
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, March 17, 2015

The House of Assembly resumed at 9.00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 17, 2015, the Sitting of Monday, March 16, 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)
Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART, Q.C. (Prime Minister, Minister of National Security, the Public Service and Urban Development)
Mr. T. A. PRESCOD
Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN
Hon. C. P. SINCKLER (Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs)
Mr. J. D. PAUL (Chairman of Committees)
Lt. Col. J. D. BOSTIC
Dr. M. M. AGARD
Hon. S. A. LASHLEY (Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth)
Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE (Minister of Health) (Leader of the House)
Hon. R. D. JONES (Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation)
Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK (Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management)
Mr. D. D. MARSHALL, Q.C.
Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P.
Mr. E. G. HINKSON
Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS
Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR
Mr. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C.

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

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning, Honourable Members. This House is now resumed. When the suspension was taken last evening, we were on Order Number 17. And with that, we shall continue. Honourable Member.

ORDER NO. 17 – APPROPRIATION BILL, 2015

Lt. Col. J. D. BOSTIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I rise to make my contribution to this debate, I first of all would like to commend the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for her presentation yesterday afternoon, and also those members on this side for their contributions as well, which were all very insightful. I also would like to commend the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, who, to use a military term, brought radio silence and decided to speak yesterday.

I really was hoping that these debates would have been done at a time, hopefully, when the economy would have been in a much better position, because obviously the state of the economy would inform the presentation of estimates and expenditure. I want to focus on those areas, really, that relate directly to the Ministry of Housing and particularly the National Housing Corporation. I was hoping yesterday that, having listened to the Honourable Minister with responsibility for Housing, there would have been some amplification and explanation of some of those issues relating to housing. I noticed and I observed that the Minister deviated from the norm in that he did not congratulate the Honourable Minister of Finance as he would normally do. And I am not sure if he was tacitly sending a message to the Minister that he was not happy with that which was allocated to him. Nevertheless, let me press on.

One of the things, in all honesty, which concerns me when I look at the National Housing Corporation allocations and the Ministry of Housing - recognising, of course, that there is not a lot of money to go around - I am still concerned that nothing was allocated for maintenance of the Government's housing estates. And this is an issue which I will speak to during my presentation.

I want to say that I must give credit where credit is due. And I remember the former Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North. I must say that he really, when he came to the crease, batting on a wicket that was very well prepared by the Barbados Labour Party, the Honourable Member was able to score some quick runs. He actually got a quick century. He reminded me somewhat of a Gordon Greenidge. And even though we may argue about the size of the houses, we may argue about the cost of the houses or whatever, the reality is that houses were constructed. And I give you credit, Honourable Minister. But then - I don't know, maybe I missed part of the innings - because, boom, the batsman went back in. I don't know if he was bowled out or if he retired hurt, but he was out. And in comes another batsman, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, and the innings slowed down considerably; the runs stopped flowing. He came in batting like Jeff Boycott or Larry Gomes - but then again, I am not too sure that I am really doing justice to those two gentlemen, because even though they batted long, for the most part at the end of their innings you could see runs on the board. But at the rate that the present Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, is batting, it seems to me that within the next three years, during the next election, when his off stump and middle stump are uprooted by Peter Phillips, he will not have any runs on the board to show for the time that he spent at the crease.

When I said that the physical evidence of houses being built cannot be disputed, I have to say equally that the physical evidence of houses remaining vacant cannot also be disputed. And this, Mr. Speaker, is where the whole question of maintenance begins. I know, for example, that there are in excess of 260 houses that remain vacant across this land. We have about 120-odd in St. Philip at Parish Land between Lancaster Phase One and Two, another 90 or so, and then we have at Constant and one or two other places. And out of this total, I believe there are some 200 or so houses that are vacant and have not been constructed with wells. If this is indeed the case, then I would ask the Honourable Member for St. Lucy to explain what is happening in this regard.

The maintenance issue comes in, Mr. Speaker, because when you have houses that have been shut up and closed for a considerably long period of time, there has to be some remedial work that will be required when those houses come into use. And I am wondering if that has been

factored in and what will be the likely cost for those houses once they have been allocated.

Similarly, with regard to maintenance - and this obviously is not something that has just started; I would not say that - this has been happening for a long time. The housing estates across this country are in dire need of maintenance, and it is something that the Government and all governments must take seriously and must establish a system to address. I know for the last five years for sure, in the housing estates in the City, people have been without a lot of basic things. And those housing estates are the newer ones when compared, for example, to the Farm and Silver Hill, Gaul Hill and other areas. And this is something that bothers me. I hope that at some point in time we would be able to come up with a comprehensive maintenance programme so that the houses across the Government's estates - including these new ones - would not suffer the same fate as the others. And certainly in the Estimates, yes, there are allocations for maintenance, but maintenance of Government offices and so on, not for the housing estates. And I am just calling on -

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. Everybody knows that maintenance of Government units falls under the National Housing Corporation. You would not see a figure in the Estimates for maintenance. What you will see is grants to institutions, to public institutions. So I am a bit surprised that the Honourable Member - a well-trained man - would make a speech like this, saying that a brief was given to him, and without reading the brief properly, sir, would make an error like that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thanks for the elucidation, Member.

Lt. Col. J. D. BOSTIC: Well, I thank you, Mr. Speaker. But even if a brief was given to me, Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that no brief was given to the Honourable Member yesterday. The Honourable Member seems to be speaking out on a limb on his own. I do not want to say he is a loose cannon, but certainly his brief perhaps is not in sync with the brief coming from the Government side.

But I will go past that. On a point of order - the Honourable Member cannot claim to get a brief from my ministry, sir, and I did not get one. Very well. I am not going to get into these exchanges. I am here to speak from my heart, to say what I have to say as the Shadow Minister of Housing. And if the person who occupies the permanent position did not say what he wanted to say and ought to have said yesterday with regards to housing, then that is a matter for him.

As I was saying, the new Minister of Housing came in and everything has slowed down. The health

programme, housing - every last person - a good programme, I would admit, but that seemed to have gone based on the allocations within the Budget. We know that everything related to the Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme is now through the window. And I am yet to hear anything at all coming from the Honourable Minister of Housing with regards to the project at Kings Village, which was on the cards, I believe, before several of the others. And I am going to even plead with the Honourable Minister of Finance to tell him, when he is providing funds for the Exmouth Gap project, to pull along Kings Village - pull it along. Help the people in the City of Bridgetown. Because the Honourable Minister of Housing, for the last two years, has been coming in here, including yesterday, saying that he is helping the people of Bridgetown, he is doing this and he is doing that. And not one single thing has been delivered, Honourable Minister. Not one single thing.

What has been happening with housing is that, yes, some houses have been constructed - no doubt about that. But I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we need to look at the housing policy in this country. We need not to reinvent the wheel, but we need to look at a comprehensive housing policy. We need to look at those people whom we are targeting when it comes to housing, so that we do what is required to ensure that the target group we are trying to reach is reached - so that we do not go and construct housing that I believe was intended for low-income earners, and then suddenly realise that because of the cost of constructing the houses, the rents we are going to be charging cannot be easily met by the average low-income earner.

I would like the Honourable Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, to say where we are in relation to arrears within the National Housing Corporation. Because there is no point in building houses in an area targeting a specific group and then, when you finish - not even, for example, with the Grotto project - the Right Honourable Prime Minister cannot easily take 20 people from his constituency who would meet the requirements to occupy those houses, because they will struggle to pay the rent. And that is something we need to look at.

I notice a shift when I listen to the utterances of the present Minister of Housing, who seems to be taking housing away from those who are vulnerable - the economically challenged, the low-income earners - and pushing it into a realm that is far beyond the reach of the persons who I believe these houses were intended for in the first place. And that, Mr. Speaker, for me, is a serious issue.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. It is quite

obvious that the Honourable Member does not understand the ministry that he shadows. The Honourable Member does not understand that it is not only the National Housing Corporation, but also the Rural Development Commission. And I observed that he is speaking, giving the impression that nothing has been done in housing, but he has not spoken about the hundreds and hundreds of houses that have been delivered under the RDC at no cost to the same persons that he claims we are not delivering to.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay, thank you, Member.

Lt. Col. J. D. BOSTIC: Mr. Speaker, years ago there was a comprehensive housing policy in Barbados. A lot of it was done by the Barbados Labour Party. Some of it was done by previous Democratic Labour Party administration, no doubt about that. And there are things that happened during that time that contributed significantly to the development of this country, to the development of the middle class. And it was based on this rapid development in the ranks of the middle class that the economy was able to flow, to move, to grow, for example. And there are some members I believe in here who might even have benefited from what I'm talking about.

When we look at places like West Terrace, 500 or so houses in Husbands, in Oxnards, Mr. Speaker, we had a situation where those university graduates and young professionals were able to get a start. They were able to get a start so that they could then expand on their housing and reach the level where we are at today. They got a start, others got a start. When it came to land and the cost of land in Walstead and those places, they were provided with a start. Others, through this self-help programme, were provided with loans. Loans were provided to facilitate what the economists call the sweat equity, where people were able to build their homes on weekends, bringing in people, friends and families, cook some food and so on. Especially in rural Barbados. That's a fact. That was another form of housing.

And so I'm saying that it is not just a matter of constructing houses, but providing all the avenues so that all of those persons who we are trying to reach will be reached, and so that the Government on its own cannot build houses for everyone. That's a fact. So there have to be other means, other measures, other things. And when you look back to the past, you would see exactly what happened under previous administrations. At no time, at no time was there ever a problem with the land because the land was considered to be prime land. It didn't matter what happened in terms of the market prices for land. We never went there so that people were able to get proper spots.

For example, in Grazettes some years ago, Parkinson Road, I believe it was about 57 two-bedroom units built there - lovely, overlooking the city. That was not an issue.

But all of a sudden the Minister, the Honourable Minister of Housing, is talking about prime land and this land and the next land, so that we are now selling lots at \$20 027 a square foot. For example, West Terrace, the extension beyond the 16th Avenue in West Terrace - it didn't matter what happened in the surrounding areas. A start was provided for people who were able then to make themselves better on their own. And that is what has contributed significantly to the development in this country.

When we look at the rental rates that we are charging today, and I'm not going to stand up here and say that the country can afford, or the Government or National Housing must continue to charge the same rates throughout time - that's not practical. But at the same time, we cannot move from a situation of \$400, \$300 and something dollars for a three-bedroom at Lemon Arbour to \$900 for low-income earners. This is something that really needs to be addressed. And I know and I give credit to the former Honourable Minister of Housing for completing the Country Towers project. That is something that we should have completed, in my opinion. But at the same time, when that was being conceptualised, it was not intended for those rates to go beyond \$100 a week for a three-bedroom. And now we have reached the stage where those apartments are now beyond the reach of the average Barbadian.

I also want to look, Mr. Speaker - I heard yesterday the Honourable Member for St. Lucy speaking to the artisans and so forth who have been benefiting under the aegis of the National Housing Corporation. But Mr. Speaker, what we have seen in the last few years in Barbados is the demise of the small contractor. And that's a fact. And I'm not saying that to say that big contractors do not need the work, that they should not benefit from anything. But at the same time, some of those projects back in West Terrace and so on, a number of small contractors were used. And the fact is, Mr. Speaker, the construction industry is part of the productive sector. And if we do not allow the money to flow down the chain so that the small contractors can benefit in a significant way, then that in itself is not really going to contribute to the economy in the way that we would like.

And there are a number of small contractors - if you want to call them BLP contractors, DLP contractors, I say small contractors - who are crying out, whose machinery, mixers and so on that they would have invested in are lying idle because they're not getting enough work. It is not trickling down enough from the big contractors to the small contractors. And this is something that really needs to be addressed, Mr. Speaker.

So I spoke about the maintenance programme that is required. I want now to move, Mr. Speaker, to the whole question of the conveyances that are to be given to people

and the whole thing of empowering people, as the Honourable Member for St. Lucy always speaks about - which is good, no problem with that. But we have a situation, though, where whilst people are waiting for these conveyances, nothing is happening in terms of the same maintenance on a lot of the estates. And also the fact that a new situation is being created in Barbados where these estates, the high-rise in particular, are more or less now going to be treated like condominiums with separate ownership. And this is a matter that has to be addressed because there are things that are peculiar to a condominium setting that will not be familiar to the residents of these houses who would have been accustomed to the National Housing Corporation doing a lot of things.

This is something that has to be looked at and this is something that should be engineered by the National Housing Corporation. This is nothing new as a concept - it is a new situation that is confronting us and it's a good thing. I'm not going to deny that. But we have to facilitate the smooth transition from NHC ownership to private ownership of these units because there are a number of communal features of these facilities that will require communal efforts. And that is something that we need to be able to do.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to beg you to save me from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, because, Mr. Speaker, I can handle the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. What I would like is for the Honourable Minister of Housing to keep the promises that he continues to make in this House in terms of assisting the people not only of the city, but the people of Barbados. And I don't mind if he doesn't try to assist me personally - I don't need the assistance from the Honourable Member - but the people of Barbados do. The people of the City of Bridgetown do. And if you want to bring it down to the personal level, he can go out there with that. Because he bats on his own and he scores on his own. Hanging by a string - hanging by a string.

We have a situation and we have to face the situation. The situation is that we know there's not enough money to go around. And that's a fact. And so enough cannot be allocated to everybody. But housing is a critical part, a critical part of the social fabric of the society. And I call on the Honourable Minister of Finance whenever he is able to - the economy is, he said, showing signs of turning around. It's showing signs of turning around. Well, when those things become greater and better and more observable, that enough funding goes into housing in this country, because we still have people who are suffering in this country because of a lack of proper housing. We still have people in the same areas like the Greenfields and Cats Castle and so on who are living under conditions that are really not good enough for a modern-day Barbados.

And especially in times when resources are scarce or are not as plentiful as they used to be, then there has to be the strategic or the focused use of the resources. And if you don't have enough money to construct housing in Barbados, at least put what you have into the maintenance of the existing stock. That is something that I would call for. If you do not have enough money in Urban to do what Urban is supposed to be doing, have a focused programme that would at least bring some relief to the elderly - that will, for example, go in the direction of moving away from pit toilets to waterborne facilities. Some focused programme, whatever little there is. That is something that I am calling for.

So Mr. Speaker, I am very happy for the opportunity to have been able to make my brief intervention. I am really sincerely hoping, for the benefit of the people of Barbados, that the current Minister of Housing, the current Honourable Member for St. Lucy, would really start to bat, will not fall asleep at the wicket, and would produce some runs for the poor people of Barbados. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I am much obliged.

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

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I heard a number of presentations and I was only fortunate this morning to hear the Honourable representative of the city's presentation as well. But on my way here, when I was coming through Carrington Village, an ordinary citizen really brought this whole discussion into perspective. She started off by saying, what is this that I am hearing, this discussion about Estimates, all these projects that we are going to have? She heard about so much projects in her lifetime already, she asked. I am hearing that people are going to get back refunds, all kind of debt cancellations. And I was appalled to hear an ordinary woman, an ordinary, ordinary woman from the wretched of the earth, having such a comprehensive understanding of what we were doing here. And she had doubts that we had constructed a blueprint that was meaningful enough that would take us through the troubled waters and that she would be able to enjoy the levels of prosperity over the years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think she caught my imagination and also my reality. Because yesterday as well I heard in the aside - which I probably was not supposed to hear here - someone made mention that this programme is one of decolonisation. And the Minister of Finance made reference to it as an effort to reform the institutions and governance in the society and so on. So when I interpret the simple word reform, I am thinking that you're putting in place a framework for a progressive form of governance.

And what I'm witnessing is the turning back of all the progressive flights that I thought we all hail and glorify as a result of the leadership of a number of leaders who, in my view, made a significant contribution to the transformation of life of people in a meaningful way. And I'm not going to be subjective or even contemptuous. And I witnessed what happened in the 1960s. I watch what happened in the 1950s. I watched what has happened in the 1990s as well. Our focus was in trying to take people out of the nigger yard. I saw that. And if I expressed a passionate view in a previous exchange, it was because I felt that we were on the right track. And I had no doubts about the progressive nature of the blueprint that was translated into meaningful programmes with the effort to eradicate poverty. Poverty. I kept saying to you from the time I return here that our first remit is to address and honour the mission which was given to us by the ordinary people every day. And if I listen to a speech that seemed to be decorated with what is perceived as esoteric business, and I don't see anything in that tells me that we will be able to sustain this quality of life which we have been able to put in place over the years, then I am concerned because I, and as well as my people will. We don't want to go back to that nigger yard. And at some point I will read the lines of Martin Carter. I would read the lines of Martin Carter.

And I don't know how you can feel comfortable as well after having the assessment of living conditions in Barbados being presented to you by Salises, a very profound analysis of our reality. Not just looking at the IADB report which we had before, which was limited to that breadbasket, but one that is more widespread, that touch on elements of our development that dealt with housing conditions, education, poverty in a very extensive way. I feel that these are things that any budget in modern Barbados, especially in the era where both internally and externally we are witnessing the trends of neoliberalism. It is going to be hard for any leader, any leader in the present atmosphere that is attempting to take us back. But if we know that something is wrong, we have to address the wrongs in the system. We cannot avoid them. Because if we avoid them, it is going to become more and more intensive and more difficult for anyone to be able to counter in the future.

And this morning as well, I looked at the conversation that came out of the reports. And I think that in examining or planning for the estimates, all the other interests was well represented. But there was a serious omission. And I believe that what we heard coming from these people as we look at the information that was coordinated out of the poverty studies, is that the blueprint, if there is one, has not addressed the fundamentals that will help the very proprietors of all of us in here to be able to see the nature and the quality of the contributions that we're making in this Honourable House. And I look at the section in this document which is the Barbados Country

Assessment of Living Conditions 2010. I don't know how much we have addressed this, but what it indicated to me is that the situation is worse coming out of the 1990s when the progressive programme was put in place for the establishment of the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission, all put in place by the Honourable Member for St. Peter. Give credit where credit is due. Give credit where credit is due. And a heavy, extensive programme on poverty alleviation, which eradication, which in some cases is synonymous. But I was given the opportunity to serve in my capacity as consultant in order to address that area of concern. And I was also given the opportunity to become a minister to further improve on the situation. And I believe that I did. I believe that I did. Because if I know the member, the representative of St. Peter, well, if I did not, I would not be there.

But when contradictions occur, when contradictions occur, we are both passionate individuals about our concern about this specific aspect of life. About this specific aspect of life. And I still maintain that this should remain on the agenda. And no progressive government, after all our struggles, can present estimates in this House that we also call the budget in this House without putting special projects, or rather a national project not directed at any specific constituency for any favours to any clientelism, but to address this major concern in this society. Because we're not doing it because we want to put a top-down programme in place. We put in place scientific methodologies to determine where we are at a specific point in history. And we were in this position relatively since the measurements of the 1930s. And if you're going to tell me that you are about to put reforms in place using those words, reform and decolonisation in a very loose manner, I ask you if the Honourable late Harold Walton Barrow put in place a system which he felt would provide us as ordinary people. Because I'm speaking of a specific type of person. When you start to generalise in scientific analysis and exclude variables from reality, I know that you're living in Fantasy Island.

In 1961, the agenda that is now being reversed was put in place. '61, '66, and also in the 1950s. And that agenda, we reapplied ourselves to it in the last quarter of the 20th century. The reality is heated debates out of all the dynamics of that period made us put a programme in place for education. While others might be convinced that we can abandon that programme and claiming to be putting a reformist approach and to be involved in decolonisation. My view is the decolonisation occurred in the 1960s. What we did in the 1960s and what we did as well - when we extended the franchise so that we can select leaders of our choice to make the changes that were related to our lives. Those are the lessons of decolonisation. Not just a flag and an anthem. But important programmes were put in place like the national insurance programmes. So that when people talk sick that they could not work, they knew where

they can get a few dollars in order to stay alive. In many cases, all the progressive labour legislation of the time. And unless you want to keep your focus, understand your perspective of development or of decolonisation, you're going to get involved in arithmetic that is meaningless in relation to the general development of the people. That is what I'm talking about.

And when that lady said what she said on that occasion, very much the same as what the document on Barbados Country Assessment is saying. And the true Barbadian style, in most cases at the beginning of the sentence there is no pronoun. So you get the indirect article. You see a lot of children. They went on to say there were a lot of us but not much money. They went on to say mothers had nothing to give the children. Fathers never took responsibility for the children. You're talking about multiple social problems in a society. Dad died young and after that everything went so we grow up poor. One woman said the husband refused to assist. He put me in debt and he left me. When you are going to put a programme in place, you don't just sit down among the economists. They have a positive consultation contribution to make. But you know what are the social and political issues and economic issues of your time. And you put the appropriate programmes in place to see how you can do something positive to change conditions so that those persons who are excluded from the analysis and the programme can be brought back into the economic mainstream and the social mainstream of the society itself. And that is what I'm talking about.

So you can come in here and try to demonstrate to people that you have some great grasp of economics and give some sense of satisfaction to your inner self. You have narcissists and strange people. Sometimes even some people get into catharsis as well, just on the outskirts of having an internal feeling that may cause them to do something that they ought to do other places. But this is serious business. And if we fool around with it, we are going to find ourselves in this situation arguing one thing on Monday nights and something else on Tuesday night. And that is what is happening. It is happening in our educational programme because we have had people who are responsible for governance saying that there will be no charge for tertiary education in this country. Statements were made at the Community College on this. We have had ministers giving us the assurance at the University of the West Indies. I am not going to say the deliberate misrepresentation of reality. I don't know if it's a way of a dramaturgical approach or how you must mislead people as you get on the stage and in the environment. At the university, you felt that you had to say something that will titillate those who were listening. And you give them the assurance. \$3 000 for each student. And you said you were going to give 3 000 students \$3 000. It means that you are bewildered, you are confused in what you want to do,

because some people left the university with a sense of satisfaction.

I heard it. I was of the opinion, well, probably he is in difficulty, but at least he still has a human conscience, a social conscience. He's not a vulgar beast. He still feels that human beings, especially the vulgar rebel, should be given a chance. And then there are all kinds of remarks about if the Ministry of Finance was aware of the commitment that her minister made - that sat in cabinet with the other ministers and went out like a lone ranger shooting off his mouth like Billy the Kid. And at a later date, sir, we were still in troubled waters, not knowing if we are going to get these bursaries or not. I don't even believe that there's one student today that is conscious or feels that kind of positivity, that she is likely or he is likely to be a recipient of those bursaries. Nobody is aware. The university don't know. And I came here last week and I spoke about the students that dropped out of the university. I didn't say that deliberately. I believe probably the minister would like to do something about it. But other people believe that should not be allowed. 1 800 students left the university. The majority of the students were winning in an area of life where we had major discrimination over the years. And the female stock of this country were able over the last few years as a consequence of this social opportunity to excel even beyond the males. They were performing better, they were quantitatively doing better. The majority of people today that are victims of this new progressive programme that is supposed to be an act of reform and decolonisation are the women in this society.

Now this is supposed to be a progressive programme. But in the days of Grantley Adams, he felt that women were equivalent to men and he gave them the right to vote. So that is not decolonisation, that is not reform. Forcing women out of the educational system at the highest level is supposed to be reform as a consequence of that kind of inverted way of thinking. So we have some serious problems to deal with. And when you talk these things, it sounds to me as though you're slapping down the very political pillars that the institutions stand on, the progressive pillars that all of our both political parties stand on. Now what has motivated that would be a concern. And I would like those who speak on this issue to be honest and say that these are the factors that are responsible for us being in this state - it is not a change of philosophical principles. It is because we are encountering these difficulties. But don't seek to rationalise something that cannot be rationalised because we don't like what we are saying.

We don't want to know that every time we get a report from the prison, we hear about a thousand or over a thousand black children, boys and girls, are incarcerated in a prison in Barbados. And nobody else don't get locked up

for the most serious crimes in this society, including murder of their own kind. And that's what I'm talking about. Nobody don't find themselves from this race standing before a court with a bogus charge that the penalty was not even imprisonment. That people in this country walk about with a sense of pride and also a sense of laughter at these men, these big-headed men in Parliament who are powerless in the system itself. And these men can walk free and enjoy the VIP lounge at an airport, travel freely to Miami for medical assistance. And that's what I'm talking about. I want the agenda to address these issues in this society because it is not going down lightly. And the best person who should really think about this is the Attorney General. He is going to be seeing more and more problems. You have an opportunity to interact with ordinary people on the street. I don't believe that what I said when I started - that I spoke to an ordinary woman on the street - is a common conversation on the street dealing with important political and social issues in this society.

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

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. But sir, at the centre of all this, I am of the opinion that this programme is returning us to the nigger yard. To the nigger yard. It can be the same thing all the time when every month some area of crime is occurring. Unless you want me to raise the issues of crime now, it could not happen last year because you have to deal with the material facts of location, person and time. And if you want me to talk about them, I will tell you about them. And let me talk about all those things. Even certain forms of perverse behaviour in St. Michael East itself - who are the influences of the perverse behaviour in the community itself. Not those who live in, but those who come in. You have to ask if you visit from time to time. And sometimes come in important people. Significant persons in this society itself. So we can deal with that. But that is a special debate as a social concern too. And it also ought to be taken into consideration by you. Because you deal with matters of crime and matters of immorality. And you should be central to this debate. This is serious business.

You send home thousands of workers in Barbados. You come in here to clone every day, waste people's time. And when I wake up all mornings, I have people that don't have food coming to my house, asking for assistance, asking for a job, can't get any. Don't have proper training programmes. And when they go on the training programme, they can't get a job still in Barbados. So you go, you learn to drive a bobcat. And then when you come out from the course, no work. Those are the issues that I need you to address. Those are the issues. It is evident, and I want you to know it is evident. A lot of people have now sent me here three times. Three times. I don't want any validation from you. The people gave me validation.

Mr. Speaker, I am not here to take people back to the yard. I am not here to do that. I am not going to say what I believe people want me to say, sir. I am not going to get here and give people all types of commitments and promises that I know I cannot honour. I am not going to tell them about Pickering. I am not going to tell them about Four Seasons. I am not going to promise anybody that I'm going to pay them the outstanding debt. And then put chains on doors of government buildings in Warrens. I don't give those kind of commitments to anybody. These are serious problems. And I want to hear members in here apply themselves to important debates so I can listen to something that can edify me and the general public of Barbados. I give hope to the society itself. I am serious about that.

I want to close this by reading the distinguished Martin Carter poem again. This is a Bible. And for you who don't quite understand, this is not the same poem. I know the other poems. This is an important anthem.

I came from the nigger yard of yesterday, leaping from their precious hate and scorn of myself. From the agony of the dark hut in the shadow and the hurt of things. From the long days of cruelty and the long nights of pain. Down to the white streets of tomorrow, of the next day leaping. I come. Who cannot see will hear.

Simple. You can't talk about syntax, morphology, nothing. Thank you very much.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your time has expired.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I get mixed up with genders occasionally.

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

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Yes, sir. Good. Sir, you're being very courteous to me.

Pardon me, I have been so far. You have extended my - 2 minutes to wind up, 2 minutes.

I want to thank you very much for being very, very generous in the circumstances. But allow me - I know you always keep me in line on what I ought to say and not to say. And I thank you very much for your guidance. And I have a great appreciation, sir, that you understand the importance of this commentary that run through the presentation itself. This is not

mamba jamba. I had a common thread running through this discussion in relation to who has decolonized

and who is attempting to recolonize in the system. I want to thank you very much.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. The Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Thank you for recognizing me. And I begin by saying that it is perhaps a happy coincidence that I am speaking after the Member for St. Michael East. The Member for St. Michael East was a member of my Cabinet in whom I was well pleased both as an adviser on poverty eradication and as a Minister of Social Transformation. And my perspective of him has not diminished. I was brought up by my mother to show respect for my elders. And the Member for St. Michael East will always understand that I will show respect for my elders. So I am happy to speak after him.

Mr. Speaker, as I make this very brief contribution to this debate, I am conscious of the fact that in 2007 I was the Minister of Finance who presided over what I thought was going to be a fundamental reform in the manner in which budgeting in Barbados is approached. The legislation that introduced the accrual system of budgeting also, for the first time in any legislation in Barbados, indicated that there will be an annual budget and that the annual budget will be these Estimates of Expenditure. In the past you might have had the Estimates called by something else. But we are here as the only 30 citizens of Barbados to preside over the preparation and the approval of the budget of the Government of Barbados. And I had hoped in 2007 that this anomaly that Barbados has perpetuated over 40, 50 years would have ended and that we would have one budget presentation. Barbados is the only country in the world that has a budget, namely Estimates, and then something that is called the budget. And it is important, Mr. Speaker, that we change it and reform it. Because a lot of the problems that the Barbados economy is facing is precisely because we have the Estimates of Expenditure which is the budget and then some call something the budgetary proposals. I speak to you with the experience of 14 years as a Minister of Finance that there is an incredible pressure on every Minister of Finance when the so-called budgetary proposals come every year to bring a bag of goodies, whether the circumstances facing Barbados warrant a bag of goodies or not. And that the sooner we stop that process and let the budget be based upon what is affordable, what is sensible, rather than what is popular - the sooner we get to that, Mr. Speaker, the better for Barbados. And I am disappointed that the Government is still not acting upon what is in the 2007 change to the Financial Administration Act. Let us have one budget debate now, sir, because this is a budget debate.

I want to approach this from the point of view of what it says about budgeting. And in my half an hour I will

try to structure my presentation to deal with a few issues. What is the economic perspective behind this budget? And what are the core issues that we should be discussing as the 30 citizens of Barbados who are here to do what no other citizen can do - set a budget for the Government of Barbados.

And I deal first with the economic perspective that lies behind this exercise in which we are engaged. In fairness to the Minister of Finance, he was very careful to say that the situation facing the Barbados economy today is not that there has been a turnaround. There is no turnaround. And it was unfortunate that the Member for St. James North spoke and sought to criticize the budget by standards that he did not set for himself. He simply said that the decline has stopped and that the economy is beginning to stabilize. That is what he said. And that there is a 0.3 per cent growth and that he might expect that there might be another 0.3 per cent growth next year.

I am disappointed, Mr. Speaker, that presented with such an economic perspective, the Barbados Labour Party in this debate has not sought to enlighten the society by drawing from its own legacy. Because the point is, what are the implications of an economy like Barbados growing at a rate of 0.3 per cent? And if you were to draw, sir, from the legacy of the Barbados Labour Party, you have to say two things: that the Government of Barbados is presiding over an economy where its major official policy is to preside over a decline in the standard of living of the people of Barbados, because that is the implication of growing at 0.3 per cent.

And why now, sir? We, as the Government in the Labour Party, set goals for the society. And the goals were expressed in many forms, but one - the key one - was the growth rate. With a population growing about 1 per cent, you have to get this economy to grow at an annual average rate of 3 per cent if you are going to simultaneously reduce poverty, reduce unemployment and widen the scope of economic opportunity in this country. Growth matters. It is the expansion of material production that will enable you to reduce poverty, to reduce unemployment. So that if your population is growing about 1 per cent and your economy is going to grow about 0.3 per cent, then effectively your per capita income will be falling and the standard of living of your people will be falling as well. The economic performance of this country, sir, is one in which, quite frankly, there is a declining standard of living. At 0.3 per cent, growth is synonymous with a decline in the standard of living. It is not a desirable situation. And the fact is Barbados needs to get back to a situation where, if we are going to be serious about reducing poverty, reducing unemployment, widening opportunity, these anaemic growth rates - commendable because the decline has stopped - we need to get back beyond that. And we can

only get back to that if there are major initiatives that will enable us to do so.

Now, I want to say, sir, in dealing with the core issues, that the major initiatives that must be taken for us to get back to a growth rate that will simultaneously allow us to have reduction in poverty, external balance, strong balance of payments, reduction in unemployment and a sound fiscal position, is to deal with the core issue that these Estimates contain. And so what are the core issues that these Estimates - this large document - can reduce to two or three statistics?

Why do I say that? That Barbados has a debt problem which is proving to be not answerable to the initiatives of the Government in terms of ordinary fiscal policy. And that an extraordinary effort has to be taken to restructure our debt if a precondition for growth is to be established in Barbados. That is the core issue. And why do I say that, sir? Economists do something called a marginal analysis. What is the change and what explains the change? That is what economists think. What is the major change in these Estimates? Sir, the major change in these Estimates is that our deficit is going to grow by \$250 million. The deficit for the next financial year is to grow by \$250 million. But the debt payment is to grow by \$240 million. So that the change in debt payments is bigger than the change in the deficit itself. The change in the debt, sir, is in fact almost equivalent to the change in government expenditure. So that the Government has a problem - the country has a problem - with the extent of the debt. And the fact is that we will go into the next financial year with a deficit that is growing at \$250 million, but the debt payments in Barbados will grow by \$240 million. So that despite everything that has been done, we now face a situation where trying to consolidate the Government's financial situation - leaving all the other measures which may be having an effect - you have a debt problem that is insurmountable.

Barbados, Mr. Speaker, has to address the issue. And as was said in making a contribution to the debate, the important index in this is not the debt-to-GDP ratio. There are countries like Japan and Italy that have a debt-to-GDP ratio that exceeds Barbados's by 200 per cent. The key issue is the debt-to-revenue ratio. Barbados has now reached the stage where out of every dollar of revenue that the Government of Barbados earns, 66 per cent has to go to pay for debt. And once this continues, all of the problems that we hear about - the absence of toilet paper at the hospital and these things - they will persist. Because if in ordinary circumstances 66 per cent of our monthly income has to go to pay debt, nothing is left in order for us to do the things that are necessary for human survival.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I stress to you that dealing with the debt is the basic precondition for re-establishing

conditions for growth. A Government that has 66 per cent of its revenue pre-empted to pay debt has nothing left to do anything creative in the economy. And the facts are that there are others. And I have worked with some documents that I hope other Members of the House who are interested in national issues will read. Jamaica faced the same situation. And there is a paper called Jamaica Debt Exchange. Jamaica had to do the same thing that we must now do. Let me tell you what we have to do, sir. You have a situation where the debt is largely local. What Jamaica did was they asked the bondholders to turn in the existing bonds. They issued them with bonds of longer maturities but with short-term interest rates that allow the Government not to have to use 66 per cent of its ordinary revenues to pay debt. They call that a debt exchange. Barbados desperately needs a debt exchange. So that you are telling the existing bondholders and people: we honour the obligations that are debt instruments, but we are asking you to let us restructure the repayments so that we can have an ease in the short term where there is a need for creative things to be done. The UN has published a report on Jamaica's debt exchange. The South Centre, Mr. Speaker, has done a series of papers on debt restructuring mechanisms in developing countries. And the Caribbean Development Bank economist Mr. Jurant in 2011 did a paper on recent restructuring of sovereign commercial debt in the Caribbean. This has not become standard, Mr. Speaker, but unless this is dealt with, we are wasting time. Once this Government continues in a situation where 66 per cent of all of its revenue has to go to pay debt, we are not going to get out of what is in fact now a debt trap. And if it is not dealt with, then you are going to find that the Government is going to have to continue to seek to manipulate its discretionary expenditures, which is going to drive our standard of living further and further into the ground.

So the core issue - because these Estimates can be summarised to the core issue in two statistics - is that the deficit is going to be still large, but the debt service is growing faster than the deficit, and that is the devil and you have to curb it. The Minister has not yet set out a position on debt refinancing. But we need the Government to deal with it. And I have already urged that this has become respectable because it was a UN General Assembly that addressed the matter of how you deal now with debt restructuring as a problem faced by countries such as Barbados.

The other core issue that these Estimates raise - that I have not yet heard dealt with in this debate - is whether these Estimates can be financed. Can the budget be financed? And you cannot get away from that. Now I ask the question, sir, because the Government has a financing gap of \$1.7 billion. So after seven years of adjustment in taxes and revenues, we as a set of parliamentarians are being asked to give approval to a budget for the country

where the Government is saying that next year, beginning in April, the Government of Barbados is going to have to borrow \$1.7 billion to pay its way, of which \$1.2 billion has to be borrowed locally. Now, sir, I believe that is not realistic. It is not realistic. The market is already telling the Government that we do not have \$1.27 billion to lend you. So that this is the same as trying to get a size 12 foot into a size 2 shoe - it cannot be done. And that is why it is so important that the Minister comes with a debt refinancing proposal.

But also the Minister has to come - and the House has to hear this because we keep saying it - Barbados has two problems. The debt is too large as a proportion of revenue. But the country and the Government is asset-rich but cash-strapped. And in order for us to avoid this financial debacle, the Government has to sell assets - and has to sell the assets not to spend the proceeds on wages, but to put the proceeds from privatisation into a fund that will stop us from having a situation in this country where 66 per cent of the Government's revenues has to go to pay its expenses. Put any proceeds from privatisation into a segregated fund to help pare down the debt. Because the debt is the problem and the financing of the debt is a problem as well. All of us in this House, Mr. Speaker, if we had a situation where we were cash-strapped but asset-rich, we would go and sell assets in order to be able to deal with our affairs. That is the same situation now facing the country. But I tell the Minister: if you are trying to have a \$4 billion budget in which there are \$2.4 billion in tax revenues and you have to borrow \$1.7 billion, we are going to have this recurring situation where what the Government is hoping to achieve cannot be achieved because you do not have the wherewithal with which to achieve it. So I read the financing document clearly, sir. I do not believe that the Government is going to be able to raise - and I am not seeking to spread fears - but the Government is going to have a difficulty raising \$1.3 billion in financing from the local system without continuing to degrade the portfolio of the National Insurance or without putting the Central Bank in a position where it is going to have to finance a significant part of this deficit. There is no point in a Parliament agreeing to a budget which cannot be financed.

Now, the other matter, sir, that I think is necessary is that the Minister - and the entire Parliament has to agree - that in addition to these little exercises I call fiscal consolidation, there has to be a number of other things done in order for us to simultaneously have a strong fiscal position, growth, balance of payments, and reduction in poverty. You have to conceive how you do all those things together. That is what a Minister of Finance does. And it is not without context that he has asked for a perspective on the IMF paper on tax reform. And I have one.

The Labour Party in the last election, sir, was putting to the country - and the country needs to hear from the

party all the time - that Barbados must supplement whatever it is doing in its economic management with tax reform. But the tax reform, in my view, cannot be driven by what the IMF reports to the Government should be tax reform. Because their perspective, based upon the terms of reference that they seem to have been given, is that you reform the tax system just for the purposes of increasing the Government's revenues. Now, in my view, that is going to be self-defeating because if the Government only reforms the tax system to take more revenue out of the economy, it will simply be increasing taxation in a shrinking economy. And a tax reform programme intended only to increase government revenue is going to make a smaller economy smaller and smaller. So that there has to be something else to tax reform that would enable us to simultaneously address the various things together. And I am saying to the Government that the IMF report has not addressed it.

In my judgement, sir, at this juncture in Barbados's development, what the Government has to do is to make sure that as the Government continues to have to hold a line on its expenditure - and let me just say this for the Democratic Party's benefit - I do not believe that the Democratic Party is cutting things like education just because they are wicked or because they are anti-developmental. I do not feel so. They honestly do not feel so. The Democratic Party would not wish to be in a position where it has to charge universal fees. And they are not doing it because they are anti-developmental. They are doing it precisely because they do not have the money to sustain it anymore. Because they are now ideologically like Margaret Thatcher - the realm of snatchers? They are not. They are doing it precisely because they do not have the money to sustain it anymore. And, sir, Caribbean countries find themselves in this position because after 40 years of independence, in most instances, most Caribbean countries are now finding the obligations of nationhood too expensive to carry. I often tell people: if you were to ask me how would you run a state with 60 000 people with all the obligations that go with nationhood - foreign service, defence force and so on - how do you do it? It is almost impossible to conceive of it. Especially if you think that the state has to continue to do the kind of things that the state did to get the process of developmentally oriented independence off the ground.

It was quite proper that in the initial stages of our development the state should create opportunities through state actions for people to be able to do things only because of state actions. But as the societies mature and you have a larger and larger middle class, as the state retreats because of financial pressures, you have to create the opportunities within which the private sector and households - and households especially - can advance. And let me say this: the solutions to Barbados's problems will not just be what the Government does, but the combination of what the

Government does, what the households do, and what the private sector sets out to do in the face of the situation facing them. The Government is going to do fiscal consolidation. In many instances the private sector has already started the process of restructuring their balance sheets to protect their shareholder values. And they will do that. And households like myself will make adjustments to their own expenditures in the face of changed circumstances. The Government has to provide the empowerment through tax reform such that as the Government retreats, the private sector and the households can advance. And, sir, that is what any process of tax reform in Barbados must involve.

Now, I read the IMF report and there are a number of tax incentives that I put on the books as a Minister of Finance that they would advise the Government to remove. The time when I needed to put them there was in 1995 when I needed to stimulate certain things - mutual funds and whatever else. But you do not have necessarily to give a Barbadian citizen a mutual fund incentive for them to buy mutual funds. That phase has passed. When Barbadians need to be incentivised by tax incentives to own shares - I do not believe, sir, that people who are putting up photovoltaic panels need to be given incentives to put them up. The return to them should come from the reduction in their electricity bill and the profits that they get from selling electricity to the light and power company. So that we have to take a different view of the incentives that we are giving. And what I am saying - and in the last campaign this was the message of the Barbados Labour Party - is that we can systematically remove those incentives that have already shown their worth and are not needed anymore. Remove some of them - remove some that I, as a Minister of Finance, brought because of the prevailing circumstances in 1995, which are different from the circumstances now. But you have to replace them with incentives to let especially the households - and I stress the point - take more responsibility for their own welfare.

So what is the point in this, sir? That whatever is done with tax reform, the people at the lowest levels have to continue to be able to have access to government services. And the Labour Party expressed that as a fundamental position in its manifesto and on platforms. No matter what you do in health or education, poor people must continue to have access to these services free. But for those above the threshold at which you pay income tax, as the Government withdraws some concessions that are now past their expiry date, introduce others to allow people to do for themselves that which the Government has been doing for them.

So, for example, Mr. Speaker, people above the \$25 000 threshold should be allowed now to have what I call a health allowance. If the Government is going to cut health expenditure, let people be able to have an allowance for

health - buy health insurance or whatever else - so that you can have a private healthcare sector expanding in Barbados. Because it is already happening. When I had my little issue, sir, I went to a private entity and paid. Now, it would have been more helpful to me, sir, if there was a little incentive that would have allowed me to offset the heavy cost of private hospitalisation in Barbados. But healthcare in Barbados can be made an affordable centre for growth if we have a properly structured healthcare allowance to allow people above the threshold at which income tax is paid to purchase health insurance. So they do not have to go to the hospital alone but can purchase it, sir.

I am also saying the same thing - and it offends people - in relation to education. Barbados is not only about UWI. When are we going to stop that debate? Barbados must enter a realm where we have a global view of education. There are many Barbadians here who will not necessarily want to send their children to the University of the West Indies. In my own case, my elder daughter represents Barbados at table tennis and she wanted to both do a professional qualification in accounting as well as to go to the best university where she could develop as a table tennis player. That was not at Cave Hill Campus - it was in Texas. And there was no provision for her to go at the state's expense. There are going to be many Barbadians who will want to pursue courses that are fundamental to the development of this country but cannot be found at the University of the West Indies. And all I am saying, sir - and I join the debate with my friend again - is that we anticipated this when we were in the Labour Party: to recognise that tertiary education in today's global world must involve Barbados being able to educate its people wherever that education is relevant to the purposes of Barbados's development.

And what we want to maintain - the University of the West Indies at Cave Hill as the flagship - we put in place a Registered Education Saving Plan that allows persons who have to pay income tax to begin to pay for their children's tertiary education, whether at UWI or wherever.

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

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I oblige you. And all I am saying, sir, is that the existing Registered Education Saving Plan that was put in place by the Barbados Labour Party allows persons who are saving for their children's tertiary education only relief from the withholding tax on interest. I am saying that we have to first of all publicise it, but make

it more popular by allowing people to be able to have a larger amount that they're saving free of the tax. So that I'm suggesting to the government that any tax reform

to be brought to this House in a budget can't follow. And I'm not saying anything. I'll be giving a lecture in Grenada on 26 March about whether IMF policies can work in the Caribbean. It can't be. You can't have tax reform and Barbados at this juncture only with a view to increasing the government's revenues. But any tax reform must enable the government and the country to simultaneously address tax reform in the context of stimulation of growth that is private sector driven. In the context of enabling us to continue to have a society where our competitiveness and our human development is based upon sustained investment in education and health. Except that in this instance, the sustained development investment in education and health will come not just so much from the state, but that we can now conceive of a country where we have, after 50 years of relatively successful development, believe that our duties as members of Parliament are to empower our citizens, most of whom are now in the middle class, to be able to take more responsibility for their welfare. And the fundamental strategy of Barbados going forward is that all of us citizens together have to understand that a part of the adjustment is not just fiscal consolidation, but even adjustment at the primary level. And that the responsibility of a single sensitive state must be to find new ways of doing new things. But more especially so in the context of an economic challenge that is so grave, to find a way of empowering our citizens to take more responsibility for their welfare. I'm obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: That's the member for St. James Central.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I am obliged to you. And I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you allow me to make a few observations during the course of this presentation. I start, Mr. Speaker, by making the point that the estimates of expenditure, revenue and expenditure is no ordinary debate. Government's Appropriation Bill, Mr. Speaker, sir, is effectively the government's budget. It is preeminent, sir, in the calendar of those things which we might call parliamentary debates or parliamentary events. Its preeminence, sir, is seen in the fact, first of all, that it is the only debate that has to be conducted on an annual basis. And secondly, it is entrenched in the Constitution of Barbados Act, Chapter 9 thereof.

The matter that has unfolded before this House today thus far - well, thus far, this debate, sir, of government laying its Appropriation Bill and, as it must do, introducing it by a lead speaker, but then opting out of participation in the second reading speeches thus far, except for the Member for St. Lucy, Mr. Speaker - in my judgment, is one that is a deeply unfortunate development. I feel, Mr. Speaker, that given the current situation which is facing this country, in which Barbados is experiencing an unprecedented level of financial pain, in which our people, Mr. Speaker, sir, have recently been placed or plunged into

unemployment in thousands of numbers, that it hints, sir, at a level of disrespect towards the electorate of this country. But more importantly, sir, it reeks of an arrogance in the management of this country's fiscal affairs.

That there is a deep and tangible pain, Mr. Speaker, cannot be doubted. And that the country or the people in the country are experiencing substantial human suffering - a human tragedy is unfolding, sir - is also a reality that cannot be disputed. I would want to say, however, sir, that it ought not to be construed that the Labour Party or any member of the Labour Party is suggesting that all is lost in Barbados. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our concern, Mr. Speaker, is that there is the appearance of a failure to adequately manage the financial affairs of Barbados and to discharge the burden of governmental responsibility in a sensitive manner so as to minimise the hardship that is impacting the people of this island. And, Mr. Speaker, sir, we feel that there's a need to capitalise on the prospects of hope and to institute such policy as can be instituted in order to advance entry through that window of hope.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we heard the presentation of the lead - almost, I say lead, almost the sole speaker on the government side, day before yesterday - we were treated to what can only be described as an orgy of self-indulgence. The complacency that was manifested, sir, turns around a growth figure of 0.3 per cent. And I want, Mr. Speaker, during the course of this debate, to bring a measure of realism to what we are confronted with. The growth figure, as stated, falls within what is known as a statistical margin of error. So the first issue, Mr. Speaker, sir, is that it is so slender and almost so insignificant in nature that it may not exist at all. But more important than that, Mr. Speaker, sir, is the fact that Barbados' performance - Barbados' economic performance - cannot be, and has never before been, and I would want to respectfully suggest, sir, can never be contextualised or assessed within a vacuum.

Barbados, sir, falls within a region and within a hemisphere. And the reality of what has transpired within this region, and indeed by extension in this hemisphere, over the course of the last five years or more, suggests to us, sir, that many, if not all of the countries of the hemisphere, and indeed the region, have been similarly impacted and afflicted by economic circumstances that came to arrive on their doorsteps. I have said in this House before that the issue facing this government is really the way in which this government has failed to manage those financial circumstances that were once capable of being described as international in nature when they arrived on the doorsteps of Barbados.

Now, Caribbean and Latin America, sir, is made up of 33 countries, if you include Cuba. And of those 33

countries, sir, if you do an assessment of how they performed in the fiscal year 2013-14 and 2014-15, you will realise, Mr. Speaker, sir, that 0.3 of a percentage is among the worst performances to be found in either the Caribbean or in Latin America. So that, well, one is obviously glad to hear that there has been a hint of stability being brought to Barbados' financial affairs. The reality is, sir, that when you compare it to our neighbours right next door in CARICOM, when you compare it to our neighbours in Central America and wider Latin America, Mr. Speaker, one is hard pressed to find any performance that falls below a 0.3 per cent of growth.

Now, once you assess that performance against that backdrop, you are also then required to have a look at what were the markers that were put down by this government when the difficulties first began to be manifested in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, sir, this government has to be assessed against the fact that at the core of Barbados' fiscal policy for the last five years has been a revision of the medium-term fiscal strategy, and it is entitled 2010-2014. But when once you read it, it projects its relevance into 2016. And between pages 16 and 18 of the revised fiscal strategy, sir, there are two alternatives for our performance which have been outlined. The technical experts in the Ministry of Finance at page 16 give what is described as a best case scenario. Well, obviously that didn't come to pass, so that now becomes automatically irrelevant. And then they give what is described as a worst case scenario. And the worst case scenario, Mr. Speaker, sir, was premised on a presumption that did not in fact come to pass. The presumption on the worst case scenario for Barbados' economic performance, sir, was that we would continue to be part of a prolonged deterioration in the global economy and it would therefore consequentially impact on our domestic performance.

The reality is that by 2013, India was seeing a 5 per cent level of growth. By 2013, the United States of America had rebounded and was seeing a 2.5 per cent level of growth. By 2013, Great Britain, again one of our major trading partners, and also Canada, were both seeing a 2 per cent level of growth. And so therefore, sir, the worst case scenario, or the circumstances upon which the worst case scenario were premised, did not arise. But that notwithstanding, at page 17 of this revised fiscal strategy, sir, we see that the worst case scenario contemplated for 2013 was a 5 per cent deficit. In fact, sir, it reached as high as 12 per cent. So clearly we performed well outside the bounds of what was contemplated back in 2010 as being the worst possible performance for Barbados. And then in the last financial year, Mr. Speaker, sir, it was projected to be in the vicinity of 5 per cent - and we are, sorry, at 4 per cent - and we are now at 8 per cent. So that what really and truly has been trumpeted by the Minister as being grounds for feeling some degree of satisfaction in terms of

Barbados' out-turn performance is really, sir, an artificial premise.

Effectively, what the Minister of Finance is saying to us is that you can feel good about my performance and herald me as having done something significant because this year I am only 2 per cent as bad as the worst case scenario, whereas last year I was 2.5 per cent as bad as the worst case scenario. And, sir, that is a level of complacency which I honestly believe the country can little afford at this stage. Throughout the annals of human history, sir, the afterbirth of complacency - the placenta, if you will - has been indifference. Wheresoever you have studied human civilisation, sir, that has been the afterbirth of complacency. And there is now, sir, a cold and callous indifference which is taking root in this government.

That is also cause for another observation that I want to make with respect to these estimates. Because the Minister, Mr. Speaker, sir, on an annual basis has brought estimates of revenue and expenditure to this House, as indeed he did this year. And he has failed and or neglected to bring substantial amounts of government's liabilities to account. This is not the first time that we've seen that manifested in these estimates. We have complained from this side of the House that it was becoming a pattern. It is now, sir, in the fifth year of the tenure of this Minister of Finance, an alarming pattern.

Now it's a very serious matter, Mr. Speaker, sir, because this year alone, at page 44 of the Auditor General's report - and that, sir, was laid in this House; it is a document of the House - and I quote, sir, from page 44 at paragraph 2.84 under the rubric Accounts Payable. The Auditor General says as follows, and I quote: there were a number of outstanding amounts due by government to institutions which were omitted from the financial statements. And these include: (a) \$45 million due to the National Insurance Department for national insurance contributions and rental of properties; (b) \$131 million due to the University of the West Indies; (c) \$35 million due to Sustainable Barbados Recycling Centre; (d) \$2 million owed by the Ministry of Public Transport and Works to various suppliers and contractors. These amounts have been excluded from financial statements and indicate that government's liabilities are substantially being understated. End of quote.

No, sir. The Parliament of Barbados cannot be a theatre for a game of appearance versus reality. It can't be a theatre, sir, where we get into what is the appearance as opposed to what is the reality. Parliament cannot, sir, condone that approach. And we know that while the Auditor General of Barbados was speaking about what transpired in 2014, we also know, Mr. Speaker, sir, that currently there is an amount of \$180 million due and owable to the National Insurance of Barbados. We know

that there's another \$40 million due to what used to be known as the Barbados Tourism Authority. We have heard yesterday, sir, of a private sector entity that is owed another \$40 million, sir. And the question therefore is: what is the real figure? And the Minister seeks to take refuge in accrual accounting. But the issue that is being raised by the Auditor General, sir, is that these are figures that are not being brought to book. And Mr. Speaker, sir, we are, without having to try too hard to come to the totality of the figures, already looking at numbers that are in excess of \$470 million.

And in the third quarter report last year, the Central Bank Governor - Mr. Speaker, sir - in the third quarter report last year, the recently reappointed Governor of the Central Bank indicated that to achieve current account targets it was necessary, sir, that there be a \$210 million reduction in expenses. And that in addition to that, sir, there would have to be further revenue-raising measures implemented in Barbados in the first quarter of 2015-16.

The reality therefore that is confronting us, Mr. Speaker, is that revenue growth is less than debt service commitments. We just heard the Honourable Member for St. Peter place the debt service commitments at about \$240 million. And revenue growth is less than our expenditure commitment, sir, for 2015. And the question therefore that has to be asked is: where is the turnaround in the Barbados economy to come from in those circumstances? Because against all of the projections and against all of the available figures, the math has not added up. And that brings me, sir, to what is the real reason why this government all of a sudden is so anxious to escape from having second reading speeches in this debate. Because Mr. Speaker, sir, there is a lot to hide. There is a lot that has to be made contact with about which the government is not anxious to have contact made.

Government has for a very long time had severe challenges, Mr. Speaker, in satisfying both the International Monetary Fund and international rating agencies about how fast, first of all, and how far this government could go with respect to fixing the CLICO issue. The international rating agencies have been for a long time deeply concerned about the debt commitments of this government. The IMF, equally, when it has come through this island doing its annual inspections, have expressed their own concerns about this situation. And the government, sir, has burdened itself by a commitment - not by one Minister of Finance, but by two Ministers of Finance and via two Prime Ministers as well - that it will honour obligations, sir, to fixing the CLICO issue and resolving the difficulties faced by policyholders. The reason, Mr. Speaker, sir, for our government's inaction on this matter is largely the strictures which have been placed on the government by these international agencies. And it is a matter, sir, which is haunting us.

Because even as we speak about the question of debt service and, sir, even as we have heard the Leader of the Opposition and now, sir, the Member for St. Peter speak with respect, sir, to the need for debt refinancing - even as we knew last year, sir, when the Member for St. Philip West brought rights with the government and wrote a lengthy treatise which found its way into the public domain, and the core of much about which he wrote, sir, was the need for us to find a satisfactory debt refinancing solution to our debt service obligations - Mr. Speaker, sir, the estimates, the speeches of the Minister all continue to fall short with respect to what is going to be the solution with respect to CLICO. It cannot be wished away. It is a major reality which will impact in a major way on the debt service and obligations of the country. It cannot be rushed into non-existence. And a solution, Mr. Speaker, sir, has to be found that lies within the bounds of financial and fiscal prudence.

Now, I genuinely feel, sir, that candour is where the government needs to be at this point. It needs to be candid with the country. I sense that it is obvious that hands are tied. But the Minister, sir, needs to be able to take the country into his confidence as to the extent to which he has any elbow room or any fiscal space at all. The smoke and mirrors, though, is where the problem continues to exacerbate the state of affairs - the appearance versus reality. This cannot be, at a time of national crisis, a set of circumstances in which we play games.

Mr. Speaker, sir, if there is no fiscal space, then we have to focus on things that empower and drive Barbados' competitiveness profile. I want to suggest to the government that perhaps that is where a lot of emphasis should now be placed. The Minister cannot tax his way out of the problem. The Minister clearly is not going to grow his way out of the problem in the short term. So therefore, sir, we are in a situation where we need to look at those things that drive us forward, that have historically empowered or enabled us, and lift the competitiveness profile of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I ask myself in these estimates, when I look at the estimates booklet, what is there new in there? What strategic objective has been pointed to by this government that will move Barbados up the value-added chain in any one of the sectors in international business? What is there that we can point to and say, look, this is where government is seeing an opportunity to move Barbados up the value chain? And Mr. Speaker, sir, in tourism, what is there? And you can go through each one of the productive sectors, sir, and the answer remains the same. We are caught in a situation where, according to the leading opposition yesterday, you're spinning top in mud. You're doing the same thing in the same way every time, every year, and expecting a different result. In other parts

of the world, Mr. Speaker, sir, that is described as something closely akin to a medical disorder.

Competitiveness - I shadow the Ministry of Commerce. I see automatic low-lying fruit that government should be anxious to seize. The Ministry of Commerce, sir, also encapsulates international business. From the international business sector's perspective, sir, Barbados has one difficulty that has to be confronted: when the west coast of the United States, sir, is at work, Barbados is closed to business. When the Hong Kong market is open and thriving and doing business, Barbados is closed to business. When, Mr. Speaker, sir, parts of Europe are open and doing business, Barbados is closed to business. It stands to reason, therefore, that there is much merit in the discussions which we have heard people from the sector talk about in having a 24-hour platform for the Barbados economy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, so even if you felt that you don't just wish to patronise or pay attention to the international business sector, there are certain benefits of enhancing the productivity, the productive capacity of commerce in Barbados. We know, sir, that government is a regulatory environment without which we cannot do. We know, Mr. Speaker, sir, that it is the experience on a daily basis of anybody who employs people in Barbados that you have an hour-long lunch break being transcended into two hours of lunch, sometimes three hours of lunch. Because people, Mr. Speaker, sir, have to take time out of their busy schedule in the middle of the day in order to attend upon a government department somewhere in order to obtain certificates, licences, registration documents, et cetera. The technology is available, Mr. Speaker, sir. It isn't difficult stuff. In order to implement the change, Mr. Speaker, sir, to carry us closer towards a 24-hour platform which would see government departments not being closed down at 4:30, but sir, perhaps being open until 7:00 so as to create a shift of work that will accommodate the pressures or facilitate the pressures being placed on businesses in Barbados on a day-by-day basis. Those are the things that we need to be looking at if we are going to seriously talk about the competitiveness of the country.

We know it to be also a desirability at the Bridgetown port. We know the financial consequences of paying overtime at the Bridgetown port, Mr. Speaker, sir. And we know that these things can be adjusted. We see them right here in Bridgetown. Bridgetown shuts down at 4:30. The private sector has made it abundantly clear that if we would only come to Parliament and change the Shops Act - which is not something that is heavy lifting; it is a primitive piece of legislation, a tiny little piece of legislation - but if you transformed it and took it away, Mr. Speaker, sir, it would allow a new light of day to come in to Bridgetown, the capital city, and commerce would start

to thrive. And if commerce starts to thrive, people could get employed.

When my friend to my right, Mr. Speaker, sir, talks about people being sent back to what he described as the nigger yard - in reality, Mr. Speaker, he's talking about people who are put into a situation where they have no hope. We are not asking for the government to be the employer. We are saying, sir, that if you give business in Barbados an opportunity to do the things it wants to do - and these are the people who sit at every Chamber of Commerce meeting and say we should change the Shops Act - small things that can enhance the productive capacity of the country, enhance competitiveness, move us to a new platform, Mr. Speaker, sir, of being something closer to a 24-hour level of operation.

Again, Mr. Speaker, sir, I say to you that in the international business sector you can't on a \$5 million budget expand into Africa or expand into Latin America and do the kind of education about the value-based proposition that is Barbados. You're not going to be able to achieve on a \$5 million budget in 2015 those things that you had on a \$16 million budget in 2008 and 2009. That certifies human understanding. We know, Mr. Speaker, sir, that there is a need therefore for there to be not only more funding but greater agility on the part of the government.

Barbados right now is threatened. We are part of what has been described by Canada as a high-risk destination. We know that Royal Bank of Canada and others are closing their wealth management services in the country. And yet still, Mr. Speaker, part of our developmental agenda, part of what we have said in the strategic development documents, is that we want to be the number one wealth management place in this hemisphere. Mr. Speaker, sir, how do you achieve that if you have not recognised the importance of making sure that you re-engineer the education of Canadian bankers, that you go out there and lead delegations to meet with the bankers and the wealth managers in Canada, sir, so as to make sure that they buy in to the high-value proposition that is Barbados? But the absence of the agility on the part of the government - another low

hanging fruit. The absence, Mr. Speaker, sir, of taking these initiatives which can - I mean you're not asking for fiscal measures. What you're really asking for, sir, is for government to embrace the reality that opportunity is being squandered in Barbados. And if there was a theme that can come out of these estimates, it is that better could have been done and better should be being done. It's not just to beat upon the Minister of Finance or about a mission of failure, but to say, sir, that you cannot fall into a smug, self-satisfied complacency about 0.3 per cent of GDP as growth.

And Mr. Speaker, sir, it is in that context that I feel very strongly that the government needs to be speaking more to this country, yes, within this debate as well, so as to give Barbados an understanding of what it is that is government's realistic intention in these very difficult circumstances where mediocrity is seeming to prevail. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: I believe that all across Barbados the listening public will be ruminating and wondering why it is that the members on the DLP benches are not rising to speak stridently in support of the presentation of the Minister of Finance and the things that he has set out yesterday. The explanation offered by the Prime Minister is that they are in a hurry to get to the heads. But I don't think anyone on this side nor any member of the listening public finds that explanation to be convincing in any way. In fact, if there is any inference to be drawn reasonably from it, that inference would have to be that the members on the DLP front bench and back bench find themselves in an awkward position of conscience where they cannot speak in support of their own estimates and of the Minister of Finance.

We had a poem here this morning and it reminds me of another poem, though from a different book. The boy stood on the burning deck. And so - I apologise, Mr. Speaker - the Honourable Minister of Finance is left to defend his macro policies alone, while each of his ministers will go into a silo called a head and try to justify to the people of Barbados the financial arrangements that have been made thereto.

Now, you know, Mr. Speaker, it is really an embarrassing prospect that a government could decide that the excursion into detail is somehow more valuable an exercise than looking at the macro. If this opposition followed that, and the lone independent member of the House followed that, the people of Barbados would have been treated only to the commentary of the Minister of Finance in his speech yesterday. And the many things that he did not say the people would have been ignorant of. I am grateful to have been here listening to the contributions on this side, but also to the contribution of the Member for St. Peter, who took pains to point out glaring deficiencies in the government's budgetary position and financial affairs.

This, for the Minister of Finance, has become his annual sugar-coating exercise. His annual exercise in sophistry. It isn't a carnival because at a carnival there's jubilation, there's celebration, but there are no smiles on his front bench. There are no smiles in the opposition. And I know for a fact that there are no smiles among the broken Barbadians who are suffering day by day. So not a carnival,

but a sugar-coating exercise where the Minister of Finance treats this chamber to his view of things seen through his rose-coloured glasses. And the view that he has tells us that we should somehow feel that the people of Barbados could bear the burden of an additional \$1.7 billion in borrowings. Through his rose-coloured glasses, despite the abysmal ratings that this country has been given, the Minister of Finance wants us to believe that he and his team will go there and find \$1.2 billion in local borrowings and another half billion dollars in foreign borrowings.

Now, these are all fancy terms, but I could hear the voices of country people who don't like to owe nobody by nature, crying out - asking, even the voices of the dead crying out, asking - how will we bear this burden of debt? Can we expect another dolorous blow to be inflicted on the people of Barbados by the Minister of Finance?

Now, the Minister of Finance has said that we have stabilised. A nice positive word - stabilisation. You know, when you get to the bottom of a hole, you've stabilised too. Can't go no further. You are perhaps as stable as you can get. Then you are six foot under, and the undertaker who has put you there pats himself on the back and says, "You had a good turnout." If the imagery is lost on the members of the government benches, let me put it in other terms. No doubt Barbados was buffeted and severely sore by the shock waves caused by the international recession. But from day one - day one - when we were coming close to the end of our last term in government and we started to speak about the international recession and that we needed to make provision for its impact, I remember the former Prime Minister - now late, or as they say, of blessed memory, though perhaps his is not now so blessed - I remember the former Prime Minister saying, "What recession? Get on with the running of the country. What recession?" And now we hear the Prime Minister, not as he wants to do, using his own words, but using the words of Barack Obama and other people, saying that the recession still continues. But that's not the issue.

The issue is that from day one, this administration, instead of right-sizing and bringing stability to the economy, began their administration in 2008 by a mad cash grab. And we started going downhill from there. And so now that perhaps they have caused as much havoc as their strong stomachs could stand, they're now saying, "We've stabilised." That's a wonderful boast for the Democratic Labour Party. Having sent home 3 500 people, they have managed to stabilise an economy that they threw into instability in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, a recent presentation this morning described 0.3 per cent growth as anaemic. Somebody said it probably falls within the range of standard deviation. But whatever terms you use to describe it, 0.3 per cent growth will take Barbados absolutely nowhere. But I'm reminded

of the words to be found in Alice in Wonderland, that if you don't know where you're going, then any road would do.

I stand representing the people of the constituency of St. Joseph who continue to reel under the punches of the Democratic Labour Party administration on a daily basis. Those who have not been sent home by the government have been sent home by the private sector, whose businesses simply could not remain open. Those families that had dreams of a son or daughter for the first time being able to embrace a university education - those dreams have now been shattered beyond repair. We have districts in the Scotland District, in my constituency and in the constituencies of St. Lucy, St. Andrew, St. Thomas, St. John and St. Philip. We have districts that are at risk of being cut off because of geological instability, but have been abandoned by a callous Democratic Labour Party administration which feels that there is absolutely no obligation to look after those folk.

There is nothing in this budget that satisfies anybody in my constituency. And the sad thing is that I don't believe there's anything in this budget that serves to satisfy the needs of anything in the Democratic Labour Party constituencies. So what are we left with, Mr. Speaker? We're left with an annual assessment of numbers of dollars and cents. But tragically, the administration that said that Barbados is not an economy, it's a society - they have clearly forgotten the very mantra that they used to captivate the hearts and minds of people. Because this blue book - last year it was orange, every colour in the rainbow over time - is now nothing more than meaningless numbers. And very soon its only use will be to start a little fire for somebody who ran out of gas because they can't afford to replenish the bottle. These numbers bear absolutely no relationship, Mr. Speaker, to the reality of the existence of the poor classes in Barbados, or the middle classes in Barbados, or even the upper classes in Barbados. So then it is no wonder that the Democratic Labour Party members don't want those second reading speeches. No wonder.

But it is important for us on this side that we look at some of the macro issues. Mr. Speaker, the Minister has spoken and we've had GIS press releases about CLICO - \$30 million, \$30 million to be put into a new company for CLICO. I got a call from one of the policyholders who sits on one of the bodies to ask whether there was any provision in the estimates for CLICO. I told them no, there was no provision in these estimates for CLICO. But they insisted, "No, that can't be, because the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister all fervently promised us that this new company was going to get \$30 million to get it off the ground. And now that the auditors, the judicial manager, have decided that the time would come to liquidate, surely the money would be in this year's estimates, because this thing is imminent. You can't liquidate it - that is, sell off all

the assets to willing buyers - and still want to fund a new company." So surely this \$30 million must be in here. It isn't. It isn't. This represents yet another brazen betrayal of the people by this administration.

But the whole CLICO issue deserves the attention of this chamber. And I don't know that any other time is more appropriate than now. And Mr. Speaker, I don't believe it has been made a document of the House. And therefore I propose to make the forensic audit of CLICO International Life Insurance Limited under judicial management - it is the report as of June 21, 2013 - I want to make this a document of the House, sir, because I intend to refer to it.

Mr. Speaker, one has to wonder - one has to wonder if the Prime Minister would not want to go back on his earlier statement that our vote of no confidence should have been punished with laughter. You know, when we were speaking about these issues then we were ridiculed, laughed at, all kinds of red herrings were dragged across the path. Punished with laughter. But I venture, Mr. Speaker, that none of the Democratic Labour Party members are laughing. No.

I want the Minister of Finance - under whose ministry I believe the Financial Services Commission comes, and he will not deny that the buck stops with him - I want the Minister of Finance to offer to this chamber some plausible explanation as to why the Financial Services Commission approached the High Court of Barbados and sought to have the report that I've just made a document of Parliament sealed.

Now, it is worthwhile to remember what the Financial Services Commission is supposed to do. Mr. Speaker, the Financial Services Commission is the regulator of various bodies that are actually engaged or licensed to do particular activity. So in the case of an insurance company, sir, the Financial Services Commission is the regulator for any insurance company. But it is obvious that you must first be an insurance company. The government has set up this entity called Enlico New Life Insurance Company. I thought to myself, what an absurd name. But they're dreaming. They set up this new company. It is not registered as an insurance company, has not yet been registered as an insurance company, and therefore does not fall under the regulatory authority of the Financial Services Commission. Yet still the Financial Services Commission - an agency in the Minister of Finance's ministry - would petition the courts and argue that they want the report sealed because, even though they were unaware of the contents of the report, they felt that any adverse reports contained therein could compromise the capitalisation of Enlico and hamper its ability to develop its portfolio in the near future. And it made this application to court as the regulator of insurance companies.

Now, the first thing - and I have every reason to believe that the Minister of Finance was aware of this - the first thing, of course, is that the Financial Services Commission had no business in this, had no business in this, because the new company was not an insurance company. But secondly, the reasoning is so split that it wasn't aware of the contents of the report, but that anything in the report could compromise the capitalisation of the new company. That is absurd. But you know, it is more in what was not said than what was said, because this report now hangs around the necks of every single Democratic Labour Party member of Parliament like the proverbial albatross. That's true, because every single one of them without fail sang the praises of the former CEO of CLICO. They sang the praises of the former Prime Minister of Barbados, now of blessed memory. But now that the report has come out and they want to quote from the report, this is what is being presided over and participated in by this administration. And they can't deny participating in it.

They can't deny participating in it because a gentleman named David Thompson, at the time while he was Prime Minister, according to this report, sent an invoice to CLICO for settlement for \$3.33 million. He signed it while he was Prime Minister. An invoice which, according to the report, the auditors have determined was false. The invoice was fraudulent. Now, that's why I say it hangs around their neck like an albatross, because I want every single one of them to get up today and distance themselves from a man who, while he was the Prime Minister of Barbados, was signing an invoice that he knew to be fraudulent. But they don't dare say a word.

But not only is the invoice alleged to be fraudulent, but the report also sought to implicate a gentleman whose name I will not call, but a former member of this chamber and a former Attorney General who is well known to everybody on that side, alleging that \$250 000 of it was for him. And that gentleman had to reply to the judicial managers in a letter denying that he knew anything about it or that any of the money was for him. And this action was taken when the Member for St. John, as he then was, was Prime Minister of Barbados.

Now, the public will speak about this again and again. And I have other issues to move on to. But the stark reality that we face is this: that if the Financial Services Commission, falling under the control and guidance of the Minister of Finance - the minister under the Act, they are to take instructions of a general nature from the minister, that is in the law - well, the regulators in this case were misguided. Because it will go down in the history of this country, and it is the only conclusion to be drawn unless the minister wants to say that the regulator acted independently, it will go down in the history of this country that this administration sought to use the regulatory agency to make sure that these indictments on the Democratic

Labour Party administration never saw the light of day. And so, instead of getting on with managing businesses in Barbados, the Financial Services Commission is walking about trying to keep the doings of a man named David Thompson secret. But it's not secret anymore, sir.

Well, in the time remaining, sir, I have described these estimates as a set of numbers. A set of numbers. Very few of those numbers are finding their way to the east. Very few, sir. I look at the report, I look at the estimates, and I try to suss out what is in there for St. Joseph. There's nothing in there for St. Joseph, sir. What we saw is that the identical provision as was made for last year has been made again this year, but none of last year's money was spent. So it is just rolling over into this year and will probably roll over and roll over, while the people of rural Barbados continue to suffer from the neglect.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a dismal place. And we are in a dismal place because over the last seven years we have seen our dreams shattered. A constituent came to me, which is to be expected. But you know what his complaint was, sir? His complaint was that he no longer had any savings. And you may say, well, what's the point? This is a gentleman in his mid-50s who would have been building his savings for retirement, but the hardships of the last seven years have caused him to dip into his savings week after week, just to stay afloat. And unless things change, he will have no opportunity to build them back up. And he's faced, therefore, with a dismal prospect of reaching his ripe retirement age, but without the benefit of a safety net that through his own hard work and frugal nature, he had been able to maintain.

I speak on his behalf, sir. I speak on behalf of the housekeepers who would have come from St. Joseph and St. George, but who can't find work now because the people who employed them have had to cut back on their own expenditure. I speak for the university students who, about to end their university education, have had to withdraw and now they're looking for jobs in a jobless market. I speak for my constituents who go to the QEH, but know that they have to carry with them in a goody bag alcohol, Alcala plaster, toilet paper and soap.

I began by saying that the Minister boasted of stabilisation, but I remember only too well, Mr. Speaker, when we as a country boasted of prosperity. We cry for a return of those days. But what is certain, sir, is that those days will not come again as long as the Democratic Labour Party retains control of our country's fortunes. I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael North. Thank you.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, this whole scenario with these estimates and the pronouncements of the Minister of Finance year after year, in my view, can best be likened unto the relationship between a doctor treating a dying man, where the doctor continues prescribing more and more medication for this dying patient and the patient continues returning to the doctor, indicating that he is feeling worse and worse. But the doctor keeps on giving him more and more drugs and insisting that he is going to feel better, even up to the point where the patient is about to take his last breath. In other words, Mr. Speaker, there is a total disconnection between

the doctor and reality, as there is a total disconnection between this Minister of Finance and what the people of this country are feeling. The fiscal deficit is rising and the debt is rising even faster than the fiscal deficit. But the Minister insists that his bitter-tasting medicine will in fact be the cure for this ailment. But Mr. Speaker, as he continues along his merry way, people in this country are really suffering. We hear over and over about the condition at the hospital. And despite the several compliments that appear to accrue to those persons at the hospital in the dispensation of medical care, the truth is that they cannot continue to give what they do not have - if there are no supplies, if there are no medications and other necessary things to be used on patients. The fact is that it is going to continue to be a horror story, even just thinking about having one day to go

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute, please. Sorry to interrupt you.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: People in this country now have no money. There used to be a time when somebody would say to you, "I have no money," and it would mean that perhaps they were tired having to go to the savings account to keep on making withdrawals. Now, when people tell you that they have no money in Barbados, they mean literally that they do not have one single cent. And you can go anywhere now in this country and you are being approached constantly by people who are asking you for some sort of financial assistance. It has gone to the point where, coming over to the supermarket some weeks ago, a chap approached me about money. And when I told him that I had none - which was true - and I sought to open my car door, he pushed it back to prevent me from going into my own car until I gave him money. Luckily, some passersby came along and the scene did not escalate. I thank God, Mr. Speaker, Madam Deputy, that it did not escalate.

Madam Deputy, in this country we have to deal with the corruption of CLICO and the connection between CLICO and this Government, and the fact that this Government, given that connection, ought to see itself at least morally committed to ensuring that those people who

suffered because of the connection between them and the corrupt CLICO do in fact receive back their monies. And any money so allocated is going to make it impossible for the Government to have that money to spend on other more worthwhile things that it should be spending on to assist the poor people across this country.

Mr. Speaker - Madam Deputy - Barbados is in a sorry state. The roads in this country, bush Barbados has now become a nasty place. Wherever you go, garbage and trash everywhere. And this Government, ma'am, is going to continue to prescribe its own medicine and insist that the situation is going to get better, although all evidence says that things are getting worse.

University students - Madam Deputy, I happen to be a part-time teacher at the university and I saw students scrambling up to the last minute to try to get funds to register for courses. And this is a MID programme. And you know, even though some of them managed to get the funds, the whole experience for them was so mentally devastating that it affected a number of them psychologically. Even though they eventually got to register for the programme, some of them still ended up being so psychologically devastated that their performance in fact dropped below the level which they had attained in the years before.

And Madam Deputy, all this is happening and the Minister of Finance will continue this year again, I am sure, to prescribe some more bitter-tasting medicine and maintain that things are going to get better. But Madam Deputy, things in this country will not get better until those sectors that have to perform to take this country out of the morass into which it has been put by this administration stop underperforming. We are going to be spinning top in mud.

And I propose today, Madam Deputy, to spend a few minutes on the area of tourism, because no planning has gone into that sector and it has gone from riches to rags. It is time that there be a reality check - a reality check in relation to tourism - because the Minister and the Government lately have been beating themselves on the chest and proclaiming some alleged success. I almost said invisible success in relation to the sector. So it needs now to be examined a bit more.

We are going to start, Madam Deputy, with the issue of long-stay arrivals coming to this country. Now, the Minister of Finance yesterday was quick to talk about a 2.2 per cent increase in 2014 upon 2013. Of course, they quickly noted that 2013 was a 5 per cent decrease on 2012 - which in itself rather answered the question. But then to say that 2014 was an increase on 2013 is no great boast. 1998 was also better than 2013, some 17 years ago, and 2000 was also better than 2014. So when you say that 2014

was better than 2013, you are not using the correct base on which to proceed. And in fact, Madam Deputy, that is nothing at all to boast about.

I know that the Minister might be wanting to jump up and say, look at January and February for 2015. I am going to leave my comments on that for another time, when in fact he does say that. But just to say that after this flying start in January - this flying start in January which was professed to be the best January ever - February has again lapsed back to 2008 levels. So the Minister is unable to sustain tourism on any realistic or needed growth path. But as I said, I reserve my comments on that aspect of things until he seeks to talk about January and February 2015.

The fact is, Madam Deputy, we have had too many lost years in tourism. It is really about time that the sector truly turns around. I wish I could stand here and genuinely support the Minister in a contention that the sector has turned around, because it is about time. Seven years is a heck of a number of years to continue without any growth in a vital sector.

Now, when we look at this, we have the CTO statistics - the latest published statistics by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, dated February 11, 2015. And it shows again that of 27 countries reporting to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, Barbados is the third worst performer - third from the bottom. Barbados cannot seem to rise again to where it was before. But that is the Caribbean Tourism Organisation.

I want to go a little deeper than that, because I want to refer the Minister to the Tourism Master Plan. Now, where, Madam Deputy, is the Tourism Master Plan? Where is it? Why is the Tourism Master Plan not in this Chamber? I am not going to tell the Minister of Tourism whether or not I have a copy of the Tourism Master Plan. I am not going to tell him that. But I am going to let him know that his desk is not the only desk on which you can find the Tourism Master Plan.

And I want to refer him to pages 29 and 30 of Volume 1 of the Tourism Master Plan. There are six volumes - Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3, Volume 4, Volume 5A, Volume 5B, Volume 6A, Volume 6B - a total of 1 737 pages to be exact. And I want to refer him to pages 29 and 30 of Volume 1. The inscription on Table 22, in red, says: "Performance worse than that of Caribbean overall." That is what is written in red text on page 30 of the Tourism Master Plan, Volume 1.

Table 22 is headed "Recent Trends in Stayover Arrivals to the Caribbean and Globally." And this data, compiled for his Commission's Tourism Master Plan, was compiled from three sources:

Mr. SPEAKER: Excuse me, Honourable Member. Yes, Member. Please continue.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: The United Nations World Tourism Organisation, Integral Realty Resources, and the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. And in that document it says, in terms of the global trend, the growth rate for 2012 - which is the latest year reported on in the Tourism Master Plan - was some 4.0 per cent. The Caribbean trend showed an increase in 2012 of 4.6 per cent. But Barbados, in the same Table 22, was shown in red - not only below the Caribbean average, but in fact showing a negative growth of 5.5 per cent. While substantially all of the other countries pressed on, Barbados showed not only below the average Caribbean level of growth, but negative growth of 5.5 per cent - in the Minister's own Tourism Master Plan that he will not bring to Parliament. It has been sitting on his desk.

In fact, Madam Deputy, Barbados continues to be one of the few countries around the place that is still talking about an international recession. In fact, some days ago, someone went as far as to call it a global recession - which we never had. We had an international recession that nobody at all talks about anymore except Barbados. Countries are pressing on.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: The Honourable Member is misleading the House, because as recently as today, Brazil - one of the big countries - as recently as today, the President of Brazil was on radio saying that nobody could have predicted that this crisis would have lasted as long as it did, and that the quantitative easing and the stimulus that was being practised in her country now has to stop and she has to put some austerity measures in place.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thanks for the elucidation, Member. Please continue.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: It certainly has not stopped Brazil from pressing on. But I understand the Prime Minister's position very clearly. The Prime Minister made his position on the international recession very clear some years ago when he said: "One thing we know for sure is that the international recession cannot go on forever. It has to stop sometime." And that was his approach to the governance of this country - that we have to wait until an international recession ends before we can pick back up. So Barbados can do nothing at all to counter an international recession. We can do nothing at all.

But more importantly, the numbers in tourism underline it all. The fact is that there is no revenue coming in at all from the Ministry of Tourism. There are constant declines in the peak of our winter season. Our reserves are falling, having fallen by \$100 million in the peak of our

winter season. Mr. Speaker, this is because there has been no planning whatsoever for this sector by this Government.

And I am going to look now in the minutes left to me at the Barbados Tourism Authority and its restructuring, because the Tourism Authority - the marketing arm and the product arm - represents, in my view, the CPU, the central processing unit, of tourism marketing. And the first point in terms of absurd planning is that at a time when the Government was announcing a policy of consolidation of entities, the Minister of Tourism decided he was going to split one into two, going against the Government's stated policy and intention. So he is the reverse man. The Government is consolidating and he is splitting up.

But when he split it up, he got rid of 45 people - 45 people - decimating all the institutional knowledge that was there before. So what I have now at the marketing arm is a CEO and no middle management below him at all. None. All middle management gone, except for one fellow who was in a back room, two by two, with no tourism experience, minuscule aviation experience, no human resource experience. He has now been brought up from the back room to service all of the complaints from any member of the staff in relation to human resources, tourism, or aviation. No experience whatsoever. One man brought forward to answer all those matters.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the whole appointment of the few staff that are there now was itself a scandal, because people were recruited on the basis of just an interview between the former chairman and one board member. Having been interviewed by the two of them, they were then given letters to go into positions that did not even exist. The whole restructuring of the BTA was such a scandal. And it is no wonder that when you have this sort of chaos and mayhem at one of your most important institutions, you are going to find yourself in a state of constant and consistent decline in a very important sector. We have lost too many years. And I think it is time that we give this Minister of Tourism his severance package with gratuity - before they become taxable - and take him off the backs of this industry. We really need to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Worse, the BTA is not paying its debts. It is not paying its debts - from theatres right up to airlines, entertainers, everybody you can think of, locally and internationally. Everything you can think of, the BTA owes people. And you know, this might be trivial for the Government. It obviously is. Because I really first and foremost want them to deny that, despite the figures that are continuing to go into the estimates for marketing of Barbados - BTA, now BTMI - you see all these fancy figures of \$87 million, \$97 million. I have been told - and I am willing to be corrected - that last year not even \$40 million reached the accounts of the BTA. Not even \$40

million of the \$90-odd million that was allocated for them. That is what I was told. If it is not so, correct me. But one thing we know for sure is that money is not being given to the BTA for the payment of its debts. And our name is mud in the marketplace.

I know it is only going to take one single carrier to decide it is ceasing operations to Barbados because it is not being paid, and then the Government will understand how serious the consequences can be. Just one airline deciding, "I am done with Barbados because you are not paying me," and we will see what the consequences will be for Barbados in terms of our credibility out there in the marketplace. And so we need, Mr. Speaker, to address that matter urgently in terms of the payment of our debts. Not that we should be in the position in any event of paying so many airlines so much money. But that is a policy that this Government has embarked on and has gone hook, line, and sinker into.

Further, even when the Government attempts to get involved in programmes, it is really just sometimes throwing things out there for nice sound bites, but it does not even often assess its own programmes or review them. Take, for example, the Barbados Island Inclusive programme. Well, it has been around for a couple of years. As you know, you buy a ticket within a certain window, you travel within a certain window to Barbados, and when you get here you are given vouchers - US\$200 in vouchers redeemable at various locations. The BTA is supposed to pay the people on redemption of the vouchers.

Do you know that last year many vouchers were sent from the BTA to the distributor to be distributed, and they were distributed? First of all, the marketing is obviously a joke, because people landed in Barbados and knew for the first time that they were entitled to vouchers. They did not even know that any such programme existed. So they landed and were then told upon arrival that they were entitled to these vouchers to go and use. Having used the vouchers, two things happened. The BTA has not paid a lot of the people that are supposed to have been paid. But more importantly, they have not even sought to review the programme. A number of vouchers have been returned to certain distributors and the BTA will not even go to collect them - to see how many vouchers have been returned, to know how successful the programme has been, what they need to do to tweak it. Nothing at all. It is as if the BTA is totally disinterested in its own announced programmes. There is no planning, no efficiency, nothing in relation to this sector. And it really starts from the top - it is a top-down cavalier approach to our tourism. And until we get a lot more serious about that, we are going to find that we are spinning top in mud in the sector that, if not the only one, is certainly one of the sectors that has to pull this economy around from the morass into which it has been put by this administration.

Now, in terms of airlift, as I said earlier, Barbados has embarked on an unnecessary policy of buying airlines. We have had a service coming out of Brazil for five or six years now, and we can only bring between 500 and 600 people per month. And we are paying for that after five years. Five years. Markets are built already. Well, it is certainly not so in Jamaica and the other places that the carrier is flying to - they are going full all the time. But in Barbados, as usual, we get the little crumbs, because our only approach is: you do not need to generate demand, you can pay for it.

Now, we heard recently about this additional service out of New York. Somehow the Minister managed to lose New York in a way that only he could - a developed market - and lose the services of American Airlines out of New York. You cannot just trivialise that loss, because American Airlines has connectivity that very few other carriers would have. Certainly not JetBlue. So when I hear recently an announcement made that JetBlue is going to be having this Mint programme, it is a different profile from what Barbados has been working with through the years. They have gone to Delta now, and again, Mr. Speaker, I must inform the House that Delta is being paid under another revenue guarantee arrangement - guaranteeing it that below certain load levels it will still be paid a certain amount of dollars, and giving it the right also to withdraw its services if it deems that it is not worth its while to continue flying. So this is the way in which our tourism is being developed.

Mr. SPEAKER: You have five minutes in which to conclude.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: I am not going to need that, Mr. Speaker, because I cannot get into the sandals issues and all those other issues in five minutes. But I will say, Mr. Speaker, that this is contrary to what is being bandied about. Barbadians have every right to continue to be extremely concerned about the state of our tourist industry. It is the worst we have seen it. Every now and again you will get a knee-jerk and something will happen. January was good. This is not the first time we have had a good January, only to be flattered to be deceived.

But I am urging the Members on that side to ensure - and I want to hear the Minister - I am hoping that they call the head of tourism so that I can go into some more details on some other issues. But certainly, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot left to be desired in terms of our performance in the area. There is a lot left to be desired in terms of the presentation of the estimates and the state that Barbados will be in after these estimates are attempted to be implemented. And I certainly would not want to do anything to interrupt the run of the country economically, and therefore to that extent only will not stand in the way

of the passage of the estimates. But Mr. Speaker, we think that it leaves a lot to be desired. I am obliged.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Participating in the debate on the estimates, one of the observations that must be made in listening to the presentations coming from the opposition is the fact that so far we have not been able to first of all identify any real viable alternatives that are coming forward, and the question of the perspectives on where we are in relation to what we face today. And perhaps with the exception of two speakers responding to the presentation of the Minister of Finance, you have not really had a lot as a listening public to think about or to understand the reality of the difficulties that we face as a nation. And not only that, the realities that government faces in terms of trying to move us forward, at least to achieve a better life for our people.

And you know, when we listen to the presentations, we seem to be focusing on a few issues. But what we don't understand is that there is a bigger picture. And I think that the point made by the Honourable Member for St. Peter comes to mind in terms of what really can government do in an environment that we are facing today? And I note that the opposition constantly harps on a point in which they have said that this government is totally responsible for the position that we are in today. And let us understand that in itself is also a misrepresentation of the reason why we are here today.

You know, I had the opportunity to take a look at the figures that we have here under Table 5 in the document and going through them, this is what I note. In relation to health, government plans to spend \$413 million, \$414 million on health. In relation to education, government plans to spend \$498 million. In relation to Social Security and welfare, government plans to spend \$278 million. Those three components of expenditure represent about 30 per cent of the total expenditure projected. Now on a category that we call economic services, government plans to spend 12 per cent or \$530 192 387.

Now, I listened very carefully to the opposition trying to prove to the public of Barbados that here is a government that wishes to derail the social engineering that has happened in terms of the investment in education, the investment in health, and the investment in Social Security and welfare services. And when you examine the figures, it is very far from the truth, because when you look at the amount of financial resources - the truth lies in the numbers. The numbers tell the truth. And I believe it is incredible that anyone can state that the government has not been interested in trying to ensure that the services that matter most to those persons who are least able to defend

themselves in our society are the ones that have continued to be maintained at considerable sacrifice by this government.

And you know, I also took the opportunity to take a look at the estimates for 2005–2006 that was prepared then by a Democratic Labour Party administration. On health, in 2005–2006, the government projected to spend \$314 151 408. Now, here it is - we have a situation where the opposition is saying we are not spending enough. When things were good, they spent \$314 151 408. Today, the government has actually increased that figure in circumstances where we recognise, as a matter of fact, that we need to stop in this country - in the aim of trying to destroy one another, in the aim of trying to destroy each other - misleading Barbadians as to what is possible and what is not possible. Because that is the problem: in trying to make our point, we are trying to mislead the people of this country as to what is possible or what is not possible.

So the point that I am trying to make is that government today plans to spend \$430 million on health care. In 2005–2006, the plan was to spend \$314 million. Now, does that suggest that the government has not made adjustments in terms of recognising that health is important for this country? You can judge education. In 2005–2006, it was planned to spend \$383 million. Again, when we look at what is projected - \$498 million - at a time when the government faces severe challenges, not only on the domestic front but on the international front, it is still faithful to the social construct, to the belief that health services should be available to Barbadians.

Now, you know, we take for granted what happens in this country quite a bit. We take for granted. And the opposition needs to educate Barbadians because if we are to get Barbadians to a new mindset - because we talk about the fact of trying to change the result - but if we do not change attitudes, if we do not change expectations, we cannot change the result. And this is what I mean. Barbados is probably the only country in the region in which a child who goes to school at a primary school, if they have a problem with their eyesight, the government guarantees them that they will get the necessary assistance. In other countries, it is not given at all. It is not a right. And we begin to understand that the reason why we see this huge amount of services that we as a nation give to our people - it has to be costed. In other words, it costs something. The fact of the matter is that in other countries the level of services given to the individual citizen is nowhere near to what the government of Barbados provides its citizens.

And what we have to recognise at this point in time is that these services cost money. These services take resources in order to provide. And for those who think that what we are providing was actually earned in the past, let

us understand what is going on. We are trying to tell Barbadians that the investments that we made in the past are actually assisting in this situation. But let us understand what it has done. It has placed a tremendous responsibility on this government - not only to provide what is there now, but also to take on what was done in the past by the previous administration, which in some cases is not earning the type of dividends that it was supposed to earn. In other words, we are not generating the level of revenues that we were supposed to generate, the level of benefits that we were supposed to see. And that investment was made by the previous administration. But at the same time, loans were borrowed. And we still, at this time, have to find revenues in order to repay those loans that were borrowed by the previous administration. We have that responsibility. And the government has not said that they are not going to accept it. The point is really that they are willing to work in order to do it.

Mr. Speaker, sir, one of the things that we need to recognise, as I said before, is that we have made investment in certain sectors and I really think that we need to consider education in itself as an investment. Why? Because we should, over the course of time, have built up in this country a perspective and a population that should be able to drive development based on the level of resources that we have actually put into our educational sectors. The fact that a lot of our productive sectors right now are not performing at the level that they should be is something that we should be very concerned about. And the question of whether or not the type of education that we are providing is serving the strategic interest of this country in the manner in which it should - because we are seeing our productive sectors not being able in some cases to compete with the productive sectors of other countries. I believe that the solutions for those sectors lie in whether or not we can generate the type of innovative thinking that would help those productive sectors to develop the competitive strategies that allow them to compete with products from other countries.

And that is extremely important because, you know, when we examine how universities in the United States and the UK work, there is a very strong linkage between the universities and the private sector. But unfortunately the universities here seem to think that what they mean by linkage is that it allows them to bleed the private sector to finance all kinds of programmes that in many cases do not even add to the productivity of the sectors. Instead, what I am talking about is that the university needs to look at programmes that help to address certain basic issues of competitiveness that our productive sectors face.

Let us face it. We need to spend on our social sectors. We need to spend on them. But what is also going to provide the resources upon which this country can build solid growth is investment in our revenue-generating

sectors. And the fact of the matter is that education, health and Social Security and welfare services cannot do it on their own. We can only provide a base. On the other hand, the productive sectors in themselves are the ones who can provide the strategic direction for this country. But we need to make the investments in that direction. And again, the educational services that we have in this country have to play a role in terms of ensuring that we provide solutions to those sectors that can make a difference, that can help to increase their competitiveness in today's world.

The other point too I wish to make when we talk about competitiveness is that if we can increase efficiency and lower cost in those sectors, the viability of those sectors can also be assured. In that regard, I think that we need to laud and praise the government on their foresight in terms of the investment in the renewable energy sectors. And I believe that the fact that this year we are continuing to push ahead in terms of investments in solar energy is something that is praiseworthy. But also too, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we need to get to the stage where the productive sectors need to at least be facilitated in terms of making greater use of the opportunities available for renewable energy generation.

Why? We cannot be assured, Mr. Speaker, that the current level of oil prices that we see will continue. Most experts indicate that they expect it to continue for another year. But the fact of the matter is that we are dealing with exhaustible resources and as they get scarce, prices will rise. On the other hand, emphasis and focus on renewable energy can offer a cheaper form of energy to our productive sectors. And we all know that energy is a principal input in our production sectors. As a matter of fact, we also know that one of the main reasons why our manufacturing companies in Barbados are so uncompetitive is because of the fact that in some of our Caribbean neighbours, especially Trinidad, energy is available at a fraction of the cost at which it is available in Barbados. We all know that. So the strategy, to my mind, should be to see if we can encourage increased use of renewable energy alternatives by our productive sectors. In that way, we will be able to increase the competitiveness of our productive sectors at the same time. And I believe that in itself is important in terms of ensuring that we can see more growth in our productive sectors. The result of that also, too, Mr. Speaker, is that we will see greater employment opportunities being provided for our young people.

Because, you know, what is amazing is that our young people now are coming out with extremely innovative ideas. And the fact that we have invested a lot in terms of promoting an entrepreneurial philosophy has helped in terms of generating new ideas among our young people. But we cannot expect businesses, especially businesses that are at a very infant stage, to do it on their

own - they need all the help that they can get. And in Barbados, you are facing high energy costs. And at the same time, generally the cost of services in Barbados is relatively high when you compare them to countries even in the region. And I am saying that in that regard, what we need to do is to give our young people who have business ideas that they might wish to implement - we need sometimes to see if we can find a way to invest some resources even more in terms of helping those young people to actually develop those business ideas. And I think that what we need to do is to provide them with funds that will not be at the same level as if they had to go on the commercial market for those particular funds. And that is something I believe is good, because we all know that generally businesses take a while in order to mature and to develop.

And you know, one of the things that I find is that sometimes when businesses fail, instead of saying let us look and see how we can actually develop - they fail in that one, let us try something else - we actually pour scorn on the individual that is actually trying to develop those businesses. And I believe that it is in those approaches that we can energise our business community, energise new ideas in terms of business to help to grow this economy even more. And I think that is one of the things that we need to look at in terms of the strategy for business development in this country.

Because, you know, recently I heard a particular section of the business community indicating that government must, in terms of the concessions that they speak about, prepare to give more concessions. But you know, one of the things that I believe the business community also needs to look at - and let us be realistic - because we are at a stage in Barbados where, because of the amount of resources that we are spending, we must expect a lot. And I do not believe it is sufficient that businesses in this country basically continue to call for concessions. But at the same time, the question is, what are we going to receive once those concessions are granted? And I think that is important. And we cannot provide a blank cheque to businesses just because they feel that government must give them these concessions and we are not seeing any different results. We need to see businesses stepping up to the plate in terms of helping the government to provide more employment opportunities for its people. And we need to recognise that and we need to stop behaving as if government can do it on its own.

And I think that in this particular environment, government is challenged when we look at the numbers. You know, Mr. Speaker, sir, the other point that I wish to make when it comes to the whole question of looking at new ways of training our people - you know, it was interesting that we have in our communities on a daily basis a number of persons who are actually involved in

trades. We know that on an annual basis, many of our young people try to get into skills training and the skills training institution is not able to accept as many of those young people as it should. Even in my community, in St. Michael West Central, there are tradesmen - carpenters, joiners, plumbers. And one of the things that I find is that some of those same senior tradesmen sometimes might want to take youngsters in the community and teach them a trade. Now, the fact that skills training has not been able to satisfy all the demands of young people for training is something that we need to look at - to see whether or not we can at least enlist the support of qualified, experienced tradesmen in communities in order to help to train youngsters in things such as masonry, carpentry and the trades.

The point is that we need to move away from the tradition of thinking that only designated institutions have the capacity to train people in the various trades. Because, you know, the idea that training could only be delivered in a building set up for the purpose - I believe somehow when you look at it, a lot of our education institutions are making that mistake. Because I sit down and I watch and you find that Barbadians now sit down in their homes and they earn master's degrees and bachelor's degrees from universities in the United States or the United Kingdom. And our principal educators still have this view that in order for you to get a qualification, you have to come and sit down in a classroom and be educated. In other countries, that view is far removed. Not only that, we need to be flexible and more innovative in the way in which training is delivered.

And I am saying that if we can certify more people within communities who have skills - such as your carpenters, your masons - to help to train young men, and in the same way, if we give businesses at least some type of incentive to train those young people, and once they can prove that they are taking on a young person as a trainee, why can we not find a way of helping to subsidise that training that is being delivered? Because, let us face it, the skills training programme in itself is not able to satisfy all the demands. And that is an issue I believe that we need to look at. We talk about innovation, but we only talk about it in respect to putting it on paper. But when it comes to practising it and facilitating those persons who want to be innovative in our communities, we do not do that. And that is why I am saying that even our bureaucrats need to start to take a different look at how they do things in the current environment that we are in.

Because Barbadians should not be fooled into thinking - because the opposition would like to give the impression to Barbadians that the world is what it was 10 years ago. It is not. And not only that, they would also like to give the impression to Barbadians that the resources that were available 10 years ago are still available today. They are not. And they are not, not because of any actions of this

government, but because of the combined actions of governments in the past. For instance, we did not go and build a Kensington Oval that today cannot even justify the amount of money that has been spent on it. But you have to run the thing and you have to pay the loans for it too. And that is the hard realism that we have to give to Barbadians - that yes, we are in a difficult situation, but the same resources that were available to government in the past are not available today.

And in that regard, Mr. Speaker, we also need to say to Barbadians that we therefore need to have - and I go back to the point about attitudes and expectations - we therefore need to have Barbadians with different attitudes and we have to temper expectations with the realities that we now face today in the context of what can be done. And it is not because government does not want to do more. We would like to think that every single service that could be made available to Barbadians could be made available. But we all know that there is a cost for doing that. We all know that as much as it hurts every one of us in here - because I hear members of the opposition talk about the difficulties that constituents face, we have it too, and we have to face it. But also there is a situation where resources are limited, not because of one government's doing, but because of the fact that we lived a particular way in the past. And this is where we need to change. We need to change in terms of our attitudes and our expectations. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much. I want to indicate, sir, I support the estimates and also support the Minister of Finance's efforts to rectify the country. Thank you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this sitting be suspended until 2.30 this afternoon.

The question that the House be suspended until 2.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and the House was suspended accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Good afternoon, Honourable Members. The sitting is resumed when the suspension was taken. We were on Order Number 17. With that, we shall continue. Yes, you, Honourable Member for St. Andrew.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to commend the speech of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. She has done such an excellent job that it has made it very easy for us to follow, in the sense that she has laid bare a number of the rosy pictures which have been painted by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, when you listen to the Minister of Finance and you heard this rosy picture which he spoke about, you would wonder whether or not - and I believe that Members on that side as well would wonder - whether or not he is living in the same Barbados as we are. Because certainly I thought that he was in a different country. And certainly the people who he was referring to, who had this bright picture of where we are and where we will be, are certainly not the people in St. Andrew that I represent. And I would dare say that they are certainly not the people in St. Michael North West. Because I am very familiar with his constituency. And those people are really crying out. Crying out for help, Mr. Speaker. Those people, Mr. Speaker, are certainly - I would say some of them are a little annoyed. I had the privilege of speaking to a lady from his constituency the same day that his speech was delivered. Almost the same hour. An hour after, as a matter of fact, she called me and she wanted to know what country the Minister of Finance was speaking about.

But you see, I have my sympathy for the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker. In some countries, when the estimates are being prepared, the actual expenditure - the actual estimates of the expenditure for the ensuing year - are actually included in the estimates. And it is mandatory. Certainly, even though in those countries it is not mandatory, convention has it - and I can speak of England - that the Permanent Secretaries have a responsibility to ensure that the actual expenditures for the ensuing year are included in the estimates. Mr. Speaker, you cannot come as a Minister of Finance and tell a Permanent Secretary that - even though the actual expenditure was \$180 million last year - we only want you to include \$150 million. And that does not even take into consideration the expenses for the other year. Because if it was \$180 million in the year before, it is fairly obvious that, all things being equal, it will go up.

I am not saying that the Minister of Finance told the Permanent Secretary - the people preparing the estimates - to include, if I may take the Queen Elizabeth Hospital as an example, \$150 million. I do not think he would do such a thing. I would say that he knew full well that the actual figure for the previous year was \$180 million. Similarly, Mr. Speaker, the University of the West Indies - how could you include \$71 million for the next financial year when in the last year it was almost \$140 million? And you cannot even say that you are looking for additional revenue, additional monies from the students, saying that you will no longer be funding the university. Similarly, Mr. Speaker, \$675 000 to the Scotland District - I will come to that a little later with respect to that particular programme as it relates to White Hill. But last year it was \$1.5 million. And this only applied to various routine expenses.

So when the Minister is glowing about a rosy picture, he is glowing about a rosy picture with respect to

figures which somebody told him - I do not know if it is the people at the IMF, it can be the people at the international lending agencies. But somebody must have told him: well, look, if you come to us with certain figures, obviously you are not going to get the type of funding that you expect. When you look at the Capital Works programme for the last few years, it is fairly obvious that the Minister came up very shallow in terms of what he would expect an international agency to do in giving him a loan. It is like a fellow going to the bank and he wants a million dollars to build a house. And they ask him, what is your salary? And he says, well, I am a carpenter. How can you want a million dollars when your monthly payments will exceed your salary? So obviously you cannot meet those commitments. And that is the problem that the Minister faces, and somebody - I wonder whether some smart person did not tell him that. And that is the reason why we are seeing these estimates in terms of quantum being downgraded to the extent that \$180 million becomes \$150 million, \$139.5 million becomes \$71 million, and \$1.5 million, as it relates to the Scotland District Programme, becomes \$675 000.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that while there might be constraints on any government, if it is mandatory for a government to include the actual estimates, I believe that because of the abuse or the likely abuse by any administration, the time has come where we should have legislation to ensure - and we should put the onus on the Permanent Secretaries. Because if you put the onus on the Permanent Secretaries to ensure the actual expenditure is included, a Minister of Finance cannot come and tell an officer: well, I want you to include X amount of dollars in the estimates.

What we are seeing in these estimates is obviously outrageous, Mr. Speaker. But there are certain tragedies, Mr. Speaker, in these estimates - and I say tragedies, real tragedies. And there are tragedies by omission. Tragedies by omission. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the fact that a number of people were sent home, people were promised that they would have some - they call it a retooling programme - where they could go elsewhere. People were promised that they would be placed elsewhere when other vacancies arise. And you unceremoniously booted people who in some instances worked at these institutions for over 20 years.

If I may take - that is not her real name, but let us say Lisa. Lisa. Transport Board. Worked for 20 years. A lady who - had she not - well, I just got the name from the Leader of the House. Lisa. And she - National Insurance - six months gone. She has a mortgage. Has a mortgage and a family. And that lady is now on the streets. Not on the streets in the sense that the Honourable Minister of Health would know about - and I only say that because he is the

Minister of Health. But she is literally on the streets and the bankers are at her door.

And Mr. Speaker, one would have thought that in these estimates we would have seen something here to stimulate the productive sectors so that people like Lisa - people like Lisa, whom the Honourable Leader just referred to - would be able to get back a job. But no. Very shortly she will be put out and she cannot even go to welfare because the people who are on welfare are now being denied the usual stipend that they used to get. So there is nothing that you can do for people like Lisa. And these estimates should have addressed that.

The Capital Works programme. The Capital Works programme in these estimates - I went through it and I thought I had missed something. And I sat down with the Leader of the Opposition. Non-existent, Mr. Speaker. And the few areas that can be viewed as meaning Capital Works programmes - they are for studies, professional fees, consultants. Over a million dollars being paid to consultants. I am not questioning the professional capacity, Mr. Speaker, of these individuals. But that is what this Government has done. That is what they are doing to us. And then a Minister of Finance could come into this House gloating - oh, how nice things are, things are rosy. The Minister of Finance should be ashamed. Even if he did not encourage any manipulation of the figures, at least he should not come in here and paint this rosy picture as though everything is well. But Mr. Speaker, that is not so.

And I spoke about tragedy. That is a tragedy, Mr. Speaker. It is a tragedy, Mr. Speaker, when a Minister of Finance could come to this House - with all the suffering of the people who were affected in the CLICO debacle, Mr. Speaker - and not a word. Silent on CLICO. Silent on CLICO, Mr. Speaker. Now you are not dealing only - I mean, you are not only dealing with investors. You know, I believe that the Prime Minister, the present Prime Minister, has not done anything in order to help those people in CLICO. Not even a word. He has not said anything since the report just came out. Because he probably wants to make the former Prime Minister look bad. Because the bad blood between the present Prime Minister and the former Prime Minister - they did not even used to speak. And this Prime Minister, obviously he is gloating, just like how the Minister of Finance was gloating when he presented his estimates.

I have one of the best speeches that I ever heard the Honourable Prime Minister make - I do not recall whether he delivered it, but it was in the form of a document. And it was a total attack, Mr. Speaker, on the former Prime Minister. Yes, yes, yes. Excellent document. And I admired - I must tell you, from then on I admired the Right Honourable Prime Minister. To be honest with you, I do not agree with some of the comments which are being

made by certain persons about the present Prime Minister. But, Prime Minister, you have to understand that it is the people of this country - the people who save their little dollar when the month comes to put monies into a pension plan - those are the people that are hurting. Forget the past relationship with the former Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. Forget that bad relationship and come to the rescue. Because the former Prime Minister said that he was going to do everything. Some people said that they are not so sure whether or not he is the late Prime Minister because he might resurface at some point in time. I do not know how true that is. But forget all of that. Come to the rescue, Mr. Speaker, of the people who have been suffering as a result of what went on at CLICO.

You know, I was a little lucky. I must say that I was one of the lucky ones - not only lucky in terms of the insurance policies, but lucky in terms of a pension plan for members of my staff. And in this respect, I must thank the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, because everything was almost signed. And the Member for St. Joseph - I do not know if there was something that he knew that I did not know - but I heard him this morning and I was very pleased to see his treatise on the rounds that went on at CLICO. Because that pension plan would be of no use to members of staff as they speak. And this is a serious, serious matter. This is a national tragedy, Mr. Prime Minister. And if the Minister of Finance cannot do anything about it, you must. The people of Barbados will hold you, as Prime Minister, responsible. It is serious. It is a serious matter. It is a national tragedy. There are some people - I have a constituent and I sat down and I cried with him. Every cent he had went into that plan. Every cent. And he was an old man. He was still paying a mortgage because his son wanted to buy a house. And now his son's mortgage is in jeopardy. The Government must do something about those suffering people in CLICO. And Mr. Speaker, forget your pal - your pal has nothing to do with it. Forget your pal and do something about these people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the biggest tragedy of all is the tragedy of White Hill. And I say the tragedy of White Hill because it is a national tragedy. A lot of people have not realised that. I was talking to one of the residents in White Hill who has been affected and he says: Mr. Payne, we appreciate what you are trying to do, but we are poor people. You mean Hurricane Irene? Hurricane Irene - that is what they call her in St. Andrew. Hurricane Irene. The Prime Minister is referring to Hurricane Irene, a national tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, you had a situation in White Hill with respect to the water mains over the years - and that happened up to the time that I was Minister. When I assumed office in 1999, you had officers who used to go around and check for those burst mains because there were always problems in White Hill with the Water Authority.

That stopped - I do not know how long ago. I would not want to be too political by saying when it stopped. But certainly when I was there in 1999, when I left in 1999, that policy was enforced. On a monthly basis, those mains in White Hill and those unstable areas used to be checked. Now what has happened is that the road over the years has been undermined. This is a road that was there from time immemorial. The burst pipes undermined those roads over a period of time because those checks were not made. And then you had a serious, serious flooding in that area one weekend, and that was it. And those roads - I mean, when you came and you saw, you could not believe that was the same road that you saw the week before.

But that did not mean that all was lost. Mr. Speaker, you have houses - I would like to see million-dollar houses in this area. But the area is fairly stable. It is a stable area, a solid area, and there are certain weak areas. And I believe that these rains did some damage to these particular areas. But all was not lost. Mr. Speaker, out of the blue, a gentleman turned up - the Minister of Public Works - just like that, and declared that the White Hill road is abandoned. I never heard anything like that before. Nobody knew. I certainly did not know, as the parliamentary representative, that he was touring the area. He never called me. I understand that when he got there, somebody made mention of my name and said that George Payne was down here, and he said: who is George Payne? This is the Minister. The Minister going to an area for which I am the parliamentary representative. I am not any normal parliamentary representative. Let me make that known. I am the parliamentary representative. I was there from 1991. I was born in that constituency, you understand? And I know that constituency backwards. When I was a Barbados athlete, I used to train on that road. I knew that road for years. And for you to come and tell the people - ask the Minister of Tourism, his father would know, his father was the President of the Amateur Athletic Association - those are the things that you should boast about. The Minister of Finance should boast about those things. Not false information.

Mr. Speaker, he goes to White Hill, abandons the road. I do not even think the Prime Minister had that power - to state that the road is abandoned with immediate effect. Now, how are you going to abandon a road? And I must say that not a single Member of Cabinet, even though they did not know about it, not a single Member of Cabinet came out and condemned it. I did not hear a word from them. So I must assume that the Cabinet agreed. I see - well, I believe that one Member declared an interest and stated that he did not agree with it. But you abandon - you are a Minister. I was a Minister. That was irresponsible to the height, Mr. Speaker. No assessment of the damage. No provision for a temporary road. No arrangements to house those persons who were immediately affected. And to this

day, Mr. Speaker - I mean, when I tell you that this is a national tragedy, it is a national tragedy.

And I would hope that at some point in time I could invite the Prime Minister, together with the Minister and the Minister of Housing, to visit this area. Because as I speak, you have two ladies - people might want to say that you have to be mad to be living in those conditions. But as a result of the attitude and action of the Minister of Public Works in abandoning that road, those ladies must be mad by now because they are living in a hole. You hear what I said? They are living in a hole. The only roof over their head is two sheets of galvanised. And they live there. And there are other people who live in the open. It does not sound right. It is a fact. I could call their names. Ask the Minister of Housing. Ask the Minister. I would like to carry the Prime Minister because the Minister of Public Works is not doing anything at all on it. Nothing on it. And it is sad because this is a national tragedy.

And in their Pathways to Progress - some type of fair share for all - you know, the former Member of Parliament for St. Joseph used to talk about two Barbados. And I did not know what he was talking about because he wanted to drive home the message. Every time he got up, I was in the House when he was not here, every time he got up he used to speak about two Barbados. And I did not know what he was talking about. But what the action of the Minister of Finance - of the Government - in treating those people in White Hill this way brings home to me what the two Barbados that he spoke about means. The people in White Hill pay taxes like anybody else. They pay taxes like anybody else. And they should not be treated in this way. It is a serious matter.

And I know that the Honourable Member for St. James likes to be light - everything is a joke for him. But this is not a joke. This is not a joke. This is a serious matter. Mr. Speaker, no consultation at all. No consultation with the residents. None whatsoever.

Mr. SPEAKER: Members, please, let us have some order, please. All Members, all around. Members, please have some order. Remember, you have five minutes in which to conclude.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister was speaking, the three leading construction companies wanted to start the road the next day. Soil Conservation wanted to create a temporary road. And the Chief Technical Officer - the person representing the Chief Technical Officer of the Ministry of Public Works - said he had instructions from on high: do not allow these people from Soil Conservation to go there. Can you imagine that, Mr. Speaker?

So as I speak, Mr. Speaker, you have school children - because the road has been completely blocked off. What they did, they delivered some material right in front of the road. They did not even allow a little passage for the pedestrians to walk. They did a similar thing in Rock Hall - blocked off the road completely. No alternative road. Schoolchildren cannot get to school. Serious problem with garbage disposal, Mr. Speaker. Delivery trucks - people ordering things - cannot get in. Mr. Speaker, the injustice of the emergency services. A lady - almost a pregnant lady - she did not lose her baby, but she almost lost her baby because the emergency vehicle could not get in.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about supplementaries, but this was a case for a supplementary at the time - an emergency - even if Parliament was not in session, and we would have come even if it was a Sunday. And I know that other Members would have agreed. I am not making anything up. That is a fact. And to rub salt in the wounds, Mr. Speaker - nowhere in these estimates, nowhere in these estimates, is any provision for the people in White Hill. After all of that, nothing at all.

I almost did not come in here, Mr. Speaker, because I do not know what I could talk about from these estimates. But I only wanted to highlight what this Government has done to the people in White Hill. And it is only because - I would have to say it is only because the people in White Hill have never voted for the Democratic Labour Party. Never. Never. And their sin, the big sin that they have committed, is that they have never voted for the Democratic Labour Party. They have voted for the Barbados Labour Party all day. And that is their biggest sin, Mr. Speaker.

So this is a serious matter, Mr. Speaker. I call on the Minister. Mr. Speaker, he might have his pride, but I think he should come down to earth. Mr. Speaker, the people in White Hill would like to see him again. I will be there to protect him. I know he went sometime after and he disappeared through another little road because he did not know what would happen. But the people in White Hill are not like that. They are not like the people in - well, the people in White Hill do not share lashes. So you are free to come back. But I believe that he should publicly apologise to the people of White Hill. He should retract the statement he made with respect to the abandonment and update us on plans for the people in White Hill.

There are some people that must be relocated, but you cannot relocate everybody. And there are certain people who would not move - I do not care what you do, they are not going to move. And I want a town hall meeting with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Housing, and the Minister of Public Works. Let us address this issue. It is a national issue. This has nothing to do with the St. Andrew constituency. This is a national issue, Mr. Speaker.

And if necessarily - and we have to acquire land in the area - let us have some other arrangements. As another Member winds up, I would say that land was acquired in the past for these same people who wanted to move. But the Ministry of Housing - the National Housing Corporation - after this land was acquired, sold the land on a commercial basis to other people. So I am saying that what we need is land to be acquired. I would suggest both -

administrations might have been responsible for the squatting in the area. But a person cannot squat. A person would not squat if he had land elsewhere. And if you have created an environment whereby people don't have any choice but to squat, then government has a responsibility to deal with those people. So you have people in the Ministry of Housing saying that you shouldn't help these people because some of them are squatting. That's nonsense. That's nonsense. What you need to do, if you feel it is necessary to mark off the area, acquire the lands there as well - that is what you need to do. But this is a national tragedy. And as I said, in the past we had acquired land for this purpose.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the Government actually acts speedily. And when I say speedily - as of tomorrow - I would like to get a call. Nothing will please me better than to get a call from the Prime Minister tomorrow on this White Hill issue. I'm begging for it. I'm begging for it for the people of White Hill as a human being, Mr. Speaker. Begging for it. And this is where the Scotland District Authority - if the Scotland District Authority would have been allowed to remain in force, it would have been able to deal with this matter. And in the same way that the people of White Hill are being affected, the people of Rock Hall, the road to the bottom of Bordens which has been closed off, the road to Turner Hall was closed off - and now the road to Bordens and the people in Rock Hall are boxing. The people in Rock Hall are boxing. And they have had to create an alternative road.

Mr. Speaker, I really regret that I was not able to deal with the housing in Lancaster. I went to Lancaster over the weekend and despite the mouthings of my good friend the Minister of Housing, I am not saying that the houses have not been allocated. But the only thing that I saw - and that was Sunday - I saw two dogs running through the area. In Lancaster, even if the houses are allocated, nobody is living. Nobody is living.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. M. M. AGARD: Mr. Speaker, I joined this debate feeling the need to express some appreciation to the civil servants of Barbados - civil servants who continue to offer exceptional service and who labour under some of the most arduous conditions known to Barbados since the turn

of the century. So I thank the professionals of the health service, all of them. I thank the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force. I thank the NEC workers. I certainly thank the workers of our social services, especially the Welfare Department and the NAB. Even the Sanitation Services Authority - all of the government agency workers. Mr. Speaker, I express my appreciation to them today.

Of course, I would also have liked to thank the Ministers of Government for the work that they have done. But after reading the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2015-2016 and recognising that we now have to navigate a four-billion-dollar economy where our earning capacity is a paltry \$2.55 billion with a deficit of \$1.7 billion, I have to register my concern. Mr. Speaker, I know that it is worthy to say that we should note our increase of 0.3 per cent because we were really expecting a contraction of the economy. We were expecting a minus 0.0 contraction of the economy and hence 0.3 per cent might be noteworthy for some. But when you consider that we have experienced a decline of almost 30 per cent in the last seven to eight years, I do believe that 0.3 is hardly noteworthy. And even more significant is that our people have had to endure the hardships that have come with the decline in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand why even now the members of the Government side would wish to run away from engaging the public in this particular debate. But I recall 19 months ago when they came to Barbados and they told us that because of the global recession, in order for us to stabilise our foreign reserves and to encourage growth in the economy, we would all have to endure a fiscal consolidation programme. There would be a shared sacrifice. We felt that we were entering into a partnership between us and our Government in the national interest. But what we have found, Mr. Speaker, is that this shared sacrifice has been borne only by the people. The Government really and truly has not risen to the occasion to face the problem and to fix it. In fact, they have told us time and time again that we should not be overly concerned about our downgrades. But Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where our downgrades have actually negatively impacted the fortunes of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I was saying to you that there was actually no greater example of the destructive course that we are on, and the impact that the failure of this Government to fix the economy has had upon Barbados, than the relocation of what we consider to be one of the oldest business companies in Barbados - and that is Sagicor Financial Corporation. Now I recognise and I accept that it is indeed a private company and that Government has no influence over the action of the board members. But certainly, when a board agrees to redomicile from Barbados its base to a jurisdiction that is rated investment

grade or higher and where access to capital would be reasonably easy and flexible, then we need to appreciate that our constant downgrades are actually affecting the fortunes of this country. And it is not just that financial corporation that has left these shores - in November we also had a situation with a decaying industry restructuring project. A half-billion-dollar proposal could not be financed by sponsors who left because of the triple-notch downgrade by Moody's. So we know that your failure to deal with the economy has affected Barbadians. And I think that we need to concede that our emphasis should now be on placing Barbados on a growth path.

I searched my document because I wanted to see the initiatives that would really engender growth of the economy in this country. And no matter how much I have searched my document, I am not yet confident that we are on a trajectory for serious growth. And that is reprehensible. I think that we need to work on these areas because Barbadians today are stating that they really have no confidence in this Government. They are referring to your policies as failed policies. They are complaining that they feel abandoned. And the very people who feel abandoned are those who have made the greatest sacrifice. We have had over 3 000 people lose their jobs because of our fiscal consolidation programme. We have had over 30 000 individuals disenfranchised by the debacle that is CLICO. And I know that my Honourable colleague spoke at length to it, so I am not going to refer to that again. But people in this country feel the greatest deception by the absence of the Government to speak forcefully and decisively on the CLICO issue. In spite of all of the little murmurings, there is virtually silence. And 30 000 people have been disenfranchised.

Mr. Speaker, these are the same people today who are being asked to pay tuition fees for their children and to pay health care fees, to pay for drugs. And I believe that our position to ask for payment of fees has nothing to do with a philosophical or a paradigm shift in how we feel about these social services. I believe that we still believe that social services should be provided in the national interest and for the development of the average Barbadian. But as a result of a lack of financing, we have had to take these steps. And the reality is that there are indeed people who have been adversely affected whose progress will be interrupted as a result of the measures that we have had to take. I hope - and I want to reassure - that it is certainly not a philosophical shift, but only a temporary measure to get us back on an even keel. But even as these measures have had to be taken, there are still rumblings in this country as to how we are going to treat the most vulnerable in our society.

The constituency that I am privileged to represent is considered an aged constituency. We have more than 20 per cent of our residents who are 65 years and over. And

within the last couple of weeks we have had statements being made that have caused my constituents a lot of concern. And people are asking me: what is our position on, for example, euthanasia? What is the Government's position on care of the terminally ill? Futility of care versus rationing? Tell us what it means. That is what they are asking. They are asking: is it the case that because we continue to underfund the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, if a person is terminally ill or cannot afford to pay in full for their care, that we are going to treat them differently from an individual who can pay? Now we are concerned about these things and we are not afraid to have this conversation, because we know that with the cost of health care, at some point in time a personal responsibility will have to be taken by Barbadians. And I believe I am one of those people who believe that if you can take responsibility for your own health care, you should do so. I support the expansion of the health insurance scheme in this country. And I believe that for those who can pay for their health care through the insurance company, that is fine. Because what will it do? It will leave more resources to benefit those who genuinely cannot pay.

But the ones to whom I refer today are those who genuinely cannot pay. And there is a large percentage of Barbadians today who have had to seek refuge at our state-owned facilities - not because they do not wish to take personal responsibility, but because their developing circumstances have forced them there. Have forced them to the polyclinics, have forced them to A&E, to Casualty. These are the ones who, by virtue of having lost their jobs, can no longer support themselves financially or independently. And by extension they have lost the very medical insurance that once covered the cost of their treatment. I am speaking about those who are terminally ill. And because they are ill, they are unable to work. How are we providing for these individuals? I am not here to coddle those who can afford to pay, but we need to look at those who can't. And we continue to underfund the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

From the day I entered these Chambers, I have been hearing the Chief Executive Officer of the hospital say time and time again that the hospital needs no less than \$190 million annually to finance its operations. And time and again we come here with estimates that only offer the hospital \$150 million. That is a dereliction of duty. That is irresponsible. And I am asking myself: the Minister of Health is a senior member of Cabinet. Surely he can negotiate and convince his Cabinet Ministers that there should be a greater provision of resources to the hospital, because there is no commodity greater than life. We cannot continue to underfund the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at risk to health and limb. When you reach a point where doctors are telling their colleagues to indemnify themselves, that is the most invidious position for a doctor to be in. Because what the doctor is saying is that the environment in which

he or she exists is so improper that they have a genuine concern of harm or even death to their patients and the possibility of liability or culpability to their own profession. We cannot afford to continue to allow this situation to go on. And I feel that the Government has to get serious in this regard.

Now, in July of last year, I stood in these Chambers and I moved a resolution of urgent public importance to address this situation. And I am disappointed that I have to come back here and stand on my feet again to deal with this very same issue, because I heard the Minister of Finance promise that \$22 million within two weeks would be provided for the correction of that situation. He promised it faithfully. In fact, I believe that what had been offered before was \$2 million, but because of the intervention on this side, it was actually increased to \$22 million. And I honestly believed that he would have kept his promise. To this day - not only has that \$22 million not been delivered to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but subsequently the hospital has become further indebted. So much so that in November, and again most recently, doctors again virtually withdrew their services. And they are saying that they cannot do anything other than critical emergency surgeries. They are asking you to settle the debt, Mr. Minister. And I see no reason why, in the same way that you were prepared to give \$24 million to Grotto, you cannot provide \$25 million or \$30 million to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to ensure life and limb. I am sure that life and limb must be more important.

And I am asking you - I am standing on my feet to ask you again, Mr. Minister - to take seriously the concerns when four bodies can come together to register their objection to what is happening to them. You know that it is time for intervention that will bring a resolution to the problem. We do not want any palliative resolutions from you. We do not want you to be giving us money piece by piece. It is time for you to vote the necessary money to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital so that the debts can be paid to the pharmaceutical companies, to all the suppliers for their equipment and their services, so that the operational services at QEH can be executed in the support of life and limb. And I believe that no greater case can be made today, when we look at these estimates, than to say to the Minister of Finance: get real with your financing. Stop underfunding your critical sectors just so as to maintain your expenditure, because it is not realistic. And telling me that you can come back to Parliament for a supplemental is still not enough. It is still not enough. Because whilst we wait for a supplemental, you have pharmacies that have had to wait over two years to be paid. These are small business people. They have already been affected by your inability to return their income tax refunds. They have already been affected by your inability to return their VAT refunds. So it is a double whammy that they are experiencing when they cannot get back what is legitimately owed to them by way

of refund. But yet they have to continue to provide supplies to the hospital even though they cannot be paid. And I commend them - because they are small business people, and it must be an extremely difficult balancing act to continue providing supplies even though you know that payment will not be forthcoming. And I thank God that at least they are prepared to do it. Because if it is my mother or your mother, if it is your constituent or my constituent, certainly you do not want to know that someone suffers a near-death episode because of lack of drugs. And the situation is today that there are some people, even when they go there and they are diagnosed, whose families still have to run around to Six Roads Pharmacy and Collins and Armstrong Agency to source drugs that really and truly ought to be in the hospital. I really believe that we need to take these things seriously.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you as well that with respect to the provision of our education, there are too many young people who have had to suffer some disappointment - not because they have placed education on the back burner, but because they simply could not afford it. And I really believe that many of us in here, had we been placed in that position that many of our young people are now placed in today - had we been placed in that position 30 years ago - we too could not have finished our education. And I am not speaking to the resilient middle class that might have a pool of resources, some form of disposable income to support the dreams of their children. I am speaking about those who really and truly can do no better. So we must recognise. We know what our own personal experiences were. And it is as a result of this lack of ability that we are actually taking our country backward - not forward, but backward.

Lest anyone says that I do not support a progress that allows for personal responsibility, let me state clearly that I know that at some point in time we as Barbadians will have to come to a point where the social services that were freely given to us will no longer be given to us. And I believe that as we have developed, yes, we should be able to accept some measure of personal responsibility. But for those who cannot - who cannot do it - the responsibility falls to Government to ensure that provision, and timely provision, is made to facilitate the needs and the dreams of these individuals. The other issues with respect to health that concern me - I am told that we will be dealing with them in heads and I will certainly address those things at that time. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to be long at all because, as I said, the government's position is that over the years this exercise of debating the Appropriation Bill and the estimates which are scheduled thereto has taken on the form of all honourable members on

each side of the House delivering second reading speeches, which usually take us into Wednesday night. And then by the time you call a head, like education or health, you end up only debating one head of the estimates by the end of the week.

And the government has taken the position that the best interests of all would be served if we go back to best practice. In days of yore, I did research myself - in the Barrow years, in the Tom Adams years, and even more recently - where the emphasis at this time is placed on debating heads of the estimates, leaving the second reading speeches and the long speeches for the debate on the financial statement and budgetary proposals, by whatever name called. I know that in the latter years of the distinguished, honourable, Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, it used to be called the Economic and Financial Policy Statement, but by whatever name called, it was done on national television and all honourable members had a chance to speak - ministers about their ministries, others about their constituencies and so on.

But this exercise, we think, should concentrate on the heads, particular ministries, and in this case we hope, before Friday evening when the guillotine comes down, to have looked at education and health, to have looked at public works and transport, agriculture and social care. And so we hope to get those done. We are optimistic that we can, but that will depend on how members on each side of the House handle the situation. So I just want to put on record again why the government has taken this position.

Because for all the years that I have been associated with this Chamber, even when I was not a sitting member of it, opposition parties have complained that in estimates you need to get to the heads. And in some cases opposition parties have argued that they should be able to call the heads. They should be able to determine which heads should be called. And I really have no problem with that. Perhaps we can get to that stage. I really have no problem with that at all.

So I just wanted to make that point clear, Mr. Speaker. There is no hidden agenda here. I have looked at the Barrow years, I have looked at the Tom Adams years. I have done the research myself and I have checked with the staff of Parliament, and that is the way it is done. And therefore I just thought I would make that point for the record.

A number of issues have been raised in the debate, which of course I am sure we will get to when we do the heads. I mean, I am not going to get back to the issue of university education because we are doing education as the first head to be called, and therefore there is no need for me to deal with that. We are going to do health as the second head to be called, and therefore we will have a chance to

discuss all the issues raised by the honourable Member for Christ Church West and all other honourable members.

Eradication of poverty - I heard the honourable Member for St. Michael East talk about that. We are going to get to the Ministry of Social Care and its programmes, although I have to say that I do not know of any country in the world that has been able to eradicate poverty. And certainly no capitalist country in the world has been able to eradicate poverty, because eradicating poverty and capitalism are inconsistent. That is an axiom - a truth which is so evident that it can be accepted without proof - that if you have a capitalist system, you cannot talk about eradicating poverty, because capitalism feeds on poverty. You can talk about alleviating it. You can talk about alleviating the distresses of people in particular circumstances. But please get the language right. As long as you are talking about a capitalist system, you cannot talk about eradicating poverty.

The issue of the burden imposed on the country by its debt service has been raised. And how can anybody on this side of the House disagree with that? We discuss it almost weekly. As long as you are running large fiscal deficits, you have to incur debt. And as long as you incur debt, you have to deal with debt service. And the truth is we have to get ourselves out of that entrapment. There is nothing to hide here. As I said earlier today, only this morning I heard the President of Brazil, President Dilma Rousseff, saying to her country: look, we did not know this thing would have lasted so long. We continue to run stimulus policies,

but it doesn't seem to be coming to an end and we have to change course. But stimulus policies mean incurring debt and running deficits. Incurring debt and of course, coming up against the problem of debt service. I've heard all the speeches made in this Honourable House on the issue and of course the Government has to confront it, taking into account some of the suggestions that have been made, some of the suggestions that have been made in this House and outside of this House. But it is an issue, it is just not sustainable that on the meagre revenues that we have been earning, we have to allocate so large a segment of it to the payment of debt. We know how we got here and we have to know how we're going to get from here.

Not surprisingly, the issue of CLICO is being raised now. Mr. Speaker, I am a lawyer of some 31 years called now. I know that the matter of CLICO is before the courts. It is under judicial management. Judges have been dealing with the matter. I have kept out of that. I've kept my voice out of that because I think that the courts should be allowed to get on with their business. In any event, the Standing Orders of this House say something about how we treat matters that are sub judice. The point has to be made. I said it over and over again. I have as vested an interest in the

solution of the CLICO problem as anybody that's in Barbados. I have. I've had a life policy with CLICO since 1985 and I have a flexible premium annuity with CLICO since about 1998 or whenever it was. And although my flexible premium matured in 2011, I refused to draw it down because I said if Barbadians are going through difficulties with CLICO, it would be bad form for me to run off with what are my entitlements in circumstances where other people are enveloped in uncertainty. So I have steered clear of that.

My own view is quite frankly that we might have been better off if there had been more trust on the respective sides of this House. And the oversight committee which had been put in place by the late Honourable Member for St. John had been kept in place. The millions of dollars that I'm hearing about that have had to be paid to judicial managers - dizzying millions - we wouldn't have had to pay and we would have, in my view, made a little more progress in this matter. But there was no trust and people were more preoccupied with calling names and trying to besmirch the reputation of the late Honourable Member for St. John and trying to destroy the sanctity of his memory. All of those things. So I hope that having agitated for the matter to be put under judicial management, that we now have the patience to wait to see it through. What the Government has to do, the Government will do. But let it not be forgotten that there was agitation in this House and outside of this House for the matter to be put under judicial management.

We discussed CLICO as though there was not something called CLICO General Insurance, which had a mighty reputation in Barbados. CLICO Mortgage, which also had a mighty reputation in Barbados. We have tended to limit the debate to CLICO International Life, which a WTO report of December 2014 - or rather whose difficulties a WTO report of December 2014 explained in terms of the collapse of CL Financial in Trinidad and how it affected the subsidiary here in Barbados, CLICO International Life. But if Honourable Members on that side and elsewhere want to give the impression that there were some wicked people hidden somewhere who were trained to cause policyholders and others of Barbados problems, I am prepared to hear them out. I have a list, because I requested it, of all of the persons who invested in the Executive Flexible Premium Annuity. I have a list of all of them. And I say not yet. I know all the people who were entranced by the lure of the attractive interest rates. I know them. I have all of the names. I did not invest in any Executive Flexible Premium Annuity because it is not a traditional insurance product, according to the legal advice we got. I invested in a flexible premium annuity without the word executive, which is a traditional insurance product. But we wait. There is going to be a lot to be said on this. Do not mistake my silence for an incapacity to

speak. The time will come when all things will be made clear.

The issue of the National Insurance Department and the problems we have faced by pensioners, Mr. Speaker, has also been raised and with all those pensioners who have not yet got their pensions because of the difficulties at the National Insurance Department, I sympathise. I spoke as recently as this morning with the Director of National Insurance who assures me that corrective action continues to be taken and that a substantial dent would have been made in the problem by the end of this week.

But let me say this again. Barbados - and we tend to forget this - Barbados is a small developing country, a fragile developing country in the Eastern Caribbean. I, as a CARICOM Head of Government, know that every single CARICOM government, every single CARICOM economy is under pressure of some kind. In fact, Barbados was asked to lead an effort to set up a commission on the economy, the regional economy. And Barbados has been asked to lead that effort. And that effort has been reporting periodically to CARICOM Heads of Government and so on. But we in this region - and the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow used to always say that the problem in the Caribbean is not the high cost of living, it is the cost of high living. And we have begun, for some time now, beguiling ourselves. And I heard it in here today. I heard the Honourable Member for St. James Central talking about Barbados and the United States and Britain in the same breath. The United States has the largest economy in the world. It's the most powerful economy in the world. It's the richest country in the world. And the Honourable Member was speaking about growth in the United States and its rebounding, in the same breath in which he was talking about Barbados. He was talking about the United Kingdom, which used to be called the workshop of the world. The United Kingdom used to be called the workshop of the world, used to own the better part of the world, including Barbados. And he was talking about the United Kingdom and Barbados in the same breath.

Let us not forget, Mr. Speaker, that Barbados is a small, poor, developing country in the Caribbean. We do not produce computer hardware and we don't produce computer software. We import both. And given what has been going on in that orbit of technological production, a phrase has been developed called accelerated obsolescence, by which is meant that you buy something today and you think that you are on the cutting edge and you're given the impression that all is well, you are out front, you are on the cutting edge. And two weeks from now, something else springs onto the market and you are told that you're really a dinosaur. You're behind time. So you are kept in this chase all the time to keep on the cutting edge, to keep up to date with technological developments. And that is easy for countries like the United States that produce both the

hardware and the software. It is not easy for countries like Barbados and the other countries of the Caribbean, which have had to be saying to the world - I said it in Samoa, I've said it to the Prime Minister of Japan, I've said it in the United Nations, wherever I have gone I've said it, I said it at the CIELAC meeting in Cuba recently - that GDP per capita and so on, that index does not reflect Barbados' reality or the reality of countries in the Caribbean.

Small island developing states have to daily wake up aware of their vulnerability. There is something called - in fact what we've been agitating for is a vulnerability index. The entire GDP of Grenada was wiped out by a hurricane. In fact over 200 per cent of it was wiped out by a hurricane some years ago. And the most recent example of that vulnerability is Vanuatu. Vanuatu wiped out. The President says we have to start from scratch, just because of a cyclone over the last few days. Countries like this can't keep up with always having the most up to date technology, most up to date hardware and software. Basic issues like housing, low income housing, are a matter of struggle for us. But we continue to believe and to behave as though we can be talked about in the same breath as Japan. I'm very glad the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter made the point in his speech today that the debt to GDP ratio of Japan is over 230 per cent. But that does not affect Japan in the same way it would affect Barbados. Although I also agree with the Honourable Member that debt to GDP has to be of less relevance to us than debt to revenue, because that's the index that we have to be concerned about. And that's what we've been talking about in the Cabinet as we talk through these issues.

So Mr. Speaker, I am glad that we've got to this point on a Tuesday afternoon so that we can get to the real issues of the Estimates Debate. We're going to have a debate on the financial statement and budgetary proposals and we're going to have a chance to say all the things we want to say. All the things that were said in here today are going to be said on national television by the same people again. But we'll have that chance. But we need to get to the heads of expenditure so that members of the Government can be quizzed and called upon to justify how they're spending the people's money. That's what this exercise is about.

Now the other point I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, is this. An unheard reference was made to the Employment Rights Tribunal. Nothing wrong with making reference to the Employment Rights Tribunal. I have been accused of sending people to the Employment Rights Tribunal just to kill the matter related to the NCC. I've been accused of that over and over again. Let the record show that the Prime Minister chaired a meeting with the unions and with the NCC and received in writing a request from the unions that the matter be sent to the Employment Rights Tribunal. And all the Prime Minister did was to say, if the unions want

this, who am I to say no to it? In writing, a request was made by the trade union to have this matter referred to the Employment Rights Tribunal. And I understood the logic. The logic was it is better for an independent agency to deal with the issues related to NCC workers than for any union to find itself in a position where it has to say, Mary should not be working, Tom should be. As far as unions are concerned, everybody should be working. You go and put yourself in a position where you say, oh no, you shouldn't have sent home her, you should have sent home him. And all of them belong to the union. You compromise the position of the union itself. So they took the position, let the matter go to an independent agency for determination, and they would feel bound by the decision of that agency. And all the Prime Minister did was to say, if that is the wish of the unions, I have no choice but to accede to and to abide by that wish. So much for the Employment Rights Tribunal.

White Hill, St. Andrew, of course. The Minister of Public Transport and Works handed to me on Thursday a report with recommendations in relation to White Hill. Those recommendations I studied over the weekend. And the Honourable Member for St. Andrew can be assured that the White Hill issue will get appropriate and urgent attention from the Government. I'm very glad, though, Mr. Speaker. I am very glad that my very good friend, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, has had a chance to experience what the Prime Minister experienced at his hands in 1996 when the Prime Minister was asked to write - I was MP for St. Philip South then - and I was asked to write a letter identifying land in St. Philip that could be used for housing development. And I wrote the letter to the Honourable Member for St. Andrew. We were both in the House, he in Government, I was in Opposition. I was Deputy Leader of the Opposition at the time. And as we coincided, leaving this Chamber to go to lunch one day, I asked the Honourable Member whether he had got my letter. He said - call me by name - I got your letter. But I want to tell you this, nothing will be done about it. If the people of St. Philip South want something from the Barbados Labour Party, they have to get rid of you.

I would not allow the record to remain as it is. I do not recollect that that ever happened. That never happened. This is not the first time that I've heard it. But maybe the Honourable Member could not understand, from his distance in St. Philip, the English of St. James and St. Andrew very well.

That is very much like what I was told going down the steps of this House in 1996. I made the letter a document of the other place when I was there. Because I have not said this once or twice. I said it in here, I've said it up there. I've said it on political platforms. I've said it in the parish of St. Andrew. But that has done nothing to sour the relationship between the Honourable Member and me.

Because I know - I read Macbeth many years ago - and I know that even-handed justice sooner or later commends the ingredients of her poisoned chalice to our own lips. I know that. So I didn't have to ask the Honourable Member for St. Philip North to do anything. And I don't believe he did it. But I know that the Member for St. Andrew may be feeling some pain - pain not from the Minister of Transport and Works, but pain from a Senator in the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport. The pressure is being felt and the floor of this House was used today as a last ditch effort to get some attention from the people in White Hill. I can understand all of that. And I take this opportunity to convey to the Honourable Member my deepest sympathy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to delay the House. I hope I have satisfied Honourable Members on both sides why we are embarking on this new approach. I understand from listening to the Honourable Member for St. George North yesterday that there may have been some suspicion as to why we decided to go this route. I hope that next year we wouldn't have this difficulty, that we can agree on the procedure and that we can get as many heads of expenditure done as possible so that the real debate can take place when we have a debate on the financial statement and budgetary proposals. But there's no hidden agenda here. I just think that the process became distorted, is no longer sustainable and that we had to do something about it. To get some heads done. I am confident that this year we'll get Health and Education, the two largest spenders, done. We'll get Agriculture, Transport and Social Care done so that the people of Barbados can hear what is really happening and the Government can be called upon to justify what it is doing with the taxpayers' money.

So Mr. Speaker, I just want to conclude by congratulating the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, for the effort which he's continued to make to effect a turnaround in the economy of Barbados. He did not say in this debate that the economy has turned around. He said the economy is stabilising. And the evidence of that is clear. The Honourable Member for St. James North is not in his seat. In any event, this is the Lenten season and I have given up the Member for St. James North for Lent. That's one of the bad habits I've given up for Lent. But the misrepresentation of the position of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, by trying to give the impression that he said that all is now well and Barbados is a sunlit place - not true. We know that there are still some mountains to climb before we get back to where we want to be. But the process has started. And this Government's commitment to ensuring that process is completed is both irrevocable and profound.

So I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and all members of the Cabinet,

every single one of them, for the hard work that they've been doing to effect this turnaround. It's not been easy. But difficult times call for men of backbone and strength of character. And that is what we've been able to show throughout this entire period. I congratulate them. I congratulate the Minister of Finance. And I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to participating in the debate when we go into committee stage on the heads of expenditure which I have identified. This Bill has my full support. I'm obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, sir. Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, sir, I am obliged. Thank you very much for the opportunity to wrap up this part of the discourse - of course, the second reading of the Appropriation Bill 2015. I don't intend to be very long. Because frankly, I must say, in all of my years observing Parliament or following proceedings in the House of Assembly, and in my years since I've been elected as a member and have functioned as a Minister of Government, I don't recall ever having encountered such a mediocre set of second reading contributions from our opposition on either side of the House.

It really is quite amazing, because I was trying my best from the start of the lead of the opposition's reply to write some notes to respond to things of serious merit in the discussions and the interventions. And I really did not come up with a whole lot. In fact, I think the notepad is still blank and it is unfortunate, really. It's still as it came. I can still give it to somebody to do something and I probably make it a document of the House. I just have to head it up - Opposition Contributions 2015.

I mean, we laugh, but I think that perhaps it is because - I don't know, Mr. Speaker - maybe it is because the opposition spent so much time outside of the Parliament of Barbados when they really should have been here, protesting over a matter that really had no merits for protest of that nature, in particular, that they were a little rusty and unprepared for the estimates debate and they needed a little match practice. The Honourable Member for St. James Central has said it - they needed a little match practice before they came back into the House because they were all very rusty and unprepared for the debate. Well, not the Member for St. Andrew, because I had to say when I saw him this afternoon, happy New Year to you, because it was the first time I was saying it for the year. So not him. He's not even part of the team at all.

And the ironic thing about all of what we heard, Mr. Speaker, sir, this week so far was the very interesting scenario that in fact it seemed as though the former leader of the party, who is now the right honourable Member for St. Peter, who is now an independent member on the

government side - he sounded more as though he was leading that political party from over here than the person who is supposed to be leading it. And they were acknowledging him. And you know, the faces told a story, Mr. Speaker, because they all sat down listening in patient anticipation and expectation of a speech which was a reasonably good speech that he delivered, but some members were a little bit more excited than others. The Member for St. James Central, of course - he was wet behind the ears with the excitement.

He was clutching at every word that dropped out of his mouth. Mr. Speaker, sir, and you could see where the leadership for the Labour Party really resides. Because when the Member for St. Michael North East was speaking, the leader of the opposition - half were sleeping, the other half were busy on their iPads and, you know, nobody was listening. But I am not surprised at that, because like us, Mr. Speaker, sir, they have heard that speech so often. In fact, we have heard it repeatedly. Every year, it's the same speech. The paragraphs have not even been rearranged for stylistic purposes. They're all delivered in the same way. It has been delivered so often that the Member for St. Michael South East, who is now the queen lady of the Labour Party, was reciting it under her breath. She was reciting because the honourable member knows the speech by heart.

And we had to go through it and go through it. One interesting part that was missing, though, Mr. Speaker, sir - because as the member rambled on like rambling roads and then finally found the landing gear to put the speech down on the ground, almost dropped it out of the air - was this whole issue of the primary deficit. When the Member for St. Michael North East was speaking in many budget and estimates debates here in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member used to shout at the top of her voice that there are very few times in the history of Barbados in which we were running primary deficits. And she would call out the years.

So we come here to this House of Assembly to report the good news that the Government has been able to transform a primary deficit of \$385 million to a primary surplus of \$56 million. And the honourable Member for St. Michael North East, who of course is not here as usual - speaks and then leaves, never sits to hear reply - indicates: what is all this new academic jargon about primary deficit? Well, nobody's interested in any primary deficit. For years, we were slaughtered here for not getting a primary surplus. But I was subsequently notified that when the honourable member was speaking about a primary deficit, she did not even know what a primary deficit was. And that is why the honourable member is referring to it. Somebody has subsequently told the honourable member what primary deficit means, but they obviously have not told her what the importance of the primary deficit is.

Which, Mr. Speaker, sir, is this: that if your revenues and expenditures at a basic level, excluding debt service, are in balance or better yet surplus, it means that you are meeting your day-to-day operations - excluding debt service - without having to borrow to do so. And that is an important first station in relation to economic recovery. Precisely from tax revenue, you're meeting it from your tax revenues. It is important because if you are doing a restoration and stabilisation of your economy, that is the first place you have to start, and that demonstrates the progress that you are beginning to see in relation to the difficult challenges that you have. But the honourable member didn't want to touch that because that does not fit into her story. That does not fit into the story that this economy is not stabilising.

From their point of view, they then go on - and I heard the Member for St. James Central saying it and others repeating it as well - that the Government has put false figures in here and is trying to mislead people, and they are not dealing with the estimates because the figures in here are not true. Of course, the first very unfortunate thing about that is that you're casting aspersions. And the Member for St. Andrew, for all that he is worth or not worth, made the point that he could not believe that a minister could give a public servant any instructions to put information in a document that they know is not true. I certainly would not do that. In fact, public servants are bound by law to reflect the reality.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, sir, the honourable member is misleading the House. When I spoke, Mr. Speaker, I did not say anything whatsoever about any false figures being in the estimates book. I spoke, Mr. Speaker, about a failure on the part of the Government to give an accounting of its debt financing. And I directed the minister's attention to the Auditor General's Report of 2014 at page 44 thereof. Thank you.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: No point of order for him. Of course it's no point of order, sir. Thank you very much. Because I never accused the member of saying any such thing, just said that even though he has just gotten up and contradicting what he said that he did not say. Because the reality is this. And that's the point I am getting to. Anything that you see going in this document is a statutory document. What you see going in this document here, Mr. Speaker, sir, is a fair and honest, accurate reflection of government's accounts for the previous year based on the information we have at our disposal at the time and also the projections for the upcoming year. And I, as Minister of Finance, under the law or otherwise, cannot prevail on anybody to put information or to omit information from here that ought to be in here.

I excuse the Member for St. James Central. He does not understand accounting. He's not supposed to understand accounting, accrual, cash or otherwise. I excuse the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the Leader of the Opposition, because she doesn't understand much about anything, but goes around, Mr. Speaker, sir, speaking to this body and that body, recording what they say in her head and repeating them as though with this so-called photographic memory and giving the impression that she is an expert on everything under the sun.

But I want to make something very, very clear. And I see this thing about the Auditor General's report. I got it. You were looking for it? I got it. I asked you for it. It's yours. I'll return it. Mr. Speaker, sir, since we have gone to accrual accounting from cash, we have done it on a phased basis. And under the first phase or the first couple of phases, we started by accruing expenditure. It means that when an expenditure is incurred and a billing, invoice or any such instrument is presented and accepted, it is automatically recorded in your expenditure numbers. We have not started accruing revenue. We are going to start doing that fully from 2015, as I indicated in the estimates.

Good accounting practices - we have been going on this thing about accruing expenditure and doing revenue on a cash basis. And I have always said that will cause you challenges when you are computing your deficit. Because if you are counting expenditure when it is incurred, but you are only accounting for cash when you actually receive the money rather than when it is assessed as having to be paid, then you will always be playing catch-up. You will always have this gap.

Indeed, we have had the discourse about how to treat things like intangible assets and how to treat investment assets. If you buy shares - if you spend money like we buy shares in BNOCL - each share has a value and each of them, when added, has a cumulative value. If you are not accruing that value, it does not show as a computation on the revenue side, on the asset side in relation to your deficit. But the money you spend to buy the shares, as soon as you have incurred that expenditure, automatically shows up. So there must be a difference between the two because one is going out but there is no commensurate notation coming in. So that is why accruing expenditure and recording only cash received creates that gap.

Now I have to explain this because I don't want this thing to go - you know, the media prints these things and people read them. When we vote and approve estimates in this House, that is what the Parliament has appropriated under the Appropriations Bill for every ministry, department, company or whatever the case may be for the government. So long as the ministry or the department goes out and contracts that expenditure according to what Parliament has appropriated under the relevant heads and

subheads of expenditure, and so long as that billing is accepted in the SmartStream accounting software for the government, it automatically records in your expenditure.

So when people speak about arrears - say for the pharmaceutical people or whatever - the QEH is not contracting for goods and services to be supplied to it on a whimsical basis. They are doing so based on the appropriation provided for in these estimates by the House of Assembly. So if they go and ask for supplies based on the fact that they are getting \$150 million and they have set aside \$40 million or \$20 million for pharmaceutical supplies - whatever the figure is, I don't know, I am just speaking hypothetically - then once they have accepted that and posted it in the system, it is recorded as part of your deficit because it goes into expenditure and has to be reported on.

So when we report in the estimates what would have been spent for last year - and this has nothing to do, because I think what members are getting tied up with is the cash - there is a difference between financing and the expenditure that is available. If the company has been contracted to provide goods at \$20, just using a hypothetical, then it is recorded as a liability of the government. Now if the government doesn't have the cash flow to pay the \$20, that is a different thing. That is a cash issue. And that goes in the financing statement. But in the deficit statement of the government the liability has to show.

So if for three or four years the government was not able to pay the utility entity on time and the figure is \$130 million, that \$130 million which would have been billed to the government over those three years has already been placed in the government's records as a liability owing. So you can't come back and take the \$130 million and add it back in a financial statement for 2014. If the money was owed over a period of time as expenditure, you can't do it that way because - and I am not an accountant - you will be double counting.

I have heard many different figures. I heard the people at the utility entity say it is \$200 million. I heard somebody say it is \$185 million. I heard somebody say recently it is \$155 million. Now I see in this report it had \$33 million. Now if in fact, from all the different sources in and outside of the government, you can't figure out yet what the exact amount is, then I think it is a very unwise thing - in fact, it will be very foolhardy and indeed misleading - to pretend that it is \$133 million. It could be \$200 million or \$190 million. So there is always an element of uncertainty in relation to these matters in financial reporting because the Accountant General can only record in the statements what is put into the system.

So anybody could come and do a report for 2014 and say, well, I didn't see it reflected in there, because if the Accountant General is still not certain and there are still investigations to be done to determine the true extent of it, then it would not be a fair reflection of government accounts if you report that X is the case when in fact it is not. So when people come and give the impression that the government is hiding something and trying to hide the liabilities - the government cannot hide liabilities. Cannot. Once they bill you, once you contract with them and they bill you, it is a liability unless you are disputing the amount that they are asking for. And this is simply an accounting reality.

So I caution my friend from St. James Central: when you get these documents and you read these little snippets and you get yourself a little excerpt at 11 o'clock in the night, just pick up the phone and call me. I will speak with you at 11 o'clock at night. I will save you the trouble of having to come in here trying to sound intelligent on something that you really did not understand in the first place. So the Ministry of Finance is not hiding anything from anybody. What you see in these estimates is a fair reflection of what happened and what we expect to happen next time.

And I heard this point being made that agencies are not getting the money, so what are you doing estimates for anyhow? That is precisely a cash flow as opposed to an accrual allocation basis. But if the QEH is to get \$150 million and you say, well, you voted \$150 million for last year and you were only able to give them \$100 million, so when you come here you are pretending you are voting \$150 million - suppose the cash situation improves to such a point where you can actually deliver? You have to vote for the agency the monies that it requires, because if the cash situation improves and by their estimation they are saying you were only able to give the QEH \$100 million, so don't put in \$150 million because you know it is only \$100 million - but \$100 million is less than they deserve and less than they need to function. So we have to do this exercise and then of course we have to go and find the money to be able to give them the cash to do their work.

But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, sir, that when we came into office we found the QEH getting \$120 million. And by 2012-13, this government gave the QEH \$212 million Barbados dollars to function. And that is simply a reality of fact.

And I hear people speaking, including my Honourable friend from Christ Church West, who has now found her voice and I am very happy for her. She spoke quite eloquently about these groups and these people who very conveniently put themselves together and issued a press release last week on the eve of the estimates to give somebody something to talk about, repeating the same

thing that they said two weeks before and the two weeks before that. All of this is the setup. You see, the problem in Barbados is that everything is tinged with politics and you have to create these political optics to give people things to talk about.

But I want to say this: the medical practitioners and the other people are speaking out as well they should. I am not saying they shouldn't speak, and if they are having difficulties, say the difficulties they are having as they have been saying it. But when they are meeting, also remind the public that out of the allocation given to the QEH, Mr. Speaker, sir, 72 per cent is spent on salaries and wages. \$108 million is spent on salaries and wages at the QEH. So when people are talking about money for supplies, let them know that one of the reasons why we are having challenges finding money for supplies is because we have to spend so much money on paying staff, and rather than coming up with a plan to restructure the hospital so that we can reduce that cost - so that the programme cost and administrative cost could bear some decent relation to the services that we provide at the QEH - we continue with all the consultants and repeat consultants and this body and that body.

Because we have a general hospital in Barbados that offers practically every possible service that you could imagine. We deal with kidneys, we do open heart surgery, we have ophthalmology - so many applications in ophthalmology that you could not even believe. There are some developed countries that do not offer as many services as the QEH offers. And for each one of those services you have to have a specialised person, a technical skill to deliver it, and you have to pay them. So we have to have a discussion about healthcare as we have to have a discussion about education. But I am not getting too deeply involved in that.

But let us be realistic. When we get in this country and we pile up debt - not when this government was in office - and that is the hypocrisy of it. Mr. Speaker, sir, the hypocrisy of it is that we have inherited a poison chalice. And now that we are trying to deal with it, we are being beaten all over the head that we can't be providing this and you're not doing that and you've got to pay so much money in debt. You know where the money is going? The money is going to pay for the prison - \$700 million. The money is going to pay for the court building - that they say when the counsel sits down in the seat they can't see the judge - all incurred by the Labour Party. The money is going to pay for Greenland, that has not accepted one piece of waste yet - \$100 million. The money is going to pay - and I tell you, this Democratic Labour Party is one of the most unlucky parties in the world - it is going to pay for the [Inaudible.] building that some of the sanctimonious hypocrites in Barbados, who saddled the people of Barbados with that debt, are now running around pretending that they don't know anything about. A

supplementary is coming for the money to pay for that. And it is going to be debated in here. And people are going to have to explain. People on that side are going to have to explain to the people of Barbados how they got us into that mess, and not pretend they don't know anything about it.

And talking about CLECO - the tumble CLECO - on who said invoices and cheques - I am going to hear about that. Wait, we are not going to hear about that? Listen, if people want to crucify and prosecute this government on that type of innuendo and rumour and gossip, we can have them back to back. I want back first. And I want CLECO there. And I want Four Seasons there too. We can deal with them all, one by one. We can deal with the Crab Hill police station too. I got it. I got the documents. So all of this sanctimonious posturing that they come about here - we can deal with it in this House of Assembly. I am not getting into it now because the estimates are more important for us than to get into this at this time.

But it bothers me. It bothers me when you hear people in here trying to destroy the name of people both living and those who have passed away - people that cannot answer for themselves. I heard the former Attorney General talking about CLECO. They want to drag us into some CLECO debate and believe that they can put this thing as some garland around the Democratic Labour Party's neck. And you know the funny thing about this whole CLECO thing? The Honourable Member for St. Joseph got up and had the testicular fortitude to give the impression - Mr. Speaker, sir - speaking all over his face about -

this matter pertaining to CLICO on which I'm not dealing with today. But never said in his presentation - as did the honourable lady from Christ Church, the Member from Christ Church West - didn't say either. The Leader of the Opposition didn't say that when whatever was taking place at CLICO was taking place, the Barbados Labour Party was in government. That's right. That is absolutely correct. And had charge, because he said I am the Minister responsible for the FSC. But who was the Attorney General? Who was the Minister of Finance? It wasn't Chris Sinckler - David Thompson. Of course they were. And giving it praise as one of the best managed companies in Barbados and for which other people should follow. But now all of them pretend that it's a Democratic Labour Party whatever. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Hang on that road, because let me tell you something. No, no, no. Let me go on. Let me tell you something. What the judicial manager is reporting on in relation to CLICO, or whatever would have happened, took place when they were in office. Not you, sir, not you.

And then you all remember who is a senior lawyer, a respected senior attorney-at-law in Barbados - I mean the honourable Member for St. Joseph. Who was that? You don't have nothing at CLICO. I have nothing at CLICO.

Listen, I am not only going to press on. I am not only going to participate in the debate as Minister of Finance. I am going to lead the debate. My honourable friend for St. James Central - I would just remind him. Anyway, I am not going to let him drag me out.

But I heard the Member for St. Joseph, who was a senior attorney and for whom I have - I believe as a lawyer he is recognised and respected in Barbados - QC, former Attorney General - saying that taking up the Financial Services Commission and asking how, under this Minister of Finance who has responsibility for the FSC, I got involved in the CLICO thing. I was in court and shouldn't have been in court. And if I was giving them instructions, let me make this point. I do not - when it comes to regulatory agencies, as the Prime Minister well knows, we have a position in the Cabinet of Barbados. When it comes to regulatory agencies, we allow those agencies to do their work. We don't call down there giving any instructions. I have never called the FSC giving anybody any instructions. I don't care where the Act is. The Act is very clear. It says the Minister may give directions of a policy nature - general directions of a policy nature. It doesn't say the Minister runs the place, is responsible for meddling in it. And I don't get involved in their business. I didn't ask them what they were doing at court because that is not for me to do. That is for their lawyers and their board and their management to decide.

But if the honourable former Attorney General would take some time to read the law - the Insurance Act is Cap. 310, is it not? 310. If the honourable Member would read a little law when he is making these points, he would have made the point, or he would have known that when we passed the FSC Act, one of the things we did in passing that legislation as a Parliament - and the honourable Member responded to me when I led off that debate; he was the first respondent for the Government - the honourable Member would have remembered, or should have remembered, that the Financial Services Commission Act gives the Financial Services Commission responsibility for the execution of the specific enactments which then operated within the Act as part of the schedule to the FSC Act. So that the former Insurance Act, the specified enactment, is attached and given to the Financial Services Commission the responsibility for executing all of the powers and responsibilities of the Supervisor of Insurance. There is a QC, you know - Queen's Counsel.

And I therefore take you, Mr. Speaker, sir, to section 59 of the Act - section 59. Let me get it here for you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, and this is the section dealing with judicial management, and it says - Act 59, subsection 7. And I quote: the judicial manager, if you have a company under judicial management, shall give the Supervisor of Insurance such information as the Supervisor requires and shall report to the Supervisor whenever he intends to apply

to the court for instructions. I know I am not getting involved in it now, but I have reason to question whether or not the judicial manager executed that specific responsibility each and every time in relation to applications that went before the court and for which the court was asked to pronounce. But that is for a different debate. Whenever he intends to apply to the court for instructions, he shall at such time furnish the Supervisor particulars of the application.

But it goes further. At subsection 8, it says the Supervisor shall be entitled to be heard - shall, meaning mandatory - shall be entitled to be heard on any application referred to in subsection 7, which includes the application to have the forensic audit unsealed, or to have the company liquidated, or to have anything happen with CLICO. He shall be heard as under subsection 7 and may make application to the court with reference to the conduct of the judicial manager. That is the law. That is the law. I didn't have to give anybody any instructions. The people at the FSC have read the law. They know what their position is and therefore they appeared in court. They had what the lawyers call locus standi. They had locus standi. They needed no instruction from the Minister of Finance. If you are going to court in such a serious case like this to ask for a forensic audit to be unsealed - and it must be remembered that the judicial manager is the person who asked for the audit to be sealed in the first place, not the Government, not the FSC - and the basis on which the judicial manager asked for the audit to be sealed is that if it was unsealed it would cause a disruption in the work of the judicial management in relation to the management of the company and the restructuring of the company. And the question has to be asked: what has changed?

But you know what? God is a good God. And I am glad that it was unsealed, because I don't know what it is that was in it that couldn't be seen anyway, other than statements that have been made - some not properly corroborated, some inaccurate if you read it, others on hearsay - and all of the parties involved not being interviewed in relation to it. And then you had situations where affidavits and pleadings were put into the court and somebody leaked them to the press. This is what is going on in Barbados. Somebody leaked them to the press. Things in those reports that are not fully investigated and substantiated. And the judicial manager himself said he needs more time.

I am not going to say more than that, but this is what is going on, because in Barbadian society - let me tell you - anything happens in Barbados, you are guilty until proven innocent. People just want to hear a salacious story and off to the races they go. And then you have the unseemly situation of people who should know better walking around telling people about bank accounts. And they have people's bank account information and they have the bank account

numbers. And this is the kind of thing that people are speaking about. And I always warn people. I spoke about it in the Nation when I went to the editors' forum and I made this point to the editorial staff there. I am going to make this point again. It is me today and you tomorrow. If you have information like personal bank account numbers and people's transactions, you really should not have it. The law says people who are not authorised to be handling that information should not have it. But if you do have it, if it comes into your possession, you have to be very careful how you broadcast this thing all over the place. And I am saying: let the process of the law and otherwise take its course and people will deal with these things when the time is right.

And that is why all of this rubbish about the Central Bank taking a deposit - you remember the Member for St. James Central speaking about that all over the place. And he knows better, because I know at least he reads law. He doesn't understand everything he reads - you all remember that - he doesn't understand all the law he reads, but he reads it nonetheless. And the honourable Member knows that the Central Bank of Barbados cannot accept -

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: The Member is misleading the House. Please tell us when they have spoken on this matter. Mr. Speaker, sir, I refer to an affidavit filed in court and the person who swore the affidavit said that he has a deposit. I didn't say anything about any law, sir. I said that the affidavit filed in court - the deponent says, I, in the Roy Paris or whatever address - very well - do most solemnly swear as follows: that I have a deposit at the Central Bank. I read what I saw. If his Queen's Counsel misled him, that is a different matter.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Fair enough. But the point is this - your Member knows the law. The Central Bank does not and cannot accept deposits from any individual. The Central Bank is the bank of the Government. The banker to the Government.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: The honourable Member prefaces his remark by saying that I know - the Member for St. James Central, sir, cannot know. It is he who swore the affidavit. If the Member wants to come - I remember that is the same point that you realised just now was overruled. Please take your seat.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, sit down please.

Please continue. Yes, and the fact. The reality is, Mr. Speaker - I understand you all - the member is that even if the affidavit, even if the affidavit has something that may be a misstatement, I don't think anybody deliberately is making an eternal lie. Because the reality is that precisely the individual to whom we are speaking does not have, as

far as I know and from my investigations, any deposit - because you cannot have a personal deposit at the Central Bank; it would have to be associated with some type of financial instrument that was offered to the public. They know that, but they just try to create this impression. I don't know about affidavits. I have never sworn one. I saw the affidavit that was sworn by you that indicated that your leader apparently, in the affidavit, is alleged to have taken monies that did not belong to her Labour Party accounts. Did you make a mistake? He has not retracted the affidavit. What you are saying is true there - I wait to understand that you are telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

So, Mr. Speaker, sir, please do not let us go down there yet because we are going to have a time to discuss these matters very, very clearly and very openly. Because this Democratic Labour Party has nothing to hide in relation to CLICO. Because we have not done anything wrong. We have told people and we have promised them that we will try our level best to ensure that they get back the value of their investments and deposits and instruments they have out there, to the best of our ability and to the ability of the country to pay. These things take time. If we could have done it yesterday, it would have been done. Because we are not just talking about Barbadians - we are talking about people down in the OECs: St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Antigua, St. Kitts, all of them. And we have to ensure that those persons are not caused to be put up a creek because of a situation that they had no control over. So we are going to discuss these matters and that is the position of the Government. You do not have to believe the Government, you do not have to think so, but that is what we are working towards.

The judicial managers came to the Cabinet of Barbados. They recommended a restructuring plan. We accepted and approved that plan. And we are moving to put the plan in place. And we have not included money in these Estimates yet because we try, as much as possible, before we enter information in here, to have a degree of certainty as to what the figure is. And it was always known that \$30 million cannot pay back the people. If you have a \$300 million deficit, how can you pay it back with \$30 million? The \$30 million is for the administration of the company, which is what the recommendation of the judicial managers is. We are now going through the figures to determine whether or not it is 30, 40, 20 or 5. And when that information is gathered - and we hope before we come back with the approved Estimates, because these address the draft - then we will include that in the approved Estimates and record it in the expenditure accordingly.

So these are the matters, Mr. Speaker, as I wind up. I don't intend to go off - I said I would only do the thing - and I have gone over the time a little bit, sir. And I am obliged. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, sir. But let me just close

by saying this, sir. We have come a long way in Barbados in relation to the impact of this recession. And there is a gentleman who is currently on a sabbatical visit at the Central Bank - Peter Blair Henry - who has written an excellent book. He has read a number of books and in one of his publications he makes the point that he compares a number of countries and their road to development, their road development and things in the post-independence period. And one of the things that he points out is that one of the distinguishing features about Barbados, as opposed to a lot of other countries around the world and certainly in the Caribbean, is that Barbadians know how to handle their affairs. And that strong institutions and appropriate policies, when stuck to and implemented, sir, will bring you the benefit. It is when you believe that you can change course because somebody says next week that you should do this and somebody says the week after you should do that, that you run into problems. Consistency of policy - that is what gets you out of this situation. And I have proven that to myself in this period.

Because as members of the Opposition speak, they want to have the cake and eat it too. Cut the deficit, bring the deficit down, but don't cut nothing. Bring in revenue but don't raise the tax. Cut the wage bill but don't cut salaries. Bring down the wages and salary bill but don't say who. Do all of these things but don't do nothing, because we want to - they did too - because we are looking to the next election and we are interested in 2018. We are not interested in people. We want to get into Government so we want to be everybody's friend. Cut it, chop it, change it - once it suits a popularity context, just do it. But that is not what Government is about. That is the luxury of opposition politics. That is not the luxury of getting up every day and running a Government. So I am not into the popularity contest. I don't care whether my rating is 6, 16 or 60. I don't need a poll for affirmation. I know who I am, I know what is required for the job and I try honestly and fairly, with the faith of God, to implement the policies along with my colleagues that will bring Barbados around.

I want to close on this point. Mr. Speaker, sir, members are right - the Member for St. Peter, members are right, they are only repeating what the Member for St. Philip West has been saying - but they are all right. Debt is a problem for Barbados and we have all, both administrations, contributed to the debt burden. I am the Minister of Finance who has to deal with the debt burden in Barbados and I did not create a lot of it. And debt restructuring, debt refinancing, whatever you call it - all these fancy terms - those things are important and countries have looked at them. But look at all of the examples of the countries who have done it. It is not the only thing that will get you out. There are certain things you have to do as well. Greece is doing debt restructuring and debt refinancing but the European Union and the IMF are asking for more austerity - cut more, chop more, send home more people,

raise more taxes, do this, do that, do the next, do the third. Jamaica has had a debt exchange, a successful debt exchange. But it too has had to do the same thing. The Minister of Finance of Jamaica only two or three days ago went and carried a whole slew of new taxes in the House of Assembly, including a tax on gasoline, on fuel products. When the price was going down, the man put on a tax and carried it. Because debt restructuring will buy you some fiscal space. But debt restructuring and the space that you can get - if you can get it, get it. But debt restructuring cannot buy you a restructuring of your economy.

And that is why when we are doing things like getting the fiscal balance, the primary balance back in this economy, these are the things that we have done to prepare ourselves so that if we ever have to have that conversation, we can go and say: look, we have taken the measures, we have done as much as we can in the circumstances to bring this thing under control. But if you go to somebody with a 12 per cent deficit and tell them you want debt refinancing and debt restructuring, they will laugh you out of the hall, because they will ask you: but what are you going to do to bring yourself under control? Don't just come to me and ask. I will work with you, but working with you means that you can go back and do the same thing and be back here in another five to ten years - don't bother to come. So we are doing the things now to prepare us to be in a position to have that conversation and nobody can blame a Government for that.

So all is not well in Barbados - I never said that. People are hurting at various levels. Austerity hurts. There is no painless austerity. But we are doing it to save and secure Barbados. And rather than getting up like the Sunday recitation - the only thing missing is the stalker cane and two berry fruits and a hayti - and giving a recitation of everything that you have seen wrong in Barbados: garbage not collected, and this body ain't got this and that body ain't got this, and there was a hurricane and this and that - rather than doing that, come up with some reasonable-sounding, constructive recommendations to help your country out of the situation that it is in. Rather than just going at the laundry and getting your suit laundered with the idea that you are going to be in Government next week because of a poll and if an election is held the DLP can only get four seats, and everybody walking around excited and out with notepads on Sundays knocking on windows and doors: "Hello, Barbados Labour Party here. I am not the candidate" - anybody said whatever, he has got elections. Stop with that foolishness and get serious in Barbados about policy and people.

Because after all, Mr. Speaker, sir, it is not about you. It is not about us. It is about the people of Barbados. That is what it is about. Not about getting office. I have no inheritance to office. Office does not belong to me. I don't need to be Minister of anything. I don't need to be in any

Government. I thank the people of St. Michael North West who gave me the opportunity to come to the Parliament and represent their interests. I thank them for that and I will do my best as I can. But if I have to leave Government, I will leave it too. But I am ensuring that when we leave - or if we leave, which will not be on account of you all, I can tell you - we will do so with our heads held high, that we have contributed to stabilising Barbados, including the economy, returning it to growth and ensuring that our march towards becoming a country that is sustainable is achieved. That is our mission.

So, Mr. Speaker, sir, I thank you. I bless you for your patience. Thank you for phase one, because phase two is coming. And when the cameras are on, I will be on my best behaviour with all of the files that I have at my disposal in relation to dealing with some of these matters and defending the interests of the people who I know have integrity in this country. Mr. Speaker, that day is coming. I am obliged to you and I beg to move, therefore, that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, before we go to the Head standard and start with Education, as we have indicated, we want to take a suspension until 5.30 this afternoon. I beg to move, therefore, sir, that the House be suspended until 5.30 this afternoon.

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

The question that the House be suspended until 5.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, this sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken we were on Order Number 17 and with that we shall continue.

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

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

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee.

Mr. CLERK: Head 77 - Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation - in the amount of \$286 444 800.

HEAD 77 - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is my intention to place before this Honourable House Head 77 and to try to spend some time in dealing with the various issues which are all part of this very important social sector called education. And putting it straight up that education from time to time goes through certain dynamic changes, some propelled by direct policy initiatives, followed by programmes and other ideas which might come from the populace at large or possibly borrowed from other areas where one has encountered the best practices at the given time. And therefore right now we are in the mix of dynamic change - change which can be tabled as confronting realities, building excellence and engaging the future. I want to repeat that: change which has at its base confronting realities, building excellence and engaging the future. And we are doing that against the background of the changes which have been taking place in the world, particularly over the last seven or so years. A lot of change engendered by certain financial realities in the world which have caused many educational systems to rethink a lot of what they have been doing. And nevertheless, still looking to the future to build out our societies and our economies.

This year we have been asked to make a further step based on that which has been provided in the estimates of expenditure. As you have heard, the total sum including transfers, provisions for tertiary education, provisions for primary education, nursery education, secondary education, for the Higher Education Development Unit, for the Accreditation Council, et cetera - that total sum of \$489 million. Just slightly down from the \$293 million for this financial year, the financial year that we are in, 2014-2015. I repeat that: \$489 million for the financial year to come. We know that governments of Barbados have over time committed quite a large sum of money to this aspect of human resource development, building out its human capital, building more and more capacity among the citizens of Barbados.

It is not the only department or ministry that invests in either education or training. There is some bit of separation because training, skill development, et cetera -

even though a lot of it is done in schools - but out-of-school youth also benefit as a result of the intervention of the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development, which is headed by the Honourable Member from the other place. You will find there the TVET Council, which has major responsibility for building out the policy initiatives and the recognition of the various programmes, the Barbados Vocational Training Board, which gives expression to those particular initiatives, and also work which is carried on by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in the various entrepreneurial and other initiatives. So you will find that even though there is a separation in the quantity of resources, when you look at it, governments over time have spent a significant amount of money on education and training and other forms of skill development and the building out of competencies among the youth - in-school youth and out-of-school youth - and those people as well who need second-chance opportunities.

When you look again critically at the amount of money relative to the gross domestic product, just simply looking at what the government provides is among about 6 per cent of its gross domestic product at various times. Sometimes it drops to about 5.5, 5.7. And it compares extremely well with what is being spent in the countries of the OECD. In fact, what they do that we do not do is that they take into consideration monies which are spent by families to equip children to go to school, provide bus fare, lunch money, and they take a measurement. We simply look at that which is provided by the state and that is the difference. In fact, if we had to look - and maybe we need to look - at that which is provided by families to ensure the continuation of education, our figure might in fact be higher than that being spent by some countries in the OECD if we use that measure. But we might very well take a look at that; persons who are better equipped to consider that area.

In this whole process of provision of educational services and the transformation of educational services, we have to have at its base a vision, a continuing reassessment of that vision. And we have placed before this House a vision for education in Barbados - one which will have an efficient and effective world-class education system that engages and prepares all students, citizens as a whole, to be locally, regionally and globally competitive for life and careers. That is what we are placing at the base as the vision for education in this country going forward.

There have been over time successes in our education system, and those successes can be viewed by looking at various measures, whatever those measures are that you want to consider. One measure might very well be how Barbados has developed. And there are many, many persons who have said and stated quite emphatically in the region and outside of the region that Barbados has

developed the way it has because of the amount of resources that Barbadians have spent or have placed to the use of education. And if you consider that we really do not have what I refer to as a wide array of natural resources - we had a little manganese up in St. Andrew years ago, a little oil, particularly along the eastern and south-eastern part of Barbados, more and more of it declining in land, fossil fuel finds both natural gas and petroleum, we have some sand, particularly in the Scotland district - but when you look around as a country that can mine gold or bauxite or silver or plutonium or whatever, that does not exist in Barbados. So for a long time, but more particularly in the last 50 to 60 years, policymakers, decision-makers, even ordinary citizens have said: let us invest in our people. And these funds provided are but a continuation of that particular philosophy - you can almost say ideology - in relation to the build-out of our human resource capacity, our capital, our human capital formation and our human capital development.

We can from time to time be critical, and I believe that critique has to do, if you are sincere of course, with how best to utilise, how best to manage those resources within the context of that further development. The mission that we are currently working through is one which says, Mr. Chairman, that the mission of education in Barbados is to increase the proficiency of all students within one coherent, effective and efficient system by allowing all learners the opportunity to expand their knowledge, competencies, attitudes and skills through varying learning opportunities and to promote effective research in science, technology and innovation. And that these things are valued by students, parents, communities and the wider Barbadian society. That is what is the thrust forward. That is the bedrock on which resources of the state, resources of the people are being called upon to give expression to. But also resources of caring organisations, resources of PTAs, resources of communities, resources of philanthropic organisations to help build out.

No one has ever believed that the resources provided to education or any other social area is enough. One has never believed that. There is always the constant desire, the constant need to have more and more resources being placed to these areas. What has happened over the last seven years or so is that we have been asked - and we have done - to be efficient, to manage the resources that you have and to manage those resources to still work towards the best results that our children can give, that our teachers can encourage, and that our society needs. That our society needs to ensure continuing viability of our economy and our country. And from my vantage point, I believe that we have been doing well. We can do better. In any situation where human beings exist, we know that we can do better.

We have said that in the 21st century there are things that we have to do. We have taken over the government

within seven or eight years of the emergence of the 21st century. There were footprints planted before; there was a journey shown. But all journeys - you have to stop and take reflection, possibly reorder your steps to ensure that wherever you are going or wherever you want to go, you can successfully go. So we have to look at developing essential digital skills for the 21st century. A lot of it is all around us. Our young people are technological beings. This started at the end of the 20th century, where our young people were exposed to gaming technology, video technology, some aspects of digital technology, all of the various technologies that make it possible for us to exist successfully within the 21st century. We recognise that we cannot be Luddites and hide away from the presence of technology.

We talk about collaboration in the learning environment. We talk of new teaching modalities where constructivism - where the learner is placed at the centre of all learning - and that the teacher is no longer the seer of all knowledge, but the overseer of learning, of giving young people and learners the opportunity to examine their own abilities, to critique their own abilities, and to develop strengths as they are encouraged. Because you encourage strengths as they are developed to make themselves better human beings on the face of the earth. And that is why we emphasise very strongly now within education something called emotional learning. Some people call it enrichment learning. But we are speaking more of emotional learning - emotional strengths where a lot of attitudes lie and behaviours, et cetera. But we are also speaking of spiritual learning. What kind of human beings we are, what kind of human beings we want our children to become. So beyond the emotional learning behaviour, we are talking also of spiritual learning. And I want to emphasise that because without human beings recognising that they are also spiritual, there are behaviours which they can get involved with that are inimical to the development of human society.

We are also speaking of developing creativity and innovation. These are at the heart, these are at the crux of the further build-out of our society and our economy. For argument's sake, let us simply consider the development of one or two successful apps. Or a Barbadian who stayed at home who developed an excellent song or proper CD and goes onto the Internet and just has to sell one song at 99 US cents and sell 10, 20, 30 million songs in a matter of months across the world and has a merchant account set up here in Barbados through which, when you purchase it, it goes right into that account every day. It is not money laundering; it is the selling of one successful song that is beautiful, lovely to the ears. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East is the manager of that person. Her coffers too will be filled. And that is what we are trying to transition our young people to. Not all of our young people will transition because they have variable talents. There are varying talents, there are multiple talents all across the

place and we are looking to tap into those talents for personal development, for national development, to help in the development of the economy and society.

We are talking about promoting entrepreneurial activity - all of this embedded at various levels of the system of education that we have. Entrepreneurial activity at Community College, SJPP, University of the West Indies, in our secondary schools environment, acquiring scientific knowledge. And that is why the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation is there, still evolving, still trying to find the right mix to ensure that our scientifically minded people, our scientists, are involved in the process of national development. But critically still, as we do all of this with the resources provided, we are not going to forget the raising of the overall standards of literacy and numeracy within our country - still fundamental to any learner. Raising literacy, understanding, comprehending what is there before us and our ability to be numerate.

Now we have, and started some while ago, looked at that critical age of early childhood education - a very critical area. Hitherto the last maybe 15 or so years, a lot of our children at age three did not go into a learning environment. People who could not afford to send their children to private institutions, they were kept at home and socialised within that environment. Not a criticism, because nearly all of us here - maybe outside of one or two - maybe the Member for St. James North was not at home; he was in an environment where his parents paid for him to be given early childhood care and education. But my mother looked after me in the home and the grandmother was next door.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: On a point of order.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: What is the point of order?

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I went to Pinery School - New Pine Primary School, that is now Wilkie Comerford School - and I am very, very proud of my public school education. I then went to Harrison College, of which I am very proud. The Honourable Minister really and truly should behave himself with decency.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Who went to school under age five and did not start his educational care and development through whatever methodology used at age three? What we are doing now is in fact reaching even before five to give those children who hitherto could not benefit from early childhood care. So at age three they are going into schools, they are learning through the various techniques and methods better suited for that particular age cohort, and our children therefore do not have to stay at home.

As I said, a lot of the momentum was created through the work of CARICOM, which gave a mandate to countries of CARICOM to look further down and get our children trained up into an educational setting, into a care setting, into a development setting. And that is why on the basic education development there are always monies for the society to take care of our nursery-age children who are in nursery parts of primary schools, to take care of our children who are in dedicated nursery schools like the Maria Holder Nursery, or Eden Lodge Nursery, or the one in St. Philip - I do not remember the name off-hand - Algerine Nursery, or the one down St. James, the St. Boniface Nursery. These are dedicated nursery institutions. And what you will find is that those teachers have been trained to such a degree that they recognise and they know how to deal with children of that early age. And our young children are learning. There are some of the brightest faces that you can see and encounter in our education system, eager for knowledge, eager for learning, and we are continuing to refine the skills of our teachers.

Only recently - I believe a year ago - we had some 40 of those nursery teachers who, in conjunction with Wheelock College, the Maria Holder Trust and Erdiston Teachers' College, were able to complete a diploma in early childhood education. Best practices being continually brought to bear on our three-year-olds. You will have as part of this continuing exercise that six new nursery schools are in the process of being rolled out. The first has in fact been started at Gall Hill Number Two and the Churchill Road in Christ Church being built out. If you pass there - if you are heading to a service at Christ Church Parish Church - you will see what will be possibly one of the more well-planned and developed nursery schools in Barbados being built as we speak.

That will be followed very shortly by the second nursery school to be built in the parish of St. Philip at Oldbury in St. Philip, right before as you swing into Gemswick - which used to be referred to by a name that I so love: Penny Hole, Penny Hall, a name that I so love. You will find the second nursery school being built in that area. And you will find over the next two years a nursery school being built to replace the Government Hill Nursery School on the land where that great educational institution - private as it was, catering to so many Barbadian young people of the day, held by an outstanding and recognised educator called Mr. Wilbert Callender - the Cooperative High School. A new nursery school will be placed there on that site, land owned by the state; a new nursery school will be built there.

You will also find that we will go down to Holders Hill and a nursery school will be placed there. We will go further down the west coast where the old St. Alban's Infant School used to be and a nursery school will also be placed there. And we had plans to put a nursery school at

Sears Court. But as I told colleagues, we will look at that based upon the impact of the presence of more three-year-olds in that area, because the school at Gall Hill Number Two, Churchill, might be able to accommodate the numbers. But if not, at Sears Court near to the day-care centre there, a nursery school will also go there. That would complete that current exercise in satisfying the needs. We will also find a place to have a nursery school. We have worked overtime with private providers but we found that the public schools tend to be a lot more attractive - first, there is the cost, and secondly sometimes there is the infrastructure that might be of some consideration.

Why the emphasis, Mr. Chairman, on nursery education? It is self-evident. The earlier that you expose the child to early cognitive stimulation, early tactile stimulation, early psychomotor stimulation, early creative stimulation, you are possibly working on a better human being in the world. A better human being in Barbados, cultured in an environment that is suitable to the expression of that child's talents. The development of the kind of contact necessary -

to foster better understanding of each other regardless of color, class, race or creed. We are looking to build better humans, foster the development of better human beings. Going to any of these nursery schools or nursery classes and you can see the extent of eagerness to learn behaviors that are good for these as young people growing up in a country that cares about them. Notwithstanding the challenges that we have faced over the last seven years and challenges before of course, because one could pretend as others do and as they do so well that this is the first time that we have faced challenges in this country and we have had to make alterations to the cloth. That we have had to look at how we do things, that we've had to look at how effective we can be and how efficient we can be in finding the maximum or the optimal use of the resources that are before us. And therefore that effort will continue.

That programme will continue. Erdiston Teachers College - I'll speak more about that as I speak over the next few hours or so - Erdiston Teachers College is doing its best in that area as well. Not only for teachers but in its other programmes. Parents can come to learn about early childhood care and development so that they can better manage and look after the early needs of their little ones. And I think this presents a very holistic picture of early childhood care and education. I know the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central will be able to speak to particularly from zero to three that early care component where there are places so that parents can go to work in that area. So what we call the build out of day care centres, care facilities, early intervention facilities where

you know that those children, those youngsters will be taken care of in a very good environment.

So the fullest expansion, Mr. Chairman, of early childhood care and development. There was a time when we thought that particular agenda could have been satisfied by 2015. We are now in 2015. We have re-altered our expectations and look to the satisfaction of that agenda by either the beginning or mid-2018 - that every parent who wants their child to go either into a private early childhood care facility or into the government or the state sector will be able to have that child in a school, in a learning environment, being the best child that it can be. Being the best individual for the development of Barbados that it can be.

We also have provision of funds again on the basic educational development of \$179 million, that is to take care of all our primary education needs among now 62 or so primary schools. There was a time in Barbados when schools first went - 14 elementary schools - and there were 140-some odd schools in Barbados. 169 elementary schools in Barbados. It was that time in history. There was a time when we had great fight - head teachers, grade four head teachers, grade three head teachers, grade two head teachers, grade one head teachers - because of the numbers in those schools. Schools were community schools essentially built out by the church in Barbados, supplemented in the early stages by state intervention, but more and more by state intervention for basic educational development or primary education.

I know you're signalling to me one minute more in my initial salvo, but I'm just setting the foundation as we roll out over the next day or so how we are systematically looking at the build out of education in Barbados and how we will continue to foster proper development of our young people. We're not going to be successful in every single one, but we will try. We know we have to try because their future depends on our current efforts. Their future is going to be a cause for the development of Barbados over time. And we cannot resign ourselves from that responsibility regardless of the quantum of resources that we have.

And there are teachers in the system who recognise this and who have been cooperative. There are persons at the Central Ministry who I must thank for their efforts over time. And all of them have my sincerest thanks for the work that they have done under my leadership and under the leadership of the Democratic Labour Party over the last seven or eight years. But more particularly over the last year and as we move forward into our year 2015-2016.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for Christ Church [Inaudible.]

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: Chairman, I would also like to enter this debate on the head of Education - a very important ministry. And I would like to certainly compliment the hon. Minister for continuing to lead from the front in certainly transforming our educational product in Barbados and of course making it even more relevant to the development of Barbados.

It certainly is a truth in Barbados, Mr. Chairman, that our educational system has got to continue to respond to the new Barbados. And during the debate which ensued earlier in relation to the policy framework of the estimates, where the issue of seeking to tackle poverty was raised, I believe one of the hon. members from the other side did raise the question as to what the government was doing to alleviate poverty. And education in terms of the policy framework affords us an opportunity to address that.

I believe the approach taken by the Democratic Labour Party government has been one of empowerment - using education and of course the ministries that are so closely connected to the educational policy to help to inspire our generations of young people and to transform their lives away from dependency. And I think the problem we have encountered in Barbados over the many years is the whole question of finding always this notion of dependency. I believe I hear that a lot from the Barbados Labour Party. The policies have been inspired by notions of dependency. Our policies are inspired more on notions of empowerment. And I want to certainly congratulate the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Chairman, the reality in Barbados is that in order for us to realise some of the key economic goals within Barbados, our educational system, supported by ministries such as the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, have got to basically re-identify those notions upon which the Barbados economy can rest. I observe that in relation to what is happening in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, that there is a symbiotic relationship with the Ministry of Education. We are pushing the cultural industries as a key sector for economic growth. And to do that, we have to also form synergies. We have to certainly take our educational system and repackage it, reframe it and modernise it.

One of the things that I believe that we have to do, Mr. Chairman, is that we have to find ways in which we can transform some of our schools in Barbados to become those agencies by which our cultural industries can be seen as a living example and certainly alternative means of employment. So I have certainly broached the topic to the hon. Minister of Education of the need to identify one or two schools initially and brand them as schools for excellence in the creative industries, the cultural industry sector.

And the same thing applies, Mr. Chairman, to the whole question of transforming our sporting industry. We cannot speak of having a sporting industry in Barbados without tying that in to what we offer at the level of our educational system. And therefore, I believe that the time is right to again designate at least two or three of our schools to be schools for sporting excellence, so that our young people who are certainly enthused by sports, are certainly interested in the creative sector, can at an early stage be involved in not only identifying those niches of growth for them in those sectors, but also to receive their education in a school environment that identifies with the creative sector and certainly with the sports sector as well.

I noticed, Mr. Chairman, that one of the things that we need to work on is the whole question of certification, particularly for those persons involved in the creative sector. That remains one of the weaknesses in Barbados. And I would like to say that the National Cultural Foundation, which has done a lot of pioneering work in the schools - I don't know how many members of the House are aware, and I believe at last estimates I did go into some detail on the work which is done by the National Cultural Foundation at the community and certainly at the school level to develop our cultural sector.

With the coming on stream of the Cultural Industries Development Authority, we should be charged with responsibility of moving our cultural industry sector forward and creating new businesses and of course promoting artists and cultural practitioners. The role of the National Cultural Foundation will now be much more focused on the whole issue of cultural development, both at the community level and within the schools. And one of the things that we will be focusing on is the whole question of certification. And of course, the national vocational qualifications in the arts will be one of the areas of focus, and in particular relating that particular goal to many of the programmes that are done, particularly in the primary and secondary schools.

We do have a very robust programme and the outputs of NIFCA, the National Independence Festival of Creative Arts, is certainly an indication that those programmes are working. We have worked significantly in the area of the literary arts, Mr. Chairman, and of course we are going to be forging ahead in the new financial year with those literary arts programmes. And of course, these programmes will be very key in terms of moving and feeding into the other areas that we want to do to help to grow the cultural industries. The festivals that we are talking about, productions that fall under the NCF, NIFCA and those school programmes - we believe that the training in those key areas of educational skills are going to be key to developing our literary artists. And therefore we will be spending quite a lot of time in that.

Artistic development, Mr. Chairman, is going to be a key area of focus within the schools programme, which is collaborated through the National Cultural Foundation. And I want to take this opportunity to certainly thank the Ministry of Education for continuing to support those very vital programmes. These programmes, many of them, Mr. Chairman, have been ongoing for many years. What we have done over time is that we have enhanced the programmes, we have strengthened them. But the beauty of this, Mr. Chairman, is that these programmes that have been run - whether we are talking about literary arts, whether we are talking about the whole question of the writers in schools - we have been working very feverishly on developing writing skills, and we have seen that coming out in NIFCA, and therefore we believe that over time, particularly as we are focused on the cultural industries, that this early important work in relation to cultural development would allow for a greater output of persons involved in those very key areas.

I think our cultural industry sector will benefit from that. And therefore, we believe that these are programmes that we have to continue to accelerate. We know, of course, of the Irving Burgie Awards, and they continue to provide the scholarships and the funds for the growing of those particular programmes as well. But we will see, Mr. Chairman, over the next financial year, an accelerated focus within our schools, in particular in relation to film and photography. We have spent a lot of time creating a number of incentives in the Cultural Industries Development Act to spur development in the film sector. And we have actually seen a lot of interest in our schools in the area of film production and videography. And therefore, we believe that one of the things we have to do is to continue to strengthen the skills component of our young people from a very early stage if we are going to claim our rightful place.

Mr. Chairman, in terms of the film industry and the global impact of what we can do with our film industry in Barbados, we have to be able to develop the skills, and we know that major film productions that are seeing Barbados as a domicile for recording and filming of movies and documentaries - that it does help the domicile if, when film production companies come to our shores, we are able to provide a cadre of skilled persons. And therefore, that programme in relation to film development and photography will be accelerated because we see it as a strategic focus that will help us to generate the kind of skills, starting from the schools, that will help to create the avenues for alternative and structured employment.

And I mention these few programmes, Mr. Chairman, because at the end of the day, if we are talking about recalibrating our educational system, if we are talking about creating a more diversified economic base, we are talking about the cultural industries and sports as

key areas for economic growth and diversification. We have to be able to point to those areas that we are going to be reinvigorating our educational system. And therefore, if we are talking as well about how we are going to tackle poverty, we cannot do it in silos. And to a large extent, a lot of the programmes that we are building out - linking education with culture, linking education with the whole question of cultural development, and creating new niches that our young people can see as alternative means of entrepreneurial activity and employment - I would submit that those are the practical ways that we can tackle issues of poverty.

Intergenerational poverty, Mr. Chairman, cannot only be wished away. And as much as we talk about it at the macro level, what we are determined to do, certainly within the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, working with the Ministry of Education, we are determined to transform the thinking of our young people from the primary school level through to the secondary school so that we can invite them and offer them opportunities of finding new niches upon which they can build their future and therefore help to further transform the economy of Barbados.

Some of the other programmes that I want to refer to - because I think the National Cultural Foundation has been working extremely closely with the Ministry of Education and they have done a phenomenal job in terms of ensuring that our young people can have access to these different areas of endeavour. One of the business development strategies which are being pushed at the community level and within our schools.

I will wrap up in one minute. I want to use this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to speak to some of the innovations that are working very closely with the Ministry of Education and providing different areas of focus. And in winding up my contribution, I would like to just say that many of these programmes are linked very intricately with our focus on the cultural industries and the National Cultural Foundation. The role of the National Cultural Foundation as it relates to the development of culture and the dynamics upon which we will move the development of culture both at the community level will be accelerated and will become a key feature within the context of helping to build out the transformative base of our educational system, starting of course with the primary schools and the secondary schools. I will come back again, Mr. Chairman, because there are a number of other initiatives that I would like to be able to address. I am obliged.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for St. James North.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Chairman. We on this side are of course very happy to debate this most important aspect

of government and state funding. Because certainly before two years ago, both political parties were agreed on the issue of education being sacrosanct to the human development and human capital of Barbados. We agree that, and I believe we still agree that education is a fundamental human right and contributes significantly to the realization of other rights. The UNESCO position paper on Education post 2015, Mr. Chairman, which I don't know if it is a document of the House. If it isn't, I will make it a document if the House speaks to that issue. You know, we have to agree that even before the coming into effect of adult suffrage, our education was advanced in terms of the other Caribbean countries. I mean, we have to recognize the role of the church, especially the Anglican Church and the other churches in terms of education. Even though it is very arguable that the education supplied by the church schools was to keep, you know, the majority black race subservient. And in the position we were in at the time then, of course we had ministerial government and the Right Excellent National Hero, Sir Grantley Adams being head and within his first cabinet we had a Minister of Education, I believe it was Hilton Vaughan, and monies of course, allocated to education - a lot of money to develop the black people of this country.

Traditionally, Mr. Chairman, since independence, certainly the governments of Barbados up to this time have generally allocated between 20 and 23 per cent of the government's budget towards education and the development of education in this country. The reality of the situation, Mr. Chairman, is that using the mathematical guidelines, now only about 11 per cent of total government expenditure is allocated to education, down 50 per cent from what it used to be under the Barrow certainly and Tom Adams administrations. And that is a serious undermining of education and shows really and truly what this government is thinking in terms of the continued development of our human resources in this country. Education has created the black middle economic class in this country. We are agreed on that. And even though, yes, I agree that the same UNESCO position paper on Education Post 2015 which I quoted does speak towards a 6 per cent - that countries should aim towards allocating 6 per cent of their gross national product to education - it also speaks towards governments and countries allocating about 20 per cent of their government budget towards education, prioritizing groups that are most in need. And that is not the case.

When we examine these estimates, one of the goals of the Ministry of Education as stated is to ensure high quality free education for all, from preschool to tertiary education. And that is again, Mr. Chairman, being undermined, and has been undermined again for the last two years since it was announced in the August 2013 budget presentation by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that university students will now have to pay tuition fees at

our University of the West Indies. We disagree fundamentally on this position. The fact of the matter again is that the Ministry of Education actually spent \$30 million less this current financial year than what had been approved in this Parliament at this time last year. In these same estimates, there is a continuing decline in the funding provided for education by the government. And this really and truly makes a mockery of the statement in the Democratic Labour Party's performance booklet of 2008–2012, which quotes the Honourable Minister of Education as saying that education is the greatest liberating force in human life and that investment in youth must be paramount both in terms of education and health, of course. And you know, we speak again about a lot of words, a lot of rhetoric, but the action and the money allocated does not speak towards that.

You know, but the whole issue here is that this government really and truly has no strategy for taking this country forward. No national development strategy. The previous Barbados Labour Party administration spoke towards making Barbados the smallest developed country in the world by 2015. That was the goal and the focus of the Barbados Labour Party last administration. And it was moving towards that and it was focusing towards that - had a national development strategy plan and all of that. And again, we have some people - and I must commend the Barbados Entrepreneurial Foundation in this respect - that wishes to make Barbados the number one entrepreneurial hub in the world by 2020. That was their aim. We are extremely far from that aim under this Democratic Labour Party government. What is the relationship, for instance, of the Ministry of Education to the Barbados Entrepreneurship Foundation? We heard the Honourable Minister of Education speak about how the government's aim is to promote entrepreneurship in Barbados. Again, let us back that with the finances. Let us not only speak these words. And you know, countries in the world that have advanced from developing country status to developed country status - small island states such as Singapore, which we use as an example in a lot of cases, as a country that has moved forward - have created a national development strategy. They know where they are going, where they want to locate themselves in the world, and they have moved their educational policy within the context of that national development strategy. But if this government does not have a national development goal and is just seeking to put plaster over wounds continuously and react to situations and not take a lead as to where it wants to go, well, therefore the educational policy will be absent as well.

And are we, for example, prepared to provide what it takes to be Barbados' scientific and technological capital of this region? Are we prepared to seek to move and to give the support of our scientists and to create science parks maybe within our university system and to create a new

area of development and the economy for our citizens so that they can continue to have an improved quality of life which they were prone to having before 2009 came into play.

You know, Mr. Chairman, we have, for example - I mean, the minister spoke about it - the ministry also has a science and innovation compartment of it, but that is treated like a third cousin. I would want to say there is no separate Permanent Secretary, no separate administrative office within the Ministry. Last year or this current financial fiscal year, only a half million dollars was allocated to that; this year, well, three-quarters of a million has been allocated. But is that sufficient to advance the science and technological potential of Barbados? We must develop in our submission an educational policy whereby our citizens after 15 or 18 years of schooling ought to be able to create their own jobs, their own employment, become their own entrepreneurs rather than to be job seekers and to only aim for a government job even after they have a university degree. In a lot of cases we need to introduce entrepreneurship as a study, innovation and studies from primary school level. We need to place more emphasis on foreign languages. We are surrounded in Barbados by a lot of Spanish countries, by Latin American countries, by South American countries which have Spanish as their first language. We have to create and facilitate the opportunities for our young people from primary school level to have the chance and the potential to go and get jobs in these places - these places with big economies and now larger populations. But that could only be done with the initiative of government in creating the opportunities for advancement of entrepreneurship and foreign language study as a matter of policy.

The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter spoke today about the introduction by the last Barbados Labour Party administration of Registered Retirement Savings Plans, introducing that as a way to create a means whereby people could save to invest in their future education of their children, maybe at tertiary level. The Barbados Labour Party Manifesto at page 50 speaks even further than that. I would want to suggest for example too that we can give tax incentives, tax allowances to the creation of life insurance policies for our children which would mature when they reach age 18, which they can use for educational funding at tertiary level, you know. But here we have a situation where right now the Ministry of Finance cannot even refund people's income tax returns - the refunds that are overdue for almost a year now. So I have my serious doubts. I mean, the government is always asking for suggestions. I have my serious doubts whether the government would even take what we say here seriously. But surely, surely - you have now caused Barbadians to have to pay tuition fees - create a situation where investment in life insurance policies for our children, those who could afford it, would be a tax incentive, a tax

allowance. And that is the kind of incentive that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter is speaking about.

I see that the Democratic Labour Party manifesto, the last one in fact, promised to introduce an income tax credit of up to \$5 000 on interest - I think you should wrap up first of all and I again, I think you need to be relevant to the head that we are debating. But I thought I am being relevant. I cannot determine relevance, but we are speaking towards educational policies. I appreciate you allowing me to wrap up. You should wrap up, please. That the Democratic Labour Party manifesto promises that it would introduce an income tax credit of up to \$5 000 on the interest on loans sourced from the student revolving loan fund and in respect of tertiary education costs and training at overseas internationally recognised institutions. And Mr. Chairman, we have not heard one single word about that policy or the creation of that financial device since the general elections two years ago. I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will come back later.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, as I rise to speak on Head 77, I want to make the fundamental point that in measuring one's development as it relates to our country, one must make a decision when we have arrived. And it is clear to me, Mr. Chairman, that after nearly 53 years of free secondary education, there comes a time in a country's life where it has to make a judgment call. And the question that must be asked of those who continue to ask government, especially in hard economic times, to continue to offer social amenities right across the board - the question must be asked, when will it stop? Because if we are truly to measure the progress of a people and the progress of a country, then we must have a measurement. And if we continue to outlay the social cost to all those who can afford and those who cannot afford, then we must ask ourselves, how can we measure the progress of a programme? And if the rich in the country who can afford to drive million dollar cars and build million dollar houses can continue to draw on the purse of the country at a time when it is being said that the country is in difficulty and it cannot feed itself, but yet still the country is being asked to continue the same programmes as if nothing has occurred - as if the people of the country have not progressed - and my question is, if we continue to bear the social cost of those people who can afford, then the question must be asked, are we interested in the country or are we only interested in oneself? And that is why, sir, that we have decided. Because the truth is, when you really think about it, instead of only offering 80 per cent across the board, we should really ask ourselves if the Honourable Member for St. James North, who continues to brag how rich he is, whether he should continue to receive 80 per cent like the poor people.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I have to ask the Honourable Member for St. James North the same thing.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: I rise on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I have never bragged about that, never said so. I am not rich. I am not like the Honourable Member for St. Lucy who is so wealthy he measures rice by the grain before he sells it.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I would like to measure your common sense by the grain too. So. Yes, Mr. Speaker. Well, the point I'm making, Mr. Speaker, is that what we are seeing, that if we are truly interested in the masses of people in the country, then those who can afford to pay should give up the right. Give up the right and allow the same poor people that they are arguing for to get the 80 per cent that they are claiming. And I want the Honourable Member for St. James North to measure the race. How do you measure it? And instead of allowing my son to be educated at the expense of the country, when there were poor people to be educated, he was educated off the pockets of his mom, et cetera. So I am asking the Honourable Member for St. James North to follow the lead. If he so cares about educating the masses, then give up the 80 per cent and allow the poor people to get it and start coming in here and behaving as though he is interested in the masses of people, but yet still wants to demand the same 80 per cent as the poor people in the country. And that is the challenge I put to the Honourable Member for St. James North. But no, you are saying that you should look after the masses. And I'm saying that if you want to look after the masses, give up the right that you are asking for and depriving the poor people of that 80 per cent that you can afford to pay.

And you know what is interesting? When it comes to health, they want to cover themselves on health, but when it comes to education, they want to milk the nation. And then you can't get it both ways. You have to decide whether you have progress or not. Because the truth is, sooner rather than later, the Honourable Member for St. James North is going to come back here and ask people to put him back in slavery again. We get free food, free clothing and free shelter. That's where he's heading. And I'm saying that if a country has progressed, it cannot be asking for the same privileges as the people when they were in slavery. And I'm saying that in order to measure progress, you measure progress by moving away, removing yourself from the nipples of the country. But the Honourable Member for St. James North doesn't want that. He wants to progress. But yes, he wants to stay at the nipples of the country all the time. And I'm saying that cannot be free. And if a country is about to celebrate 50 years of independence, then the best way to demonstrate that you are truly independent and truly have made

progress is by removing yourself from those social amenities of the country. To demonstrate that the country has progressed and you have progressed.

You cannot come in here and behave like a slave all the time. You have to show that you have elevated yourself away from being a slave and you have to show that you are now working to help the masses of people in the country and not pretend to be a slave. Do you want to be controlled by a slave master and call the country your slave master every day? Come on, man. You cannot abolish slavery and still ask for the benefits. And that's the problem. If we are saying that we have 50 years of independence and that we have progressed, then we must have something to show that we have progressed. And that's why, like the Honourable Member for St. James Central, because he has demonstrated that he is and has progressed by removing himself and his offspring from the nipple of the country. And he would not make that comment.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am saying that I can support - Mr. Chairman, sorry, Mr. Chairman - I am saying that this is a demonstration and, as we move towards 50 years of independence, clearly this Government, the Democratic Labour Party Government, has demonstrated that the country is truly moving towards full independence. Because as we were in 1966, the Right Excellent Errol Barrow understood that we were not going to achieve full independence until we can demonstrate to the world that everything is being delivered and the poorest are provided for. But we are now moving to show that we are truly independent. And one of the best ways to do that is to show how many people have moved away from the nipples and the social demands from the country. And to demonstrate that you have moved the people in such a way that they now can support the country and they don't have to depend on the country. And that is fundamental.

But those people who contend with the slave mentalities will come in here and argue all the time that the country must do this, the country must do that. When are we going to start discussing what we are going to do for the country? And this debate is about that - after 53 years, nearly a free secondary education, you get an opposition still asking the country to support their needs. Well, if that is what - well, let us bring a budget in here and discuss free shelter, free clothing and free health and everything for the masses of people in the country, including the Honourable Member for St. James North, who is projecting that image as if he's some poor boy and yet at the same time demonstrates how rich he is. You cannot. You have to decide where you are.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am saying that this debate is about whether we have progressed as a country or whether we are still stagnated. And I am saying that after 53 years of secondary education, what we are doing in our social

policy is a demonstration that we have progressed as a country. And if we have not progressed as a country, well, then let's forget and go back to the good old days. Let us go and work for the plantations. Let us go and do everything that we did and get free food, free clothing and free shelter. But if we are going to be providing these things for ourselves, then we must understand that we can't only provide them, but we must ensure that we can also provide some other amenities in life.

I don't think the Honourable Member for the City, graceful as he is - I don't mind that this morning he was misled with a brief that he didn't understand - will come and make that argument in here because he understands how to defend himself. He was well trained how to protect himself. But the other member for St. James North believes that the country must continue to protect him. Even though he has elevated, he still wants to behave like a slave. And I, Mr. Chairman, I want to say this - we have to understand that we have to live and we also have to provide examples for the young people. But how we get in here and behave, what we are telling the young people in this country, is that they do not have to provide anything for themselves and can depend on the state. And sooner rather than later they will be telling them that they don't even have to work. And I'm saying that is foolishness. After nearly 50 years of independence, they truly have to show that you are independent.

But this mentality that because they are elected they must create this dependency syndrome and give young people the impression that they do not have to strive for anything - but what is interesting is that while they are giving that to the masses of people, they are elevating themselves. And some of them, sooner rather than later, might tell you that they even got enough to buy jets. That's his goal, to get a jet in life. But at the same time he wants the poor man to continue to be a beggar. And I'm saying that's not fair. Let us pull our constituents up with us. At the same time, let us use the educational system as one example where we can elevate ourselves and elevate the masses of people. Do you like to continue seeing your constituents begging you? If so, keep it. But I don't like that. I'd like to know that our people are educated and put in a position to make them independent, not to depend on us as politicians. And that they are seen truly as our brothers and sisters and that they have something to report progress on.

So if you are happy to come in here - and that is St. James South heading to St. James North, heading to St. George South and heading back to - [Interruption.]

Mr. CHAIRMAN: You have, sir. Mr. Speaker. Honour. Yes, please. I really ask that you refrain, first of all, from departing from the subject matter. Thank you, sir. And personal remarks at the same time. Please address the

Chair. I'll also ask other members that we have started the course already of shouting across this room. And just a minute, please. Since it seems that we might get out of order, I'm asking members to desist from any such practice. Thank you very much.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm very happy that you are protecting me from the Honourable Member for St. George South who is butting about like a bumblebee. But that's okay, sir. He will be dealt with in time. So what I'm saying, sir, is that on this Head 77, one must recognise that this is the most important head in this booklet and this is the head that we must be guided on and that we can show progress on. And I'm saying that I'm happy to be part of a government that is prepared to demonstrate and to show measurement and to use the skill to measure the progress of the country. Because if there was any time that we have an opportunity and we have demonstrated that we have progressed and we can wait - it is now. Because what we have said is that we have given people 53 years to uplift themselves and it's time for them to report progress. And Mr. Chairman, there is a lot of progress out there to be reported. I do not mind my friend for St. James North, because he has benefited tremendously from the progress that has been reported. And it's about time that he give back some of that progress to the country and see some of his comrades and the masses of people that he also lifts them up and tells them to report progress too. I thank you, sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I want to refer to head 77, sir, and to indicate from very early that I am extremely happy to see that successive governments continue to focus on the education sector and to make sure that the people of Barbados receive the best benefits from the hundreds of millions of dollars that are spent in that particular ministry. I want first, though, to say thanks to the staff of the Ministry of Education and indeed teachers, tutors and others who dedicate their time and life to educating the masses of this dear little country of ours. I know that is not an easy task and as usual, I know there are many who will say that many teachers are not this and that and they are negative. And my usual say is in almost every profession you will find a one or two percentage that do not fit the profile of offering quality service. However, I am of the opinion that the majority of our teaching staff has been trying really very hard, under trying circumstances, to deliver the quality education that is required.

I believe, however, sir, that amidst all the challenges there is need for reform. We did have reform over the many years on more than one occasion and the last one would have been in connection with the 1996 education reform curriculum reform package. But since then we have had so

many things impacting on the education of our children and our people that I think that it is critical now for the Ministry of Education to start to look and devise ways of meeting the needs of the clients who are in the system. Now, I know at one point in time there may have been comments made by the Honourable Minister about schools being war zones and others from the unions. And I am also aware that there was a draft Education Act when the change of government came in 2008. And I know that all the things included in that Act will not now be as relevant as they would have been five or six years ago. And therefore I would want to find out from the Honourable Minister, sir, what plans there are for a new Education Act to suit the rapidly changing environment in our schools and colleges and so on at this time. So will the Minister in his responses, sir, please indicate the status of that new Education Act and let us know for sure what is happening. Because there are too many forms of confrontation coming through the media and in other fora that really disturb many of us who believe that these millions of dollars should be better spent instead of having all these challenges that I believe are not insurmountable.

The other thing is the technology that is with us. And I heard the principal, the outgoing principal of St. Leonard School, talking about the infusion of the cell phone into the school system. And we all acknowledge that there are so many young children who at six months and a year and 18 months are taking up their phones and the iPads and finding games and other activities on them. And I believe that the time is right for us to be able to start looking at that sector, to have the technology infused in the school in a more dynamic and meaningful way. I acknowledge that the Honourable Minister would have been an Information Technology coordinator at the then Christ Church Boys School - the new name now evades me - and therefore I know that he has the capacity, or he had the capacity then, to be able to treat to such matters. And I trust that over the next coming months the Honourable Minister will be able to give us some guidance on it.

But before I go deeper into that, I would like the Honourable Minister to please indicate as well - and I am referring to the Act again - because I heard the president of the Barbados Union of Teachers speak about lots of weapons and different implements found in the school system. And I would like the Honourable Minister to indicate to us what plans are being made, because there is no point in us sending our little children at 11 and 12 years old into secondary school that is perceived by some as a war zone where there are weapons, stone throwing, boys and girls smoking weed, confrontations with teachers, and children seeking to beat teachers and teachers going overboard with children and the criticisms. And so I would really like to know what is the plan? Because too many of our children now are engaged in serious crime, too many of them are in discipline difficulties. They do not respond well

to teachers when they want to communicate with them. Many of them are on the truancy trail, many of them are still not well or are tired and they are not really conforming in the way that they should. And I believe this new Education Act will help.

I would also like the Honourable Minister to indicate if the power to search amendment that took place in the late 1990s, early 2000, perhaps maybe in 2002, if that power to search is being used in the system and if teachers understand their roles. Because any child with a knife in the bag - and I must confess, Mr. Chairman, there are some girls who are more aggressive than many of the boys and some girls are even more rude to teachers and other adults on the school's premises than boys. But we know that it is easy now to rent a gun. I heard a young lady on the radio say that last week. I do not know how true that may be, but sometimes we do not know what the children are carrying in their bags. And teachers, if they want to safeguard themselves on school compounds as well, they must make sure that those children whom they assume or whom they suspect to be carrying weapons, that the search be employed, but that it be done the correct way. We do not want to have any - and Barbadian society is very litigious and some parents know that their children are extremely disorderly and violent and they will want to run to a lawyer to say that they were unfair in searching their child. So I want them to follow the regulations, to institute that power to search amendment and to safeguard the school. A school must be a safety zone and not a war zone. And nobody feels comfortable coming to a school, whether it be a child, a teacher, a parent, a visitor, if they assume or if they hear that schools are war zones.

The other aspect of it, sir, is to do with the code of conduct. I know that in 2004 that code of conduct was made available for students, called the Student Code of Discipline, and I would like to know where that is going. I know that a lot of children get sent home from schools. I understand now that some principals do not come back. But the Honourable Minister knows there is a procedure that if a child is under the age of 16 and has to be sent home, the principal has the authority to do it for 10 days, but then the board has to carry out the further suspensions as well as any expulsion. And the Act speaks clearly to what should happen and the process to be taken or the procedure in that respect.

And I also want to find out from the Honourable Minister, what about the code of conduct for teachers? Too many teachers are going to school very untidy and we cannot expect the children to be wearing their uniforms a certain length, especially the girls, below their knees - although I support it that children must be well attired. But we have some teachers who are so untidy that the janitors and the general workers are better attired than they. And I think that the code of conduct, even though the Barbados

Union of Teachers would have coordinated the contents, it was embraced by the Ministry and adopted. And I believe that we need to have that instituted as soon as possible. And unless young teachers get an opportunity to be properly mentored by those who are in the system before, it really is going to create some terrible, terrible problems. There are too many distractions in school for our children, too many complaints about the waywardness and the high percentage of delinquency. And I think it is important that if we invest so many millions that we should get the benefits and that the funding would not have to go into

other agencies for correctional measures, as far as possible. I also want to find out, through you, sir, from the Honourable Minister, what are the Ministry's plans for water tanks? It is most disturbing to be talking about a developed society and every time there is a water outage in a community, some days schools are closed two and three days. And I know that the plan was already put in place for schools to have water tanks to satisfy that. But when you look at the dislocation of parents and guardians when they hear on the radio that X school will be closed from 10.30, those parents are on the jobs, most of them, and then they have to leave that productive area they should be working in to head to the school to pick up the children and then find somebody to supervise them. And we know, sir, that many of our children do not go to school in the neighbourhoods where they live. So when a child leaves St. Thomas to go to Princess Margaret, then we understand that a parent cannot get there, perhaps, but that child then languishes on the way home. That child is being enticed by others to come on the block, to smoke some weed, to go in a minibus on a ZR.

And I saw some pictures last week that had my head hurting me so badly, Mr. Chairman, about some of our young vulnerable children who are being enticed by hardback men into acts that we know are unsatisfactory and should not be happening to our young children. Some teachers too, I have been told, are also involved in a number of acts where they are engaging our children, both male and female. And once upon a time we know perhaps male would have been the dominant percentage, but we understand now that some female teachers are having inappropriate relationships with male children and vice versa. I think that those actions must be stopped and every measure put in place by the Ministry and by the police and any other agency to ensure that our children go through life living quality lives and not being distracted or in any way interfered with by persons who are acting in loco parentis.

And therefore I know that the Minister's work is cut out for him, especially in this time with the technology. But I trust that some answers will be given and that the rest of Barbados, meaning the stakeholders, come on board and assist, because the Ministry cannot do it alone. We need the stakeholders in the various agencies and organisations to

come into the schools and work with mentorships to help our children over the challenges. And the engagement of parents and guardians is critical if we are to get the best assistance and the best results from our large investment, but more particularly for the human development that we know can make a difference once those infractions and those different challenges are removed from the face of this system. And I wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for St. Philip West.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, let me thank and congratulate the Minister and the Ministry of Education for the sterling work that they have been doing over the last few years during very difficult and challenging times. Mr. Chairman, I think that this discussion needs to concentrate upon policy and it needs to concentrate on initiatives that help to determine what are those broad policies that define the critical elements of education and in particular, I speak to that of tertiary education. And what are those elements, Mr. Chairman, that are under stress not only here in Barbados, but also in any other country in the world? And what are the proposed solutions that several countries are trying to advance in regards to their fiscal challenges, in regards to the demand stresses on the tertiary educational system? And also, Mr. Chairman, what are the likely solutions in regards to policy initiatives that help students to broaden access with regard to tertiary education? That speaks to enhancing equity to tertiary education, that speaks to providing quality tertiary education and also speaks, Mr. Chairman, to the sustainability of tertiary education. It is within that context, Mr. Chairman, I think this debate needs to rest.

And I think it is also important that we understand how we got to where we are now. And it is important to understand that there is no one system that works in every single country. For example, Mr. Chairman, 60 per cent and 70 per cent of the education in Asian countries are paid for - in European countries, from Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Argentina, Latin America, Chile and so on - these are usually paid from government taxes. Barbados, for a long time, has always been government taxes and has been universal. Several countries have had mixed systems, as we would have had historically in Barbados, where we have had private primary schools, private secondary schools. What we have not had is an internationalisation of our tertiary education system - that is, multiple foreign universities providing their services within Barbados so as to enhance access demand profiles.

What I would say, Mr. Chairman, is that in understanding what various administrations would have done over the years, it is important for us to go back to a pre-1948 period, and then go between 1948 to 1966, and

then go beyond that period to a 1978 period. Now, let us be realistic. Prior to 1900, essentially, was slavery. So in an oppressive environment, the educational system was not designed for the mass population - it was strictly an elitist educational system. So as a result of that, Mr. Chairman, once you had the emancipation process going on in the 1830s, by 1848 the British government decided that what they were going to do was to support education in Barbados through state grants. And apart from the establishment of the state grant, Mr. Chairman, that state grant allowed by 1900 for there to be 169 primary schools in Barbados in addition to eight secondary schools. And at that point in time you had about probably 25 000 young people in Barbados in primary school.

Now that system, Mr. Chairman, was also still elitist because it did not provide for the masses of persons to have access to quality education. So there were issues of discrimination and so on. But between 1900 and 1940, a number of critical things happened. Because in the 1900 period, there was only one Barbados Scholarship. By 1948, when you established the Erdiston Teachers' Training College, there were an expansion of four Barbados scholarships. And as we moved from the 1948 period, with the establishment of the Erdiston Barbados Teachers' Training College, the recognition of expanding your quality teaching and giving your students the best education became a dominant feature of the education system at the time.

Moving beyond the 1940s, Mr. Chairman, you then had a period where significant changes occurred. That period essentially was between 1952 and 1976, when the Democratic Labour Party lost office. By 1952, you had a situation, Mr. Chairman, where you had the establishment of the comprehensive schools in the country, which used to be called the modern secondary schools. That modern secondary school development that occurred in 1952 was critical because it enhanced the broad access of the masses of Barbadian students and as a result allowed for greater equity in regards to the educational system. So you now had two fundamental features of a proper education system - that is, one, you now had a system that allowed for some equity, allowed for greater access, and you now had an Erdiston Teachers' Training College that was now able to teach your teachers how to go about the pedagogical approach.

But Mr. Chairman, after that occurred, two more critical elements had to be put in place. These would have occurred in 1962 when you had the abolition of the tuition fees for government grammar schools. Once that happened, you removed a fundamental element of the elitist educational system that now became democratised. So you had another critical feature involved in this. By 1965, Mr. Chairman, what happened in Barbados was another dramatic change. The government decided to fund private

secondary schools and you had the development of the modern Wakefield, Metropolitan, and the list goes on. What I am trying to evolve here is that by 1970, the fundamental shift of our educational system from that of an elitist one to that of an egalitarian one - underpinning the principles of access, the principles of equity, the principles of quality education - were being seeded.

What we now had to do, Mr. Chairman, after that period was to deal with what one would call the sustainability elements of the educational system. There are two things that happened when the Democratic Labour Party lost office in 1976. By 1978 there was a five-year development plan under the Adams administration. What the administration did was they introduced a number of policy frameworks that were designed on producing cost-efficient and cost-effective education. They concentrated and carried out a whole lot of work. But one of the critical things that occurred, Mr. Chairman, was that by 1986 the education budget was significantly slashed. In fact, the national budget was reduced by a little over 4 per cent at that particular point in time, which would be significant. Not saying that there were not some positive changes that were executed, because I think during that period of time you had the repealing of the Education Act from 1890 and you had the re-establishment of a new Education Act - the 1992 Act - and a whole number of other positive adjustments that went on during that period of time. And because you had democratisation of things again with the House Craft Centre and a whole number of the broad institutional frameworks and so on.

The point I am trying to make here, Mr. Chairman, is that all of that led us to a situation where our educational system - now that we are analysing it in the context of a recessionary environment and in the context of sustainability of our educational system - we now must be asking the questions as to whether the fiscal capacity of the government that had the capability of managing universal primary, secondary and tertiary education, that could carry that during the 50s, the 60s and the 70s, whether it is possible to carry it when there is a growing demand on tertiary requirements, when there is a growing demand for quality education, when there is a growing demand for internationalisation of the education system - meaning that the standards that you set at the university level must be that of any other university worldwide - and that calls for money, it calls for departments, it calls for equipment, it calls for academic staff and all those various situations.

Mr. Chairman, I start the debate there and I will come back, because it is from that discussion that you can look and see that so many countries have adopted the position that universal primary, secondary and tertiary education is not sustainable. And the most powerful countries in the world have adopted that position before Barbados, because it is not universal in the United

Kingdom, it is not universal in America, it is not universal, Mr. Chairman, in so many other countries that have greater resources than Barbados. And I want that to frame the other elements of my other interventions, Mr. Chairman, on those elements of the sustainability of higher education in the context of having to maintain your access, providing broad-based equity and also making sure, Mr. Chairman, that you have the continuing provision of quality education. And it is from that, Mr. Chairman, that I will rest at this stage. I will revisit to carry on this discussion from that point. But it was important for us to know exactly how we got here and the reasons for evaluating this in the context of international educational changes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member for [Inaudible.] Central.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, thus far we are proceeding on this head in the kind of manner that I sort of envisage. I didn't want to divert from the path I set myself. But there are some important points made earlier. I'm going to answer many of the questions of the member for St. Thomas tomorrow when I rise to speak again. But I think the honourable member for St. Philip West has in fact struck the chord relative to education. And it's a very broad way, a wide spectrum that is being looked at.

Barbados manifests many of the aspects in education which is shown by highly developed countries outside of possibly what they have done relative to students paying for their education at many levels. In the United States of America, where there was a heavy demand for privately fed education or the commercialisation of education, one saw the development of the charter school concept where the states provided vouchers - or the voucher-led system - that you could purchase education wherever you want rather than be located in your community or in your area where you had to be fed into that school. The literature has revealed that by and large that process has failed because it is not necessarily where you buy education, but the quality of your teaching or your pedagogy persons, your teachers, your lecturers, your tutors, the quality, the commitment to the delivery of that pedagogy, the strong support of parents underpinning what teachers do in schools, the quality of the infrastructure, the access to the material necessary for the delivery of instruction, for the delivery of learning. Many of those have been found to be important constructs within the delivery of quality education.

So there have been, under every president, a new reformation initiative. And you can't condemn them for that. It is trying to search for a meaningful route to continue to enhance their societies and their economies. And to some extent Barbados has been doing that, but within the context of publicly delivered education without stifling private delivered education in Barbados. Albeit that at this

juncture there is less delivery of private-led education in Barbados as you would have had in the 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s, 80s to some extent, but more particularly in the previous years that I've mentioned when important and very focused higher - or what was called high schools - emerged in Barbados led by great entrepreneurs. But there were outstanding philanthropists as well because someone like Eda Costa Edwards was not only a commercial educator but was a philanthropist. And down in areas of St. Andrew and St. Joseph he brought many persons who hitherto couldn't access education into an education facility where an institution like the Federal High School emerged. You had in Arlington, you had Mr. Lloyd Lynch with the Modern High School where the numbers were even greater in that institution. And I believe the honourable member for St. Thomas was a graduate of that great institution and many other Barbadians.

The school used to be located somewhere in Roebuck Street, maybe almost where that facility - and I'm being told no, Modern - where the Assistant Clerk of Parliament was educated. So I know what I'm speaking about. Barbados Academy, which was an all-boys school which used to be located where Country Park Towers is now located. Martin was by the ICB area. Barbados Academy - where Rudder, as we call it, Rudder School. Right where Lynch Secondary was located. Washington High, where I had the honour of going and still revere very much. Cooperative High, Wakefield High, the Scott School on Barbies Hill, Community High. There were schools in Christ Church. They were all over the place bringing education to the people. Unfortunately many unique industries - these are schools that are well known that were part of the foundation of learning in the country.

But the state sector also brought a new dynamic - a new dynamic able to increase wages for the workers in education, able to develop structures going back as the honourable member for St. Philip West said, as far back as 1952 with the development of the Solanés Boys or the Richmond schools as they were called, Solanés Boys, Solanés Girls, Princess Margaret, and then the Democratic Labour Party - Garrison, St. James. Well it's not called Garrison now, but because of the name change it was called the Great Unsealing to recognise the outstanding leadership of that gentleman, Daryl Jordan, Frederick Smith. All of those schools being built out to help promote the whole notion of the egalitarian concept of education.

In Barbados, the modern comprehensive brought a new focus to education. The twin approach to learning - not only what is called the academic, but the further use of the cognitive skills of persons or the cognitive mind into skill development. So the modern comprehensive carried a twin approach. We learn by reading, but we also learn by doing - application and skill development and competency-based training. Eventually all the various evolutions and

contortions and reform, progressive development of education in Barbados.

The honourable member for St. Philip West is correct. There are people in Barbados who are in their 60s and in their 70s who would tell you that even if they got a vestry scholarship or whatever, they had to pay fees, they had to take the exams to get into the old grammar schools of that day. Schools bequeathed in many instances to - what do you want to call them - the white children of overseers and that élite merchant class in the country. Harrison's College, Codrington, Priory, of course set up by the priests in Barbados. And the other schools that were strictly a classically based education - Latin, good as it is, good as it was, philosophy, maths, English literature, the classics, et cetera. But that in itself was not preparing the foundation for the build-out of the society, for the build-out of the economy. So the skills that were necessary were being developed through the emergence of the modern secondary school, the comprehensive school, following exactly the British model. So you had been created within the country which was previously elitist a very broad suite, a very broad base now of people in schools. You couldn't have to leave school at age 14 anymore.

By 1978, I must recognise him for his contribution - under the leadership of Mr. Louis Tull - he went further in ensuring, by the increase of the school-leaving age to 16, and the development of senior schools and pre-vocational centres, all of that in a short period of time, that even more and more children could continue to 16. Access was further democratised. And now there is further democratisation where we are seeing that students who don't matriculate at age 16 can in fact matriculate at 17 or 18. That is further democratisation. All of that is happening even as we speak. It calls on resources. And you have to be careful how much you call on those resources in an environment where cash might be problematic. But that is what we are doing - that revolutionising of education.

With the coming of the University of the West Indies campus in Barbados by 1963, meaning that greater demand was being placed on tertiary and higher education - the Barbados Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and the University of the West Indies - where it was recognised as early as, I believe, the 1960s when the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, as he is now called, spoke to the issue of tertiary education and commented that yes, at the time, based on scarce resources then, that university was proving a bit costly, but that they must be efficient, they must be effective and that they must penetrate the communities of Barbados. That is essentially what he was saying.

The internationalisation of university education - the two dynamics. One, the bringing in for education to BCC and Cave Hill Campus - that is one aspect of being

international, international students here to achieve a quality product. The second aspect is opening the doors of Barbados - not through WTO initiatives because I am opposed to total liberalisation of education in Barbados, I must confess - but selectively bringing into Barbados quality educational institutions, particularly where much of the students in those institutions come from away into your Barbadian landscape and where selected students can also access, particularly where it is not provided in our institutions, some of the educational products that they offer. That is why in the last three or so years we have opened the doors to a university called the American University of Barbados for the provision of medical education in Barbados. And that is why possibly in the next year or so another institution would be present in Barbados catering to medicine - an area that in the United States and North America cannot be satisfied by the medical training institutions in those areas in Europe. So the doors are being opened to facilitate that aspect of the internationalisation of education. We have recognised that this is what we have to do.

The Ministry of Education, arising out of discussion around the Cabinet, has just recently signed with the European Union a consultancy on using education as an export for the earning of foreign exchange and the provision of employment in Barbados. That consultancy started about two weeks ago, fully funded by the European Union, and I must thank them for that. This was started in October of 2014 and that work commenced in February of 2015 - short, speedy. The work is ongoing. So we will know and we accept that educational services being offered for sale - how that will impact on income flowing into Barbados, foreign exchange flowing into Barbados. And it is our view and it is our prediction that within a matter of five to seven years that the offer of education services in Barbados will be a major earner of foreign exchange in this country. And that is predicated on the quality already existing in Barbados, the quality that is already existing among the deliverers of education. Because persons who are trained as doctors and want to be educators rather than simply clinical persons can also be teaching within those institutions, delivering quality education in whatever other educational institution is here present in Barbados.

So there is a reformation? Yes. It is a dynamic visibly taking place right before our eyes. We have not been sleeping; we have been wide awake, working and trying to do the best we can in the circumstances which currently exist. And I believe that we are treading in the right direction. We have to cooperate, we have to work across the aisle, we have to work with the private sector, we have to work with all of that. We have to ensure that this vehicle can manoeuvre successfully to bring what it was. Mr. Chairman, I will return tomorrow to talk about the other areas of activity being funded by this \$489 million to

help develop Barbados as an economy and a society. Thank you, sir.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, sir, I beg to move that you do now report progress to His Honour the Speaker and ask for leave to sit again.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, honourable members. This full sitting of the House is resumed. Honourable members, your Chairman has reported progress and asked for leave to sit again. Yes.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this sitting be suspended until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning for the continuation and consideration of the Estimates.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable members, I wish to remind you that it is just a suspension and as such we start promptly at 9.00 a.m. without any other formalities.

The question that the House be suspended until 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 18, 2015 was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

Q1. Front matter. The source does not record the PRESENT list; the Members listed are those identified from the record. Mr. SPEAKER opened with ‘This House is now resumed’, and the Sitting of Monday, March 16, 2015 had been suspended until 9.00 a.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 9.00 a.m. Please confirm the time from the Votes and Proceedings.

Q2. Throughout. The bracketed time-checks in the source are out of sequence (for example ‘[1.00 a.m.]’ and ‘[02.00 a.m.]’ during the morning and ‘[12.30 p.m.]’ in the evening) and have been omitted.

Q3. Throughout. In the source the Leader of the House appears to second his own motions to suspend (‘I beg to second, Members’; ‘I beg to second that, sir’). The seconding words are printed under AN HON. MEMBER; the seconders are not identified. Please confirm.

Q4. Order No. 17, Lt. Col. J. D. Bostic. Within Lt. Col. Bostic’s speech the source reads ‘On a point of order - the Honourable Member cannot claim to get a brief from my ministry, sir, and I did not get one. Very well.’ This appears to include an interjection by Hon. D. St.E. Kellman, but the words are not separated in the source and are printed as they stand. Please check against the recording.

Q5. Order No. 17, Mr. T. A. Prescod. The Chair’s warnings (‘The member has five minutes in which to conclude’; ‘Honourable Member, your time has expired’) appear in the source as unattributed lines within Mr. Prescod’s speech; they are printed under Mr. SPEAKER. The line ‘Pardon me, I have been so far. You have extended my - 2 minutes to wind up, 2 minutes.’ is unattributed and is left with Mr. Prescod. Please check.

Q6. Order No. 17, Mr. R. St.C. Toppin. After Mr. SPEAKER’s interruption Mr. Toppin addresses ‘Madam Deputy’ for much of his speech, while the Chair’s later interventions are headed ‘MR. SPEAKER’ in the source. A change in the Chair is not recorded. Please confirm who presided.

Q7. Order No. 17, Rt. Hon. F. J. Stuart (point of order). Headed ‘SPEAKER UNCERTAIN - REVIEW’ in

the source. The intervention cites the President of Brazil speaking ‘as recently as today’; the Prime Minister later says ‘this morning I heard the President of Brazil, President Dilma Rousseff’, and Mr. Toppin replies by referring to the Prime Minister’s position. Printed under Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART. Please confirm.

Q8. Order No. 17, Mr. J. D. Paul. Headed ‘HON. IAN GOODING-EDGHILL, J.P., M.P.’ in the source; he was not a Member of the 2013-2018 House. Mr. SPEAKER called the Member for St. Michael West Central, whose Member in 2015 was Mr. J. D. Paul, and the speaker supports the Government’s Estimates. Printed under Mr. J. D. PAUL. Please confirm.

Q9. Suspension (luncheon). No put of the question is recorded in the source after the motion to suspend ‘until 2.30 this afternoon’; the source reads ‘[THE SITTING WAS SUSPENDED AT 2.30 P.M.]’. The formula records suspension until 2.30 p.m.; the time of suspension is not known.

Q10. Order No. 17, Dr. M. M. Agard. Headed ‘HON. MS. C. SANDRA V. HUSBANDS, M.P.’ in the source; she was not a Member of the 2013-2018 House. Mr. SPEAKER called the Member for Christ Church West, and Hon. C. P. Sinckler and the Prime Minister later refer to this speech as that of the Member for Christ Church West. Printed under Dr. M. M. AGARD. Please confirm.

Q11. Order No. 17, Mr. G. W. Payne. The call to order ‘Members, please, let us have some order ... Remember, you have five minutes in which to conclude’ is unattributed in the source and is printed under Mr. SPEAKER.

Q12. Committee of Supply. Mr. CHAIRMAN is not named in the source; the Chairman of Committees, Mr. J. D. Paul, is presumed. The Clerk gives Head 77 as \$286,444,800; the Minister refers to a total of \$489 million.

Q13. Head 77, Mr. E. G. Hinkson (point of order). Headed ‘HON. CHAD J. BLACKMAN, J.P., M.P.’ in the source; he was not a Member of the 2013-2018 House. The point of order follows the Minister’s remark that ‘maybe the Member for St. James North was not at home’ as a young child, and the speaker replies about his own schooling. Printed under Mr. E. G. HINKSON. Please confirm.

Q14. Head 77, Hon. S. A. Lashley. Headed ‘HON. MICHAEL A. LASHLEY, S.C., M.P.’ in the source. Mr. CHAIRMAN called the Member for ‘Christ Church [Inaudible.]’, the Minister of Education had just said the

Member for Christ Church West Central would speak, and the speaker speaks for the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. Printed under Hon. S. A. LASHLEY, Member for Christ Church West Central. Please confirm.

Q15. *Head 77, Hon. R. D. Jones.* The words ‘Mr. Chairman, thus far we are’ appear at the end of the Chair’s call in the source and have been moved to the Minister’s speech. The source reads ‘The honourable member for St. Philip East is correct’; there is no such constituency, and the Member who had just spoken was the Member for St. Philip West, Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick. Corrected.

Q16. *Suspension (end of sitting).* The sitting was suspended, not adjourned, until 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 18, 2015, and Mr. SPEAKER said that the House would ‘start promptly at 9.00 a.m. without any other formalities’. There is therefore no ADJOURNMENT at the end of this report.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed at 9.00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 17, 2015, with Mr. SPEAKER presiding, continuing the debate on the second reading of the Appropriation Bill, 2015 under Order No. 17. Lt. Col. J. D. Bostic, Shadow Minister of Housing, said more than 260 Government houses stood vacant, some 200 of them without wells, and called for a housing policy for low-income earners; Hon. D. St.E. Kellman twice rose on points of order. Mr. T. A. Prescod spoke of poverty and the reversal of progressive social policy and closed by reading a poem by Martin Carter. Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur called for an end to the separate Estimates and budget, said 66 per cent of revenue was pre-empted to pay debt and urged a debt exchange on the Jamaican model. Mr. K. D. Symmonds said growth of 0.3 per cent was among the worst performances in the Caribbean and Latin America and urged measures for the international business sector.

Mr. D. D. Marshall said there was no provision in the Estimates for the \$30 million promised for a new CLICO company and questioned the role of the Financial Services Commission. Mr. R. St.C. Toppin spoke on hardship, the hospital and tourism, citing the Tourism

Master Plan’s figure of negative growth of 5.5 per cent for Barbados in 2012 and the loss of 45 staff at the Barbados Tourism Authority; the Prime Minister intervened on a point of order about the President of Brazil. Mr. J. D. Paul said the Government planned to spend \$430 million on health, against \$314 million in 2005–2006, and \$498 million on education.

After the luncheon suspension Mr. G. W. Payne said the allocations for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the University of the West Indies and the Scotland District were below the previous year’s spending, and pressed for urgent action at White Hill, St. Andrew, where the road had been abandoned. Dr. M. M. Agard said the hospital needed \$190 million a year but was offered \$150 million, and that \$22 million promised by the Minister of Finance had not been delivered. The Prime Minister explained the Government’s decision to concentrate the debate on the Heads, said CLICO was before the courts, disclosed his own CLICO policies, and said White Hill would receive urgent attention. Replying, Hon. C. P. Sinckler said a primary deficit of \$385 million had been turned into a primary surplus of \$56 million, explained the difference between accrual and cash accounting, said funding for the hospital had risen from \$120 million to \$212 million by 2012–13, and answered points of order from Mr. K. D. Symmonds on an affidavit concerning a Central Bank deposit. The Bill was read a second time.

After a further suspension the House went into Committee of Supply on Head 77, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation. Hon. R. D. Jones said \$489 million was provided for education, described new nursery schools, including one at Oldbury, St. Philip, and \$179 million for primary education; Mr. E. G. Hinkson objected on a point of order to a remark about his schooling. Hon. S. A. Lashley spoke on schools and the cultural and sports industries. Mr. E. G. Hinkson said only about 11 per cent of expenditure now went to education, against 20 to 23 per cent historically, and opposed tuition fees. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman challenged those who could afford it to give up the 80 per cent university subsidy; Miss C. Y. Forde asked about a new Education Act and codes of conduct; and Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick spoke on the sustainability of tertiary education. After a reply in part by Hon. R. D. Jones, progress was reported and the sitting was suspended until 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 18, 2015.