporation taxes have gone up, personal losses have been taxed and the government cannot even now give money to the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. to pay its debts - now around \$30 million - far less to properly market the country. With the result that Barbados' name is still dirt out there. And people know, people that we are accustomed to dealing with are now saying cash up front if you want us to deal with you in future.

Mr. Speaker, I will just conclude by saying the performance of this government is a disgrace. And I've got emails and WhatsApp messages from people saying a number of things. One: "Lord, I will have to take out a loan to pay all the taxes required by this government." "Does this Minister of Finance have any schooling at all in economics? He sounds like a man doing a test that has not revised for it." "These people like they want me to commit suicide." "Soon from now you're going to pay taxes for using the toilet." These messages depict three things: anger, frustration and a sense of betrayal. Mr. Speaker, I share these sentiments and accordingly I cannot support these proposals. Thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt that we came to this parliament to find out how we are going to finance this document. But I have observed that so far the other side has not recognised that the whole aim and object is not dealing with what they think should happen, but dealing with how we would finance the deficit. And Mr. Speaker, I thought I would have heard what is the estimated excess and I thought that we would then be able to relate this document to the other. But it is quite clear that the opposition has no interest in telling the country how the financial statement and budgetary proposals will affect their lives.

But I also want to deal with some other documents and other statements that were made, because one gets the impression that the new taxes that are being paid this year for land taxes and solid waste - that the land taxes this year is greater than the combination of solid waste tax and land taxes of the previous year. And anybody who knows anything about figures will tell you, sir, that the incidence of taxation on the taxpayer as it relates this year for land taxes is not as great as it would have been last year. And

there is an actual reduction when you take the two together and know that it goes into one.

And another statement that was made, Mr. Speaker, in this House is that the majority of borrowings are short term. We were told by the Leader of the Opposition this evening that the majority of loans owed by the Government of Barbados are short term. But yet still we were told that there should be a refinancing package. If you have short-term debt, there is no need for refinancing that debt. You talk about refinancing debt when the majority of your debt is long term. And it is clear that they do not understand these issues.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, many persons would have heard me over the years discussing the euro loan where previously we would have borrowed £30 million. I want people to know that loan has to be repaid this year. That euro loan has to be repaid this year. And when we received that money, Mr. Speaker, we received 120 million Barbados dollars for 30 million pounds. And because the interest rate at the time, Mr. Speaker, was 13.5 per cent, everybody said that the loan was the most expensive loan. But what they did not take into account is that even though the interest rate was stated at 13.5 per cent, the effective rate of that loan reduced because the principal amount dropped, because the pound dropped. So obviously if the pound dropped, then the principal amount would have dropped. So, you know, we hear a lot of long talk, but when you really listen to the long talk, you do not get the substance. And I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that we need to understand that this has to be dealt with.

And that is why you would have heard a lot of talk about how this government is doing and giving the impression of how we are dealing with one person - and you heard the name of a company. I challenge the other side to tell the Barbadian public who are the shareholders of Preconco. You can talk about the marking of the desk there, but we want to know. All the shareholders - do not give the impression that there is only one person who is a shareholder of a particular company when in truth and in fact there are business people who are shareholders of this company that every Barbadian looks up to. So do not just use one person as a scapegoat. Let us know who are the shareholders of that particular company.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that we heard about the Housing Credit Fund. One would have gotten the impression that the Housing Credit Fund is a fund that is not owned by government, that the government did not go and borrow the money to put in the Housing Credit Fund. And one gets the impression that the Housing Credit Fund is not to be used for housing. The project at Grotto is part of government's housing solutions. So if you have a housing solution and you have a fund to finance it, what is the crime for the government to use money that was

borrowed for housing and not use the money to pay off a debt for housing?

And you know what is interesting? Every year in budget previously you heard one name all the time - go and pay BURA, go and pay BURA. You realise one interesting thing: not one word about BURA this evening. Not one word. Not one word about BURA this evening. They have spoken for about four hours straight and not one single word from the Barbados Labour Party or their satellites in the press. Not one word on BURA. You know, every year since 1999 we were hearing about this BURA issue and for some strange reason not one word was said about BURA. I want to know why. What has happened that you all are not speaking about the BURA issue anymore? I just want to know.

Now, I can tell you about the black belly sheep that you call the people in Lancaster. I will get round to that now because, you know, Mr. Speaker, a year ago the Honourable Member for St. Thomas told me that when she went to Lancaster all she saw was black belly sheep. I went right after her and when I went into Lancaster I saw black people and I saw the children right there at Lancaster. So I want to know, sir, what is the crime in the government housing policy when there are people living in Lancaster 1 and there are people living in Lancaster 2? Furthermore, they are not only living in Lancaster 1 and 2 but they are also extending their properties. So one would understand - you just do not go and extend like that; they had to be there for a while or they had to have had possession for a while.

At Constant, sir, everybody knew that we had an arrangement with CLICO. The board made a decision, they took over, and I am telling you that there are now completed solutions at Constant. The roads have been paved and we will continue to plaster the houses and there will be final solutions to them. At Parcel Lane, I want to thank the EPD for the wonderful job they did at Parcel Lane in ensuring that they did not allow a sewage plant to go there and in also ensuring that the solution to the problem was solved by ensuring that a Zone 1 solution was requested to ensure that the water belt was protected and the environmental conditions were met. And I want to congratulate the EPD for ensuring that the health of Barbadians was protected.

I want to make this point. Yes, everybody can talk about what the Democratic Labour Party has done. I heard a lot of talking here today about chikungunya, and the Barbados Labour Party should never talk about chikungunya in this country because it was because of the Barbados Labour Party's policy when they introduced those water tanks and caused mosquitoes to breed in the water tanks that created the chikungunya problem in this country. Let them deny that. And they come in here talking about chikungunya and do not realise that it is the water

tanks that they put in place without a solution on how to use the water that has created the chikungunya problem in Barbados. Let them deny that. Let them deny that. Let them deny that.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to talk about Grotto. Grotto has been built by the Government of Barbados. Grotto will house people. But like everything else, we did not rush and go on to other solutions. We had to carefully ensure that we look at the maximum returns, the maximum benefit, and the total benefit. We have to understand - you cannot come and tell me that NSC is bankrupt. Yes, they told me about NSC being bankrupt, but yet still in the next breath they will come and tell you they want subsidies. You can get subsidies when you have somewhere that, according to them, is bankrupt? But we will come to a conclusion in the fullest time. We have to look at locations. We have to look at how we are affecting and impacting on the lives of people.

Look, I remember well that property - the one in Bay Street that the Chinese built. People have to understand - we are not going to watch anything. We have to understand that when we allocate we do not create social problems for people. And you know, under our urban renewal policy we have to be careful that when we allocate the persons we do not put additional pressure on those persons just because we want to look good and show off and say we have done this. We have to look at the social impact. And I hope the Honourable Member for the City is listening because one of the things I want to point out to this House is that under the urban renewal policy we also have not only to look at the housing aspect, but we also have to look at the other social aspects and how it will impact on the lives of the persons when you put them in a better house and then you do not have job creation and then you do not reduce the impact of those social negatives that can occur within that particular area.

One has to recognise that Bridgetown as we knew it before and as we know it now is not the same Bridgetown of 20 years ago where the merchant class were the ones who dominated the employment solutions. The port is not the same port where you used to employ a thousand labourers. Bridgetown is now an area that we have to recognise is service-driven and that the job creation for those persons is not there. And we have to study all of these things. And we also have to understand that you cannot just give a man a house and not give him a job to service the house, and that what we need to do is to ensure that where the jobs are, you might also have to look at the possibility of making a shift to accommodate that. Because if you do not do that, you will continue to create social problems in the particular area. And this government, mindful of that, has to be very careful not to rush in just because some people go overseas and see these solutions and then rush to come and put them on the people of

Barbados without recognising that sometimes you are creating a greater social problem for the person.

So those who come in here and talk down to people just because they are looking for a vote - what we have to do is look to see what social impact we are creating on the lives of people. And we are not going to go and run and create problems for people. Neither are we going to create slums. Let me say this, Mr. Speaker: Barbadians have to understand. I have listened very carefully to the private sector and also persons living in Bridgetown and I have recognised that what used to happen in Bridgetown is not happening anymore. That the urban corridor is not carrying the jobs it used to carry. The jobs are now in urban sprawl. And we have to recognise that if we are to make a change in the urban area, it is right to ensure that the same way that Manhattan can be the service area and can create the services, Bridgetown has a golden opportunity to do likewise. And we need to ensure that we tap into that.

Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt that Barbados, because of its location, is one of the locations where you have to recognise that international transport has an opportunity to play a significant role in the development of Barbados. And we have to ensure that we tap into the international transport because of our location and make the necessary connections. We will also ensure, Mr. Speaker, that we continue our \$5.00 lot programme and that we max it out and we will add to it to ensure that we deliver as we promised. Because we understand the difference between buying land at \$5 a square foot and having people buy land at \$20, \$25 a square foot. We also understand, sir, the role that rural and urban can play if we can allocate those five-dollar lots to those people in need and use those two social agencies to empower them. Because the truth is, once we can get the persons to buy the \$5 lot and use urban and rural, we can empower those persons without creating the same social problems that I spoke about.

Before, we also have to appreciate, sir, that the rich must subsidise the cost for the poor. And there are some of our assets that we will have to give to the rich to ensure that they help to reduce the deficit so that we can have finances to help the masses of the people in the country. So I do not mind all the long talk on the other side, because we have been able to allocate the houses at River, we have been able to allocate the houses at Woodbourne, we are working at Westbury - the contractor is working out certain minor problems - and we will ensure that we deliver.

We have heard a lot of long talk on Coverley, but I have been here long enough to know that unlike many other projects of the Barbados Labour Party where we have lost a lot of money, this particular project at Coverley we will not lose money. A lot of people have forgotten that there is also another Coverley project where a contractor has sued the Government of Barbados and we now have to

pay substantial sums on that project. Is that the project where we will lose a lot of money? Yes. But you will hear them in here talking about Coverley. But they will not talk about the Fairy Valley problems. They want to talk about Coverley problems. They will not talk about the Butlers problems, the Buttley Meadows - yes, all of those. But they want to give the impression that we have all these problems in housing.

Well, you see, the truth is they are not going to push me to say what I do not want to say or push me to do what I should not do. Because I am not here as Minister of Housing just to look for votes. I am here as Minister of Housing to deliver and ensure that when I deliver it does not impact negatively on the lives of people. I have had an offer where someone has written me offering me the land in Greenfield to purchase for the Ministry. I met in the Ministry to purchase the land in Greenfield. There are people who appreciate, sir, the contribution that has to occur.

I want to make this point. I heard a lot of long talk when the previous government had a lot of money and did not deliver to these people. But this government will deliver, but we are not going to deliver on the same plan that they had. We are not going to move people and bring them back to the same conditions that they were living in when we carry out our policy. Because as it stands now, as we speak to the Caribbean Development Bank, we are not only going to be speaking about the housing solutions at Greenfield and Cat's Castle alone, neither at White Park alone or Mason Hall Street. What we will also be looking at are those additional units at Rock Avenue, Deacons, Rosemont, Oxford, Haynesville, Country Road, White Park, Mason Hall Street, Parch Land, Price Church, Lower Burney and 40 Acres, St. Thomas. But on top of that we are also speaking to the CDB about financing for all of that total 20-year programme that we spoke about. Because what we are about is empowering people - not pretending that we want to help people and adopting a piecemeal approach when it comes to poor people. But what we want to do is to empower them by ensuring that we give them a unit that when it is given to them with proper title they can take to the bank and use it as collateral to get another home for their children. That is what we are about.

And so when you see the units, whether it be in Silver Hill, Deacons, Grotto, any place - you want to hear Grotto, you got a Grotto. But all of those units right across Barbados - Maynards, Haynesville, you name it - the point is the same way you pushed me on Lancaster 1 and you pushed me on Lancaster 2, the same thing will happen shortly on Grotto. We are not going to be pushed. We will make that sensible decision because we know that you are not happy when we spend money on poor people or the middle class in this country. Your feeling is that once you all come in here and can talk about this money going to a

rich person, you will be happy about that. But whenever we spend money on poor people, you all get angry. So I do not know. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we have to look at everybody and we are going to find solutions for everybody in Barbados.

One of the things I will tell you is that the Honourable Member for St. James Central has to understand that if he wants another piece of land, he is free to come and get another piece, but he has to pay the market price for it. Because there are persons like him who will have to pay the right price so that we can continue to subsidise the poor people in this society. And he has to be prepared to help the poor people by coming to Dean's Town and buying one of the lots that we are selling at commercial rates to show that he is genuinely interested.

I am going to talk about Cahill, Mr. Speaker, sir. We heard a lot of talk in here, but all the Minister of Housing signed - I Cahill.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no agreement with Cahill until the Minister of Housing posts his signature to it. And I do not know why the Honourable Member - let us give the Member who is speaking a chance to speak. Please keep order in here, Mr. Speaker. I am accustomed to that. It is all right.

It is no doubt that when the Honourable Member from St. Michael North West spoke this evening, the Honourable Member tried to give the public the impression that there was something wrong with what the Minister of Housing did when he signed on the dotted line. But Mr. Speaker, everybody knows that under Cap. 225, sections 5 and 6, the Minister of Housing has to do these things in order to empower the various ministries so that they can carry out their mandate. But Mr. Speaker, as I said before, sir, I signed for the BURA issue, I signed for Sam Lord's, I signed for the synagogue, I signed for Bushy Park and I signed for many things. And I am not hearing anybody complaining. They are angry at me for doing my job and doing it right. So I am not interested in what they have to say. For the development of Barbados, I will ensure that I do nothing to block the development of Barbados. And I will ensure that the Ministry for which I am responsible executes its duties to ensure that the interests of Barbadians are protected.

Like for example, I heard, Mr. Speaker, somebody accuse me of trying to build housing on the greens at the Central Bank. I said it on the floor - I never said that. The Honourable Member said - I am saying now, bring the record and you will see that I did not say that. What I said is - I know real estate. I said that property that the Central Bank cannot have for itself - what we need to do is that I have asked the officers to look at the possibility of acquiring the properties next to it so that we can improve

the housing conditions in the city. And I cannot understand how the Honourable Member for the City would allow someone to make that negative comment against his city where we were trying to improve the housing lot for the people in the city. But now the Honourable Member for the City would have defended - but all of a sudden now he has a brown envelope with a brief and he cannot now defend the people of the city.

But Mr. Speaker, I am saying, sir, that what we have to do is recognise that Bridgetown is ripe for a certain type of development. And that development must be pushed by the Ministry of Housing or the UDC. And not only that - a lot of people have forgotten that in RDC there is something called a D and it stands for development. And that is where we in RDC must ensure that we work with the Ministry of Tourism to build out those areas, especially in the national park and right across Barbados. So that - I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central speaking about the spin. But it is RDC that will help to create the spin by ensuring that they develop the product in tourism so that when people come to Barbados they have somewhere to go and visit. And that is what we are working on. It is true -

that times are hard, but we are cutting the cloth to suit what we have and to develop those areas. For example, how many of you in here know that the expansion of Spightstone did not take \$200 million to occur. But Spightstone has now been expanded through careful planning as far as Chacoa and St. Lucie. And with the Arrowbar's house coming on stream, when that comes on stream, it will expand as far as up to Archer's Bay in St. Lucie just by filling in the blanks. You see, a lot of people believe that you can only expand by somebody doing the Verman Spightstone. That is not true. RDC has shown that once you do the right development and you fill in the blanks, that the same way Spightstone was able to expand to warrants - since that wants to do the right things and create the right economic activity - that you can think. And that is why we have to understand, we have to appreciate also that vending is also very important in this country. And we have to - under RDC - we have to ensure that we do the necessary building out and get the necessary locations to develop that product.

I have said to the Minister of Culture that it is the role of RDC and rural Barbados to ensure that we create the right areas so that he can spread his culture and ensure. I have said to the Minister of Agriculture it is for RDC to work with these small farmers. And I am happy that the Minister of Finance and the Cabinet of Barbados has brought this particular budget as it relates to the switch in certain items. Because the farmers above us. If I had to describe this budget, I will have to describe this budget as a budget for the farmers of Barbados because it has not given opportunity for them to pick up the slot. They all look at

the fulfilled Barbados. This budget has done a lot and I sent a message to every young man on the block that there is an opportunity now for him - that we have allocated a share of our large food bill to the farmers of Barbados and that they need to shift on the block and come and get some of the land that RDC will be looking to allocate to them and for them to work, et cetera.

So Mr. Speaker, we have production testings and there are a lot of people who want to come on board as it relates to leasing land to RDC. And when we check to see the Honourable Member for St. George North, a former Minister of Housing, is telling me I don't have any land. Yes, I don't have any land, but the Ministry has a lot of land. RDC is under the Ministry of Housing. Also the Honourable Member needs to go and read the Act as it relates to RDC. If he does, he will understand that the same thing that UDC can do, RDC can do.

So Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt that this budget, sir, as it really relates to the productive side of it, is a budget to carry the economy forward. And that is what this budget has asked for Barbadians - to give something for something. And that is when you get something, give it something to your neighbour too and get back something in return. By localisation - go to localisation and move away from globalisation. Once you go to localisation, you will be giving something for something. And we are not only saying that to the consumers of Barbados, but we are also asking the hoteliers to give back something because they received something.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North this evening making a point. And she said how much we have given to the hoteliers. I want you to listen. Everybody in Barbados knows how much the government has given to the hoteliers. And I am not talking about all hotels. Everybody knows how much the government has given up for you. It is now for you to give back to Barbadians by supporting the farmers and also by supporting the manufacturers. Everybody knows.

So Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that this budget - based on the concessions that were given - it is a follow-up based on the concessions that were given to the hoteliers, that the hoteliers have received their share. So it is time for the hoteliers now to give back their share to the manufacturers and the farmers and the cultural industry players. And if we do a networking then we will see a better return and be able to think.

Mr. Speaker, there are two ways that we can increase the revenue. One of government - and we had two choices and we have adopted both. We had to get increased revenue and we have also done the things to ensure that we increase production. And once you increase production you are making increased revenues also. So the budget has

fulfilled those things - two things that we set about to achieve. Everybody knows that if we push both of them that we will achieve what we want. But the only way it can happen is for the Minister of Finance and the Government through the Cabinet and the front bench and the back bench coming here and putting the proposals - we have placed the proposals on the table. We know they are workable as it relates to the production sector. And that is why we are ensuring that we are reminding everybody that they have to come on board and to help in developing this country. This is our country.

And the amount of bad-mouthing that the Barbados Labour Party - what they have done for the last eight or nine years - they need to stop it for the simple reason that they have to understand that they cannot even get the clothes that their customers are getting at the gate today. Even though they asked everybody to wear red when I came home, I wore two Barbados shirts - I could not even get a red shirt, including the ones I see in here. So it means that Barbadians have demonstrated that they are not going to destroy their country. And if you don't believe me, check to see how they banned the seven bonds, because they understand that all the advice given to them to mash up the country - they are not going to mash up the country that they have to live in. So if the Opposition want to continue to try to mash up the country, they have to understand that the Barbadian public is not listening to them.

Mr. Speaker, I want them to go and look at that 30 million euro loan. It has to be paid. We received 120 million. And they know when we come to pay, we don't have to pay 90. So it cannot be the most expensive loan. And all my life I have been here making this point. This year is the test case. It has to be repaid. And check and see - you went all over Barbados telling people about the most expensive loan. Check the facts. The facts are here. Now check them. Because you told everybody that Lloyd didn't know what he was doing when he borrowed the loan. He received 120 million and we only have to pay back 90. Is that an expensive loan? The problem is you all do not know mathematics. I thank you, sir. God bless.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate coming after the member for St. Lucy. I have heard about Kelman, the shopkeeper. I have heard about Kelman, the minister, but certainly I have never heard about Kelman the English teacher. And he is struggling, I know, and he is struggling. But I believe he should stick really to his ministry and leave the English to other people.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, rural development. Rural development is at the heart of my constituency. And I believe it is safe to say that rural development has done very little under the present minister in St. George North. In fact, I must say that we have got very little from the

Ministry of Housing and Rural Development over the past four years, certainly since the minister became the Minister of Rural Development.

But I want to say here that today was a very interesting day. This is a very interesting debate. And I believe that all of us should really look carefully at ourselves after so many years as an independent nation. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, when we look at it - that we as a parliament constituted by blacks, majority of us, and from 1951 we have been here - today is really a day in which we have to reflect on what is happening in this country and where we are going. We have had some interesting revelations which I believe, when we reflect in our senior years, we would want to say: was I a part of this parliament that talked about the problems that we are facing? And I believe all of us as parliamentarians need to reflect on what we are doing and what legacy we would want to leave for people to talk about us, because we are all parliamentarians.

And I want to compliment the government for using the Housing Credit Fund, because I spoke about the Housing Credit Fund some time ago and I must say it was not widely believed or well known. So they started to use it. But of course I believe that the Housing Credit Fund - which the member for St. Michael North East said was created by the Barbados Labour Party in 1983 and the right honourable former Prime Minister was involved in - was established on lend. It was a sort of secondary mortgage market, on-lend to low-income earners. Certainly it was never contemplated that you lend for building projects at \$540 a square foot - that cannot be imagined to be low income at all.

And I believe the government of the day recognised that this fund, that was started with US\$10 million - it was a revolving loan borrowed from the IDB in 1983 - has now, I believe, over \$160 million because it revolved. And it was supposed to on-lend for persons who want to borrow from the banks, credit unions and so on, and the credit unions would be replenished and refunded. And this is what it was used for. It was never contemplated to be used in the way it is being used. And I believe that the government should really - because it is not only the Ministry of Housing and Lands anymore, it is under the Central Bank of Barbados - because as Minister of Housing in 2001 to 2004 we were able to transfer it to the Central Bank because we recognised then it was better to be used in that capacity.

However, Mr. Speaker, I must say that these revelations that we have heard today we need to put to rest and we need to look at them very carefully. I do not know very much about the Cahill Project and I do not want to speak about it very much. All to say is that the government needs to be very careful about this because my children will be asking me about it, my grandchildren will be asking

me about it, because they will be burdened with paying back these bills. And we have to be careful about these things. We have to be very careful, Mr. Speaker, about these things. Because what we have heard today does not sound well, especially the fact that we have a number of cases in my constituency in St. George - real welfare cases. And I am sure the minister has helped me and helped the people of St. George and indeed rural Barbados a lot. We have had a number of cases. But today a number of persons are being rejected.

And how can you tell a person out there who comes to the Ministry - who goes to the Glebe Welfare - and says, look, I am unemployed, I cannot pay my rent. But you cannot pay the rent. But you can pay millions of dollars to somebody who is not of our colour. I am saying, Mr. Speaker, this is bad. It is bad, and I do not understand it. I cannot understand where it is that you can give no welfare grant to a young woman who has two children, who has to go and find accommodation with family. I am saying this looks bad on us as a government, as a people, as a parliament, and we have to do better.

Now, this budget speech - today, yesterday - will go down in history as one of the speeches on the budget that raised more than \$200 million in taxes. Now, we spoke about this in 2008. We talked about when the then government tried to raise over \$110 million. We felt that was high. And we saw what was done to the people of this country. They could not pay their road taxes, they could not pay for a number of professional fees and so on. It was a bad time. Now, to raise \$200 million in this financial year will be very burdensome. Whether you tell me or not that you have decreased the property taxes over time - we recognise for the first time now that you are drawing \$40 million in property taxes today. That is high. Land tax will impact, Mr. Speaker, on the entire country. Persons will have to increase the prices of their foodstuffs. Persons will have to find ways of paying this property tax.

When you increase taxes on soft drinks by 10 per cent, this means that persons who are going to school will not be able to buy. Some of them will not be able to pay the increased taxes. They will have to do other things. But of course we have to look carefully at how we can help the poor of this society. I am seeing, Mr. Speaker, that these increased taxes and increased fees on professionals will cause the entire society to increase the cost of living in this country. The cost of living will increase over the next year or so. And that, Mr. Speaker, is important.

The cost of health services will increase because people - you cannot increase medical costs to the doctors, and lawyers, and not have them passing it on to their clients. You have a problem, Mr. Speaker, at the Ministry of Health. The member for Christ Church South today says that he is playing golf every day - he goes to play golf

morning, noon and night. And that has led, Mr. Speaker, to a lot of problems with the health service. The minister is very quiet on this regard. But the minister has to go to work and ensure that we have an improved health service.

I want the minister to read - I actually brought a document for the minister to read. It is called - and he needs to look at this. I am going to give him a copy because I know that he means well - New Year Message 1985 by the Right Honourable J.M.G.M. Tom Adams, Prime Minister of Barbados. And in this document he speaks about the fact that the polyclinics were well established and on the way, and that there was a need for a national health service. This to my mind is a good document and it needs to be read by all and sundry. In it he pointed out that at that juncture there was a need to finance the health service and that it was to be done through a national health programme in which the government, the private sector and persons would be well looked after. On page 13, to make improved health care services more accessible to the entire population - and this is what he went on to say - that the polyclinics were well established and they were going to build others, but that this programme would help to improve the health service for Barbadians.

And I think we have come now 30 years since this document was published and we are still at a point where we cannot get it right. And we need to sit back and look at it. And when one looks at that period of time - the 1985 period - I found it a period in which new ideas came to the fore. We need to go back to that period where people were looking at ideas and how we were able to put ideas into practice. And we need to get back to this.

I believe that one thing that came out of this budget is the cess on milk products. I believe that this cess on milk and milk substitutes, which will be implemented from August 1st - and I always say that we have to be careful how we look at the implementation of certain things - do you realise that the farmers in Barbados were asking for this about four or five years ago? This was a promise by this government. And it has taken five years in order to put a cess in order to help the local dairy industry. It has come at a time, Mr. Speaker, that even they have accepted it. But of course this does not help the industry to get out of the woods because there are still a number of dairy producers, dairy farmers who have to compete against farmers from abroad. And you have to look at it very carefully because the price of milk sometimes is very high. But of course many young people in Barbados today do not drink milk - and it is not because they do not like it, it is because the cost is too prohibitive.

I am saying to the Ministry of Finance that Barbadians today are not eating as well as they should, or as how we were brought up. We were brought up on milk and good vegetables and good food. Today, many persons

going to school, going to work, going to sleep without proper nutritious food. And we have to watch this. We have to watch what we are doing in this country. I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that the time has come for us to look carefully at the nutritious value of food.

And to the Minister of Education - my friend - you have to look at the school meals department. Only a couple of years ago someone said to me that they would not be eating the school meal again because what it is producing today is not satisfactory. And I felt shame because a young child does not know the difference. You need to look at what is happening at the school meal system. We need to look at the value that we are paying for.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that when you put the cess on this, it helps the farmers because imported stuff becomes more expensive and will help. But we have to go further. I have said before that 40 per cent - the Minister of Health was supposed to get back to me and the Minister of Education - but I am told that 40 per cent of the foodstuff that is procured, that is given or contracted at the hospitals and the school meals system, that most of it is not really suitable. And we have to watch this because we give contracts to many persons to bring foodstuff here. I want to see a system where we check to see that the foodstuff that we buy is of quality and that children and patients that use them at the hospital and other persons that have to use them can use them to the benefit of themselves and the society.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we mean well in this country, but more has to be done to protect the farming community over the past couple of years. We know that the agriculture sector has to undergo change like most other sectors.

I do not think that the Member of Parliament for St. Philip West is a bad person. I do not think that he is a wicked person. No, I know him very well. In fact, I was told recently that he was so frustrated. He said, I go home and drink rum, because he was so frustrated - because he could not get anything done. He could not get the Ministry of Finance to understand that he means well. He was so frustrated that he went home frustrated, Mr. Speaker, because he could not get anything done. And he understands it is not his fault that there is only 12 000 tons of sugar being produced this year. It is not his fault. It is the lowest. And he is recorded as saying in the press: so what is it? Let us talk about next year. But you understand next year can be lower than this year. 12 000 tons of sugarcane is being harvested this year - the lowest in history.

But the ministry - because I do not think the minister will be involved in this - they are planting river tamarinds on the best soil in the Belle. Now, I do not think the minister knows that. They are planting river tamarind in the Belle. Redland sugarcane. For all these years, sugarcane

was king. Now we are having grass and river tamarind. The government is planting this. I do not know what crop it is. If the government can tell me what crop river tamarind will produce, I would like to know, and I hope that somebody could tell me what crop this river tamarind will produce. But the farmers are all amazed across Barbados that this industry that is so important to the survival of our economy - the government must put more money into agriculture. The government must put more money into food security, not only to protect the young children of this country. That is why I am saying that we need to procure more foodstuff from the local farmers. We need to stop those persons that have large contracts bringing food out of North America and South America. I hope this is a thing of the past. We have too much land that is idle.

If you look through St. George, St. Thomas, St. John - the [Inaudible.] Estate alone is 2 000 acres of land that is idle. I believe that we can bring this land back into production. When you look at the flatlands of St. Philip, I am saying that more has to be done to produce the onions. More has to be done to produce potatoes. We have to put more sugarcane back into production.

Now the government wants to build a sugar factory. Now, it is a known fact that everybody wants to do something. Every minister out there wants to build a name for himself. So you have the Cahill Project. You have the project in the port. So everybody wants to build something. It reminds me of the monkey. There is a monkey one day who saw people working and said, I want to work too. So he decided to roll up and down the hill, up and down the hill. And he is also working too. So what is it that -

It is that we are building at Andrews. I understand that we are about to build. Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have to be careful. I understand that we are going. I don't know anything about it, but I heard that they are breaking ground anytime this month. We are about to build a 500 000 Barbados, or US\$250 million, a factory to produce 10 000 tons of canes. That's what we are doing, that we are building a factory. And you know, if you - one thing - Mr. Speaker, if you think I am wrong, take all the documents up and you'll see that all of these projects, all the deposits that the government is building have one thing in common. All of them are going to produce electricity. You have the KH project producing electricity. The water. Andrews will be producing electricity. Barbados will be very, very bright. Very bright.

Honestly, I mean, the Minister of Finance must look at this because the one at Andrews will be producing electricity and selling to the consumer. They'll be selling to the grid. The one at Andrews, Mr. Speaker, will be selling electricity to the grid. The one at Vlo will be selling electricity to the grid. The one at the port, Mr. Speaker, will be selling electricity to the grid.

And we have, Mr. Speaker, a situation where the farmers are saying, rather than do all of this, we prefer spend \$10 million to help us at Portville. The farmer community is saying, we don't want too much. We prefer Portville because you can only produce 10 000 tons this year and next year. That if you have to produce the 40 000 tons again, Mr. Speaker, you have to then bring back all the land in the production - that the government needs to spend more money into the port, preparing the fields, plowing, fertilising and all these things and get the fields back to productive stage before you can talk about a new sugar factory. And we have to watch that very carefully.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have to - we can do better by sitting down and talking. They tell me the Minister means well, but he needs to sit down and talk. That you need to hear from the Minister. You need to hear what is happening. They tell me too that you have one chairman who is now chairman of BAMC - he's chairman of all the boards - and he has no time; that you need to have different boards. I need to look at this very carefully.

I am not sure who is - but one thing is sure. One thing is sure: that when you set up the milk board, because I understand they're going to a dairy board or milk board or whatever you can call it, that we hope that will not only be a board that is driven from Drawer Street, but one that is driven from the business community as well as the farming community in order that we can get things moving.

Mr. Speaker, we can say a lot about the various - the thing I think the Minister talked about - this cassava project which I supported. But I have not heard anything in the last two years about it. I have not heard where we're going. How can we have the cassava project when there's very little cane? And let me show you - different Ministers understand the rotation programme. Without sugar cane, it can be difficult to get cassava. Now that may sound - the Member for St. Lucy may not understand that formula. But there's something called rotation of crops. And the sugar industry has always had a rotation of yams, potatoes, cotton. The Member for St. Lucy and St. Andrew and St. Philip will understand what I'm saying. That we have to be able to spend money in the production of sugar.

Because after all, even though we heard from the Democratic Labour Party that not one blade will be flung - I never thought it would come to reality. I never thought in my life that it would come to reality. And it is coming well before our time. That we have to be able to sustain sugar because it helps us. You realise what is happening across the country - that this bush is leading to crime. This bush. I heard a Member from St. Thomas talking about this in St. Thomas. That because of the bush and all the number of problems that she's getting up there, fires are causing serious problems. And we have to watch it. That we have to be able to get the sugar plant growing whether it is a fuel

plant or not. We need to get it going. And that our rum industry depends heavily on the molasses from the sugar. So we have to be able to get it right.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that agriculture can save this country along with tourism and manufacturing. But we have to be able to put money into it and put young people to work. I am sure that the Member - the Minister of Family - would prefer persons coming to him saying, look, I want a little job in the agriculture sector in order to help myself. This is where we need to put our resources. There's a lot of opportunity for young people in agriculture, but we need to give them the right technology. We have to give them the resources and above all we have to give them the certainty. Certainty is important, Mr. Speaker.

I believe this Government must send a signal across Barbados that the people must be able to work. I feel in my heart that governments need to provide opportunities, the incentive for people to work. And I don't want you to tell me that you want to give handouts. We don't want your handouts. We want people - put people back to work. Many minutes to talk about 12 per cent unemployment - last night I felt bad for him. I felt bad for him because I was in a Cabinet that had unemployment to 7 per cent and he felt - and I didn't. I don't understand it. Too many of my people in my constituency are out of work. I do not like it. And we need to find a mechanism. If there's one thing that we have to do, it is find a mechanism, Mr. Speaker, to put people in this country back to work. We need to use our resources to put the Barbadians back to work. It is not good enough that they can't get welfare, they can't get unemployment - but this is not good. Mr. Speaker, I'm obliged to you. Thank you.

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

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this debate in support of the budgetary measures before the House and of course to share a number of perspectives in relation to the matters which are before the House. The honourable member for St. George North, who just spoke, did make a number of observations which of course I believe would require a very brief response, because while he did speak for his full 30 minutes, I believe what is clear in this debate is that the members of the opposition again are finding it very difficult to connect with the very progressive measures which are contained in the budget presented by the Minister of Finance. And to a large extent they have spent quite a lot of time dealing with matters that are not germane to the debate before the House.

I believe that the member for St. George North spoke very generally about a number of projects which he felt, while they were projects that are being developed, he felt

they did not connect with the reality of what was happening in Barbados. And he also spoke of the need for Barbadians to have a sense of certainty. And if we analyse the measures in the budget, I believe that we can come to no conclusion other than that the quest is there to provide certainty to Barbadians.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this debate takes place at a time when we are in transition, in very difficult economic circumstances. And in fact, it calls for members of the House to look very frankly at where the Barbados economy is now and of course to identify the path to transforming the Barbados economy to a state of resilience and to ensure that many of the challenges that we face today, once we adopt the right approaches, we will not find ourselves in similar challenges in the future. I believe the Minister of Finance spoke to this as being the single most important objective of some of the measures, which of course are revenue generating. But of course he made a very substantial point that the intention was to continue the effort to restructure the Barbados economy.

And I think if the members of the opposition are fearful, we recognise that we have been grappling with the issue of the need to restructure the Barbados economy for quite a while. In the budget presented by the Barbados Labour Party in the year 2006, presented by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, there was also reference to the question of the need to reshape the Barbados economy. Indeed, while the Barbados economy at that time was projected to grow on an average of 4 per cent, what was recognised was that the economy continued to have deep structural challenges that, if not addressed, questions relating to threats to our foreign reserves and of course the question of ensuring that the productive sectors can be repositioned would continue to be challenges.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the measures which are captured in this budget are essentially designed to continue the quest to present an economy that will be well restructured and therefore capable of withstanding some of the shocks that we would have seen. I believe, though, Mr. Speaker, that what is clear to me is that while we are spending good time in terms of addressing and trying to debate the economic challenges facing Barbados in these financial statements and budgetary proposals, I believe that in the future we will have to find a way to cause to be debated in this House on an annual basis matters relating to the social policies of the government, which I believe are equally important. And perhaps we don't get enough time in these annual debates to seriously debate social policies that are critical to the sustainability of the Barbados economy.

And I think that we will have to find a way to introduce those annual debates, as we should find ways to debate in this House questions relating to the foreign policy

of Barbados, particularly those policies that relate to the foreign economic policies that are followed by respective governments. Because these issues by and large have very serious budgetary consequences. And to give the Barbados public a wide purview of where we are at, I believe that we will have to look at these.

Mr. Speaker, the question facing us in this debate is really a question of fiscal challenges. And while we are prone to quarrel among ourselves, particularly the Barbados Democratic Party pointing to all the things that they believe are missing from the budget and all the things that they believe the Barbados economy requires, I believe what the budget is suggesting to the country is that in order to provide many of the things that we all require and need, there are certain international standards that Barbados can no longer escape. And one of the objectives which the Minister of Finance indicated was set in the 19-month adjustment programme was the whole question of tackling the fiscal deficit. We had a fiscal deficit that was too large and therefore it was necessary to bring that fiscal deficit down. Now we can quarrel among ourselves as to the ways in which we could do that. But I believe as a House we have to give the government credit for, in a very short space of time, as we heard from the Minister of Finance, turning around a primary deficit in the vicinity of \$385 million to a primary surplus of \$85 million in one fiscal year. I believe that is a fundamental and central point, Mr. Speaker, to these budgetary proposals brought before the House.

But I want to say more because at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we are not only talking about pushing figures around. The debate has got to be about more than that. And that is why to my mind, when you analyse the totality of the proposals before the House, we recognise that we are making a case for what we have talked about. And we have talked about it certainly in our manifesto which we took to the country and upon which the country had the confidence to restore the Democratic Labour Party back to government. We made no secret that we were keen, Mr. Speaker, on creating a country that was socially balanced, environmentally viable, characterised by good and transparent governance. And to achieve that we set on a course of repositioning where we are at in terms of the Barbados economy.

And I want to suggest to the House that the debate before us has got to be not only in relation to whether the VAT has been lowered on certain basket items, whether or not pertaining to certain professionals. And I think the member for St. George North got it wrong when he said that the professionals are having now to pay higher rates. That is not true. In fact, the rates have been reduced. So we are talking about a balancing act. But I believe that the debate is much more about that. We have got to address the issue of ensuring that we could have greater productivity in

Barbados. We have got to address the issue of how we can spur investment. We have got to address the issue of how we can make the Barbados economy more resilient so that we can get back to the point of ensuring that when the next economic recession comes, as they do come on a cyclical basis, that we are not overly exposed to the shocks that rocked the economy of Barbados in 2008 when we came to office. And those deep structural flaws I am suggesting in the economy would not have gone away overnight. We are still in the middle of correcting that. And I think that, Mr. Speaker, is central to this debate. You cannot correct structural flaws in our economy overnight. And of course the government would not have wanted to engage in any measures that cause any pain to anyone. But I believe at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, what we have got before us are proposals that are part of a continuum and cannot be analysed or judged based on one fiscal year's performance.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to suggest that there are a number of gains that have occurred in this economy. And certainly as Minister responsible for Culture, Sports and Youth, I want to compliment the Minister of Tourism for being able to champion the transformation of the tourism sector and to ensure that measures which were criticised by the Barbados Democratic Party have certainly worked to re-engage and to bring back to the tourism sector growth that is based on sustainability. And I want to congratulate him on that.

I also want to say that it is clear to us that growing our tourism arrival figures and transforming the tourism sector - we recognise that effort is based on a combination of measures. And when we analyse the statistics, Mr. Speaker, you will recognise that certainly the whole question of where we have taken the cultural sector, particularly the whole question of heritage, have been very critical in relation to that turnaround in the tourism sector. We have seen a phenomenal approach being taken by the Ministry of Culture in particular, and Sports, by ensuring that our tourism product can be diversified. And the statistics suggest to me very clearly that we have seen the results of that in a very positive way.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that a number of things have happened in the Barbados economy in the area of the creative sector. We have brought to this House the Cultural Industries Development Act. We have proclaimed it. We have established a board to manage the implementation of what has been identified as a key pillar for the further diversification of the Barbados economy and in fact a very key pillar of the growth strategy. So we are on course to setting the Barbados economy in relation to the cultural industry sector on a growth path that will immediately result in resilience to the Barbados economy.

I want to speak, Mr. Speaker, to a number of facts that have occurred in relation to the cultural industry sector,

particularly where we have been able to position our young people to take maximum advantage of a broad-based economy which is not going to look the same, particularly in the next five to ten years, as the economy that we have at present. And that is why we have incorporated the cultural industry sector as being a very key plank in relation to the growth strategy and to some extent bringing to the fore the need to diversify the economy based on home-grown solutions.

We have had, Mr. Speaker, a number of developments, as I said. One being, for example, we recognise that there are a number of emerging artists in Barbados who, if positioned well, if supported well, have the potential to earn for themselves and by extension Barbados significant foreign exchange. And we saw that, for example, earlier this year when we had the National Association of Campus Activities in the United States where a number of our artists have been moving to and succeeding in actually concretising a number of important contracts that have paid significant dividends - over 500 universities and colleges, Mr. Speaker, being represented. And as a result of that exercise in Boston this year, we had about 3 000 buyers present in attendance. And Barbadian bands were able to book in excess of 120 bookings - a record to date. And that has resulted in a number of engagements that have paid significant dividends to our young artists. They were so successful that the band Cover Drive, for example, has had to temporarily relocate to the United States in order to fulfil its contractual engagements.

We have also had, Mr. Speaker, the inaugural Caribbean Music Summit which was held in Barbados in the February period, February 1st to the 3rd in particular. And of course, among the artists that were signed during the summit was our own Xian, a female singer who continues to get rave reviews across the world. We were able in that summit, Mr. Speaker, to attract to Barbados some of the most outstanding connections in the international music industry. And therefore we are going to continue, Mr. Speaker, to reach out to those connections and to position our Barbadian artists to earn and of course to generate those foreign direct inflows that we believe can be easily achieved from the growing cultural industry sector.

I will point to one area, Mr. Speaker, that I have predicted publicly will revolutionise the earning of foreign exchange for Barbados in a very short space of time, supported by rather detailed incentives under the Cultural Industries Development Act. And I speak of the film industry in Barbados because in a short space of time, Mr. Speaker, we have seen the coming to the fore in Barbados of a number of significant players who have produced some of the most outstanding films that have taken the world by storm. We have had one of those films being showcased in France at the Cannes Festival. That film, Mr.

Speaker, is still being shown in Barbados. And in fact I was able to join in making an announcement that the film has been able to attract a major international distributor who has seen the film and who has indicated that the film is good enough to showcase to the world. And that is only one film. But there are numerous films that have been able to attract attention internationally and we have seen a lot of interest, Mr. Speaker, from international producers who are seeing Barbados as a destination for film and the recording of documentaries.

The development of the music sector, Mr. Speaker, therefore has been identified as a key area for future growth and future expansion of the Barbados economy. The work of COSCAP, which continues to herald a new era in transforming our musicians to wealth earners and generators of foreign exchange, must be applauded as well. We have seen, for example, a number of examples in that area. We have had Chanté co-writing a number of important songs. Rihanna, for example, has been a major factor in that. Rihanna, as you know, continues to take the world by storm and she continues in her quest of exploring what has been a very competitive international music industry. But she is Barbadian and therefore her quest, her movement on to the international stage has meant a lot of important victories for Barbadian artists who have been identified as being from Barbados and therefore they have been very successful on the international stage. But we have to compliment Rihanna, Mr. Speaker, for being able to assist Barbados in the transformation of our music sector and by extension the cultural industries sector. Rihanna of course is the best-selling digital artist of all time and with 13 Billboard Top 100 hits she is tied with Michael Jackson. And we believe that once she is able over the next couple of months in her latest production with Paul McCartney and Kanye West, that in a very short space of time she will actually surpass the late musical icon Michael Jackson.

And we have had a number of other artists and I want to spend just a moment to reflect on the significance of our Crop Over festival because we know that the festival is a key part of the success of the tourism arrivals. In fact, I believe that the success of tourism, particularly during the Crop Over period, has a lot to do with what has happened with Crop Over. And I think we have to acknowledge that we have a festival that has over the years significantly contributed to the earnings - both the foreign exchange earnings in Barbados - as well as creating the kind of impact, job creation, diversity in terms of talent, musical talent, creating persons who have moved into the song engineering business. In fact, it has created a most diversified platform upon which a variety of players in the sector have been able to move forward. And of course, Crop Over is supported by a number of other festivals which play a significant role in that regard. We have the Gospel Festival, we have the Barbados Music Awards, to name a few.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that in all we are seeing our festivals playing a key role in enabling our artists to become exporters of their music, both in physical and in digital format right here in Barbados. And therefore much of the developmental work which has been done over the years by the National Cultural Foundation and the Barbados Community College has been doing excellent work in this regard. Our local manufacturers of CDs and those companies including CRS Music and Media and the digital content of our music is helping to move this revolution in the music industry forward. So we have a number of statistics that I think we

should reflect on. As I said, we have Rihanna, over 230 million albums and digital singles sold since 2005. Phenomenal. We have Chantel - millions of records sold as well. Cover Drive that has taken the UK charts and of course now the United States industry by storm. But we can't forget some of our style arts because although they are no longer recording artists, they are making a significant impact in terms of the local music sector. Joseph Nels, for example, the Merry Men - their songs are still being found to be used in many documentaries and films across the world. So, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to relay that because we are seeing a phenomenal growth in that area.

And I mentioned Cropover specifically because when you analyse the data - and one of the things we are doing is that we are commissioning a mapping of the cultural industry sector because we believe that the statistics, the inputs of this sector in terms of informing economic decisions need to be taken to a new level. And therefore we are going to be commissioning through the Solesis University of the West Indies a new study so that we can more accurately gauge the impact of the cultural industry sector on the Barbados economy. And therefore we will know, I believe, once that study is done, that we will be well positioned to even place more investment and more funding behind that.

We have, for example, in Cropover, because all of the events in Cropover, as I said, help to trigger a number of international events. And we have seen a phenomenal uptake even as Cropover is launched in the markets - our key source markets, the Caribbean, Europe and the United States. The Internet and having the ability to use the Internet to make our products and services of Cropover readily available have seen a significant uptake of opportunities. We have a number of our events that are actually sold online, whether it is Pan Fusion, whether it is the Soca Royale, whether it is Cohoblot - these events, we are seeing a lot of movement internationally in the sale of those tickets. And those tickets are bought online in phenomenal numbers. Thousands of those tickets are bought by our international friends, our tourist visitors and so on.

But the other thing, Mr. Speaker, that we need to be aware of - a statistic presented to me only a couple of days ago in relation to Kadooment - and we are finding, Mr. Speaker, that in excess of 60 per cent of our bands are selling costumes directly to overseas interests. The Internet and those - those translate. Because the point I am making is the fact that these translate immediately to the earning of foreign exchange in a direct way that impacts the Barbados economy. And therefore, when we speak of the need to ensure that Cropover is well positioned - and not only Cropover, but festivals, the festivals industry in Barbados - these are key aspects of the transformation of the Barbados economy. And these are critical areas that I believe that we have to look at.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing I wanted to speak to was that within the context of the budget, the budget speaks to a number of measures which I believe are critical to Barbados at the moment. And I believe that what is being said - and we look at, for example, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which the members of the opposition did not speak to in prior debates. We have heard much criticism of the financing of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and in this budget, for the first time - because I don't believe you could find in any of the budgets delivered by the Barbados Labour Party any real serious attempt at financing the hospital in a sustainable manner - and I believe this is the first time, by means of creating a vehicle through the establishment of a trust mechanism, to ensure that we take the hospital in terms of the financing of the hospital out of the realm of public criticism and controversy that I believe the Barbados Labour Party has actually thrived on. But it was not the Democratic Labour Party government that had put a cap on the monies made available to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It was not the Democratic Labour Party that did that. So we have created a mechanism in the budget to ensure that the hospital can be properly financed. I don't think you can have a quarrel with that. We cannot have a quarrel with that because it is intended to make sure that the services at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital are made available in an environment where we don't have issues of payment for the important services that the hospital provides.

The other aspect of the budget, Mr. Speaker, which I believe is very critical going forward and I think has escaped the attention of the opposition in its passion and desire to not connect with the budget but to connect with other things extraneous to the budget - because I believe that the Leader of the Opposition spent a lot of time shadow boxing and not connecting with really what the budget is all about. The budget, Mr. Speaker, looked at laying the foundation for returning the Barbados economy to a sustainable growth path.

And one of the primary objectives of the 19-month adjustment programme was exactly that. The question is

how do you return the Barbados economy to a sustainable growth pattern unless you look at the critical areas, particularly in the productive sectors, to stimulate growth. One of the things highlighted in the budget was addressing the whole question of how we are going to deal with the educational sector - the sector which of course we have been accused of turning our backs on - and how we could create the opportunity of having those young people who were affected by the new tuition structure at the University of the West Indies getting them back into the classroom. I believe that is a particular measure that the Barbados Labour Party opposition should applaud because what it seeks to do is to create an opportunity where those vulnerable members of the university student population who have been affected have now the opportunity of getting back into university, having their tuition funded, but in a manner that deals with the most vulnerable elements of the society. And therefore I believe that is an aspect of the budget that the opposition ought to have singled out for support because I believe that is an area that has been very controversial and therefore certainly calls out for support by the Barbados Labour Party.

I want to draw to the House's attention, Mr. Speaker, the fact that it is clear that the Barbados economy has returned to growth. There is a substantial return of confidence in the Barbados economy. And I say that not without having examples of that because I was able to spot only recently in two of the daily newspapers two articles that suggest to me that there is substantial confidence in the Barbados economy triggered by the policies of the Government of the Democratic Labour Party. And it is not - I raise examples, Mr. Speaker, to show that this is not the Government identifying these examples. This is what has been carried in the local newspapers. Two examples of the private sector responding to what are clearly progressive policies of the Government.

I want to refer to two of them. One relates, Mr. Speaker, to the Insurance Corporation of Barbados with a headline which says that the ICBL is doing well. And that story, paraphrased, simply said that the ICBL is well capitalised with shareholders' equity at December 2014 to the tune of \$147.4 million. And then we had the example of the Bank of Nova Scotia because there was at one time the claim that companies, particularly large corporate entities, were shifting their corporate headquarters from Barbados because of the downgrade. But we are seeing now that notwithstanding the downgrade, and essentially because of the return of confidence to the Barbados economy, there are corporations shifting their business from the Caribbean back into Barbados. And we had the example recently, Mr. Speaker, of the Bank of Nova Scotia in Canada pulling all of its shareholding in Scotiabank Trinidad and Tobago as well as the Scotia Group of Jamaica Limited and moving them back to their subsidiary in Barbados. And that happened only a couple of weeks ago. Which suggests to

me, Mr. Speaker, that there are things that the Government of Barbados are doing well and that there is a return of confidence based on the measures that have been taken, particularly over this 19-month period.

So, Mr. Speaker, in a nutshell, I want to underscore - I spent some time looking at the cultural industries because I think that is an area that has helped to create the kind of avenues and opportunities for our young people and represents a significant part of our growth path. And certainly I believe that the measures collectively help to reshape our focus to the betterment of our economy and to help us to chart a path to bring growth back to the economy of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member's time is expired.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: We have come to the end of our contributions for today and I beg to move the suspension of the sitting until 9.00 tomorrow morning.

The question that the House be suspended until 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 17, 2015 was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

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RESUMPTION

ORDER NO. 16 (resumed)

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SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

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

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

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

LASHLEY, Hon. S. A. (Christ Church West Central)

MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M. A. (St. Michael North East)

SEALY, Hon. R. L. (St. Michael South Central)

TOPPIN, Mr. R. St.C. (St. Michael North)

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while 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; the Members listed are those identified from the record. Mr. SPEAKER opened with ‘Good afternoon, Hon. Members. This session resumes’, and the Sitting of Monday, June 15, 2015 had been suspended until 4.00 p.m. today; the source’s convening sentence (‘Pursuant to the adjournment ... met at 10.00 a.m.’) is therefore replaced by a resumption line at 4.00 p.m. Please confirm the time from the Votes and Proceedings.

Q2. Order No. 16, heading. The Order is not read on this day. The title is printed as the Clerk read it when the Order was taken on June 15, 2015: the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for the year 2015. Please confirm.

Q3. Throughout. The bracketed time-checks in the source are out of sequence (for example ‘[01.00 a.m.]’ and ‘[02.30 a.m.]’ during the afternoon speech of the Leader of the Opposition) and have been omitted. At several of them the text resumes in mid-sentence (for example Hon. R. L. Sealy’s ‘I need, of course, to thank the people of St. Michael Sout’ followed by ‘not at the beginning for a very good reason’), so words may be missing at those points. Please check against the recording.

Q4. Order No. 16, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, Mr. SPEAKER. The words ‘They are half truths - half truths whether or not you say you cannot say them. So please withdraw the comments.’ are headed ‘SPEAKER UNCERTAIN - REVIEW’ in the source. They follow directly on Mr. SPEAKER’s intervention and direct a withdrawal, so they are printed as part of Mr. SPEAKER’s ruling, and the remainder of the speech is restored to the Leader of the Opposition. The source does not record whether the remark was withdrawn. Please confirm.

Q5. Order No. 16, Hon. R. L. Sealy. Mr. SPEAKER’s call reads only ‘Yes, the Honourable Member for St. Michael.’ The speaker is headed Hon. Richard L. Sealy in the source and is later referred to by Hon. D. St.E. Kellman as the Member for St. Michael South Central; printed under Hon. R. L. SEALY.

Q6. Order No. 16, Mr. G. A. Clarke. The source has a separate speech ‘Yes, Mr. Speaker,’ headed ‘MS. TONI N. S.-A. MOORE, J.P., M.P. (St. George North)’; she was not a Member of the 2013-2018 House. No call from the Chair is recorded before the speech of Mr. G. A. Clarke,

the Member for St. George North in 2015, which follows immediately, so the words are printed as the opening of his speech. Please confirm.

Q7. Order No. 16, Hon. S. A. Lashley. Headed ‘HON. MICHAEL A. LASHLEY, S.C., M.P.’ in the source. Mr. SPEAKER called ‘The Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central’ and the speaker deals with the cultural industries, the Caribbean Music Summit and Crop Over, the portfolio of the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth; printed under Hon. S. A. LASHLEY. Please confirm.

Q8. Order No. 16, Hon. S. A. Lashley. The source has the speaker refer three times to ‘the member for St. George South’ as the Member ‘who just spoke’ and who spoke of fees on professionals. The Member who had just spoken was Mr. G. A. Clarke, Member for St. George North; corrected to St. George North in each place. Please confirm.

Q9. Suspension, end of sitting. The source records the dinner suspension as ‘[THE SITTING WAS SUSPENDED AT 9.30 P.M.]’, although the motion was to suspend ‘until 9:30 this evening’; the time of suspension is not recorded. The day ends with a suspension until 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 17, 2015 and not an adjournment, so there is no adjournment in this report.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on Tuesday, June 16, 2015, with Mr. SPEAKER presiding, to continue the debate on Order No. 16, the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for the year 2015, which the Minister of Finance, Hon. C. P. Sinckler, had presented the previous day.

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, said that the budget took a further \$200 million in taxation from a people already tax fatigued, and called it the sixth attempt to stabilise the economy since the Medium Term Fiscal Strategy of 2010. Citing the table at page 77 of the budget speech, she said the measures yielded a net revenue increase of \$200.2 million after \$4.5 million given back in scholarships and reduced registration fees. She said foreign reserves at the end of March 2015 were \$34 million lower than a year earlier, that the current account fiscal deficit was \$215 million worse than at the start of the 19-month programme, and that the Government had foregone some \$96 million in slot machine and arcade revenue. She criticised the land tax threshold of \$150 000,

the VAT on items such as mincemeat and frozen flying fish, the requirement of tax clearance for tradesmen and professionals registering under the Profession, Trade and Business Regulations Act, and the \$220 million owed to the National Insurance Scheme. She raised losses at the Central Bank, a proposed amendment to the Housing Credit Fund trust deed, a land lease and molasses tank contract with Preconco's subsidiary Storage Solutions at the port, and agreements with Cahill Energy for a plasma gasification plant, whose cost she said had risen from \$480 million to \$700 million. Mr. SPEAKER cautioned her under Standing Order 28 on references to the conduct of persons, and directed the withdrawal of a reference to 'half truths'.

Hon. R. L. Sealy commended the Member for St. Michael North West for the proposals, subtitled 'Completing the Job', said the fiscal deficit was now less than 6 per cent of GDP from over 11 per cent, and explained the land tax rates of 0.1 per cent on values between \$150 000 and \$300 000. He spoke of hotel projects at Sandy Bay, Sam Lord's Castle, with 450 suites to be managed by Wyndham, and 309 rooms at Foul Bay, and took responsibility for the 80 units at Valerie. The House was suspended for dinner.

After the suspension Mr. R. St.C. Toppin said the Government had added \$200 million in taxes, almost twice the taxation of 2008, noted that Barbados had fallen from 86th to 94th place on the ease of starting a business, and criticised the concessions to Sandals, the sale and lease back of two Port Authority tugs sold for \$8.6 million and leased at US\$3 600 a day, and the US\$60 million put into the Four Seasons project. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman spoke on the financing of the deficit, the euro loan of 30 million which had yielded 120 million Barbados dollars, and housing at Constant, Grotto and Lancaster, and said there could be no agreement with Cahill without his signature. Mr. G. A. Clarke spoke on rural development in St. George, the effect of the tax increases on the cost of living and on health, the milk cess from August 1, and the planned sugar factory at Andrews.

Hon. S. A. Lashley supported the measures, replied to the Member for St. George North on the fees of professionals, and spoke at length on the cultural industries, the Caribbean Music Summit held from February 1 to 3, Crop Over and the film industry under the Cultural Industries Development Act, and cited the Insurance Corporation of Barbados's shareholders' equity of \$147.4 million at December 2014. On the motion of the Leader of the House, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, the sitting was suspended until 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 17, 2015.