
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, December 13, 2016

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 13, 2016.

PRESENT

His Honour MICHAEL A. CARRINGTON, Q.C., B.A., LL.B. (Speaker) Her Honour Mrs. M-J. MARA THOMPSON, M.Sc. (Ph.Ed.) B.A.(Deputy Speaker)
Mr. GLINE A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P.
Mr. RONALD St.C TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.)
Hon. DENIS St.E. KELLMAN
(Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development)
Hon. Miss MIA A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B.
(Leader of the Opposition)
Ms. CYNTHIA Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P.
Hon. RONALD D. JONES, J.P., B.A. (Hons.) M.A. (Ed.) (Minister of Education, Science and Technology and Innovation)
Dr. Hon. DAVID C. ESTWICK, B.Sc., M.B., B.S.
(Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management)
Mr. DALE D. MARSHALL, Q.C., LL.B (Hons.), L.E.C.
Hon. MICHAEL A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.)
(Minister of Transport and Works)
Hon. RICHARD L. SEALY, B.Sc., M.B.A.
(Minister of Tourism and International Transport)
Right. Hon. FREUNDEL J. STUART, Q.C., B.A., LL.M.
(Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, the Public Service and Urban Development)
Hon. JOHN D. E. BOYCE, B.C.H., MRAC, M.Sc., C. Eng.
(Minister of Transport and Works) (Leader of Government Business)
Hon. STEVEN D. BLACKETT

(Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, and Community Development) Mr. JAMES D. PAUL, B.Sc.
(Chairman of Committees)
Dr. the Hon. DENIS S. LOWE, Ed.D., M.Ed., B.A., Dip. Theology
(Minister of Environment and Drainage)
Hon. ADRIEL D. BRATHWAITE, Q.C., LL.B. (Hons.)
(Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs.)
Hon. STEPHEN A. LASHLEY, B.Sc., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C.
(Minister of Culture, Youth Affairs and Sports)
Hon. DONVILLE O'N. INNISS, Dip., B.Sc., M.B.A.
(Minister of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development)
Hon. CHRISTOPHER P. SINCKLER, B.A., M.Sc.
(Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs)
Mr. TREVOR PRESCOD, B.A.
Mr. KERRIE D. SYMMONDS, B. A., LL.B.
Lt. Col. JEFFREY D. BOSTIC, M.V.O., B.A. (Hons.)
Mr. EDMUND G. HINKSON, LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C., LL.M.
Dr. Ms. MARIA M. AGARD, J.P., D.Ds., B.Sc. (Hons)
Mr. DWIGHT G. SUTHERLAND, M.Sc., M.B.A. (Dist.), B.Sc.
Miss SANTIA J.O. BRADSHAW, LL.B. (Hons.)
Prayers were taken by Reverend Father Mark Harewood.

MR. SPEAKER: Good morning, Honourable Members, this House is now in session. Honourable Members, I am not yet in receipt of Minutes for our last Meeting. May I ask for the usual Order of Deferral?

MINUTES

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes referred to be deferred.

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the Minutes be deferred was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

PAPERS

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER, by command, laid the Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) British American Insurance Company (Barbados) Limited Order, 2016.

MR. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42 (5), 43 and 44 for the remainder of today's Sitting.

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question to suspend the mentioned Standing Orders for the remainder of the Sitting was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 19 – THE SECOND READING OF THE
INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2016.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The matter before the House is a simple but important one for a number of reasons, but particularly because it allows us to close the circle on the legal requirements for the implementation of one of the measures announced in the 2016 Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, and that relates to the establishment of an Amnesty to permit for persons who may have fallen short of their statutory obligation to remit payments of income taxes to the Barbados Revenue Authority over however long a period of time, and certainly up to September 15, 2016. As you would know, Mr. Speaker, we have done amnesties or instituted these processes periodically from time to time. Even though we frowned on the fact that monies owed to the authorities over the years have been deducted and not paid in or are owed and not paid in, and that people find it difficult to make arrangements one way or the other to have those obligations liquidated, we

understand that in difficult economic circumstances and otherwise, difficult personal circumstances in some instances, sometimes it proves challenging for companies and individuals to make these payments. While we do not and ought not to encourage it, everybody including Government from time to time have had cash-flow problems and may have had other challenges, and they make real-time choices in relation to which items of expenditure they may prefer to pay or may have to pay to keep themselves operable. We try as a Government to work with those individuals, companies, corporations and entities to see that those legal obligations are met; and that the responsibilities to those persons whom they have in their employ or otherwise contracted or subcontracted are met in an orderly fashion. Depending on the circumstances, we try to help to ensure that they are met but not to the ultimate or absolute disadvantage of those persons. From time to time, we are looking at the number of arrears that we have built up in Government over many years, and it really runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars; probably even close to a billion dollars. I really do not know what the exact figure is now. The last time we had a general check on that, it was somewhere in the vicinity of \$700 million or \$800 million. It could possibly be more by now; and those are some of the active ones. Some of the inactive ones that have not been dealt with for decades now, even though we have not officially written them off in the accounting system, are deemed now generally, even by way of oral discussion, to be considered unrecoverable liabilities and so one of the things that we decided to do when we went into this period of fiscal consolidation and so forth is to try to see how best we can offer programmes to persons to assist them to bring themselves up-to-date and bring themselves current so that they do not have to continue to face some of the challenges that you would face when you have outstanding liabilities to the Crown. Of course, it helps as well because the more money the Government can get in on a cash basis the easier it makes the life of the Government in meeting those demands which, of course, are evermore growing and sophisticated from the public of Barbados for various goods and services from the State. There is a correlation between the two even though people might not necessarily see it that way, there is indeed, a fairly direct correlation between the two. Even if you do not accept that there is a direct correlation, I am not too sure why you would not, but even if you do not, at some point and time when Government runs short of cash and payments cannot be made to service suppliers and services begin to be affected and goods may be short here and there then you know that it has moved from just mere correlation to actual causation, that is, less money in the Treasury and less capacity to pay out, therefore our goal is to try to see if we can get in as much of the money as possible to do so. Equally, as well, is the fact that now that we are moving to a Barbados Revenue Authority (BRA) and that we moved to a Barbados Revenue Authority and we are moving shortly. Mr. Speaker, I believe, by way of legislation which would

come to this House soon to a single taxpayer ID platform. It means that we are also going to move by way of amendment to the Barbados Revenue Authority Act to a single Tax Clearance Certificate across all of the tax application systems. You will see some of that later today and in another Bill, I will talk about some of that but the point that I am making is that very shortly there will no longer be as we move to the single platform the designation of a tax clearance for Land Tax, a tax clearance for Income Tax, a tax clearance for VAT, a tax clearance for as we currently now have, a Tax Clearance Certificate for all of those separately. We are going to amend the law that there will be one tax clearance because there will be one taxpayer ID system. Each person will be given a tax number and that will be your number in the system whether you are paying VAT, Income Tax, Excise Tax, Land Tax or whatever the case may be therefore when that system is done and you are given that number you will be, by law, required to get for purposes of business transactions, there will be a Tax Clearance Certificate issued on all. What that means, Mr. Speaker, and I did say I would not go into too much detail to that because something else is going to come up in which we are going to speak about that, but what that means is that we want people to be in a position to have their business sorted out before that happens so that they cannot say that we have sprung this system on them, they were not aware of the system, they still have outstanding liabilities to the State in relation to the BRA and it is putting them in a disadvantageous position. When we were conceptualising the Budget and thinking about it, we said look, we know we are going to be doing this so we are going to give people six months of amnesty which is a very long period. It is very generous. I have looked at many different countries and usually the amnesty are a few weeks and everybody rushes down and you try to get your taxes cleared but we said we are going to give people enough time that they can make arrangements, if they have to do so, with a financial institution, a Credit Union, a bank, if they have to do so with friends or colleagues, whatever the case maybe to get there arrangements in place by offering them the ability to have their penalty and interest waived entirely so long as you make good on your principal payments and if you cannot pay all of the principal payments one time within the specified period of the six months, that you at least come into the authority and you make an arrangement for those principal payments to be made and the burden of the penalty and interests which in many instances, Mr. Speaker, as you and other Members in here know from having dealt with people who have had these challenges, these penalties and interests overtime tends to be much larger than the actual original principal.

The amendment that we are doing here to the Income Tax and for the purposes of this amnesty, the amendment we will do to the VAT or the order we will do to the VAT for the waiving of those penalties and interests is to give people an opportunity to bring their books to

order, clean them up without the heavy penalty and interest charges on it, you make an arrangement so that when all of these other things are put in place and you go and say, I want to get a Tax Clearance Certificate for X or Y you have no problem. I think that is a useful thing to do. The programme has started and my understanding is that a number of people have been taking advantage of the amnesty. There is still a couple more months to go and I encourage as many Barbadians as is possible to go and take advantage of it. The other thing with amnesties, Sir, is that if you have them too often then people will start to shop. They will wait around holding out for the next one to come saying you know, do not mind the Government they will say that but we will wait until the other one comes. I missed this one and I will get the other one in a couple years or another year or two. I think since we have come to office this Government has done about three or four. We did the Wit Programme as you know in the beginning when the crisis was at its highest in terms of the global crisis and its impact on Barbados. We had a penalty and interest programme and some people again decided they will miss it. We did another one a couple years ago, we did one on land tax, and some people took advantage of it and others decided to miss it and we decided that we will do one more and we will do it long enough because that was one of the complaints, that it was too short, a month or two months is too short so we gave them six months of amnesty. When this has closed I can say certainly from this Administration's view that another amnesty will not come for a very, very long time. I encourage people to take advantage. They can go on the Barbados Revenue Authority's website or on Barbados Government Information Service (BGIS), there are postings there of the conditions governing and you will see that the conditions are very, very fair and reasonable. In fact, they are so fair and reasonable that even for persons who would have been sued in Court by the entities that existed before on their own, VAT or Income Tax, and for whom judgments were given in the court you could still get the opportunity to get access to this programme so long as you were prepared to make yourself good, so that is how good the thing is.

Mr. Speaker, normally when judgements are issued in court nobody likes to touch them, everybody says the court has spoken on that and that is that, but we have said that even in those instances where you have a judgement against you, still come in, make your arrangements and get yourself current and you can get all of that penalty and interest and get the court case dismissed and so forth and you go back to court and tell the court look these people have made themselves good, could you please entertain a recommendation to have the judgement lifted and so forth and so on. We have really gone out of our way to make this as easy and as reasonable as possible and in those circumstances therefore I will commend this to anybody.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for amending the Income Tax Act is because while administratively we can begin proceedings to receive those submissions and those negotiations, legally you still have to square the circle by amending the law to make sure that it is properly and duly covered under the appropriate legislation. Mr. Speaker, I therefore can see, certainly from my end, little reason why the goodly Parliament of Barbados would not want to offer its support to this particular amendment, and therefore with those few words I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, I rise first of all to indicate that I wholeheartedly support the amendment for the waiver of penalties and interest provided to the various pieces of taxation that have been brought. I really want to say, Sir, that it demonstrates to everyone the fact that the Government is seeking to work not only individuals but with businesses generally. I really think that in the environment we are in that it should not be taken for granted because one of the many mistakes I find that businesses make even at the end of the day... We have a culture that has crept up in Barbados where it seemingly appears that when many businesses are set up they do not factor in or allow for the fact that they have to pay taxes. As a matter of fact, many business consultants would tell you that when they look to examine the cash flow of businesses or when businesses are looking at their cash flow, that very often what they view as sales or whatever is generated, they do not at the same time factor in the provision that they also have to pay taxes because it seems sometimes that in the payment of taxes in Barbados you may or may not have to pay Government, and that is one of the issues I think that certainly we have to address and that we have to remind people that taxes are part of the revenue base of the business but that revenue base is out of Government.

Very often we hear complaints from employees of businesses that in some cases might have gone under or from employees who sometimes are severed by businesses that when they go to the National Insurance Department to claim benefits, in some instances it might be severance payment or unemployment benefit, they are told that in many cases the ability of the National Insurance Scheme to pay is compromised by the fact that in many cases these employers do not remit the taxes. They also say that one of the faults of businesses in Barbados is that they do not factor in to their operations the necessity to pay the taxes when they are due and very often many of them use the taxation as a means of creating cash flow for their businesses. In other words, they are saying that the

Government can wait and they will use the taxes that are deducted from the employees' wages and in order to bolster their cash flow. Mr. Speaker, when businesses are planning their operation they need to take into consideration the fact that part of the cash flow includes paying taxes on time.

The other point I wish to make when it comes to this particular issue of the waiver is that I think that at a time when businesses are claiming that they are under a lot of stress - because in many cases you can imagine that with the considerable penalties and interest that sometimes go on taxes owed, not only corporation taxes or in terms of VAT but on taxes deducted from employees, that are supposed to be paid over to the Barbados Revenue Authority - it offers them an opportunity to restructure their balance sheets in a positive way that would at least reduce the liability section of the balance sheet, so of course businesses tend to look more attractive. In that regard I think we need to compliment the Honourable Minister of Finance for the fact that he has sought to ensure that in terms of financial assistance from financial institutions which are to be held up as a result of their failure to pay the taxes on time in the past and incurring a whole set of charges and penalties at the same time that there is an opportunity for them to at least make the balance sheet look more respectable. I think really that we have to give the Government credit for the fact that it is at least seeking to provide this type of service to businesses and giving them an opportunity to make things right. I really believe that at a time when businesses are going through a lot of stress and the balance sheets are looking unfavourable in some cases that it also offers them an opportunity to be able to present more favourable balance sheets. That is of course provided that they actually put into the balance sheets the amount of levies in terms of penalties and interest that they actually have due to Government, and I think that is something that we must credit the Honourable Minister of Finance on.

I also would wish to say that sometimes we get the impression that there is a cadre of persons in this country who seem to think that very often it is not their duty to contribute to taxes. As a matter of fact, I heard discussions in situation where people... Tax avoidance is something to which people pay great attention. There are some people who will go through a lifetime and seek not to contribute to the Treasury because they feel that other people pay on their behalf so why should they pay, and that is something that happens. This is a behaviour that sees both in individuals and businesses in this country. Sir, that also sometimes contribute to the difficulties that we do face in terms of ensuring that our collection systems do not have to go through the kind of anguish and difficulties that we see in terms of running behind persons to pay taxes.

Mr. Speaker, what we do not understand is that sometimes carry up the cost of collection which again carries up the cost of the service. Mr. Speaker, I really want to encourage Barbadians that we need to take a more progressive approach to the payment of taxes and use this as an opportunity to bring ourselves in line. I hear very often that people try to say that Barbados is a very high tax country. Sir, it is said that we should not compare but we have to and I sometimes wonder whether or not we compare ourselves. Sir, when we look at the general level of service that is being provided to Barbadians, in health, education, maintenance of our roads. We know right now because of the recent weather that we had that a lot of our roads have fallen into a considerably state of disrepair. I know the Honourable Member for St. Thomas I saw looked up, would agree to that and would want to encourage Barbadians, as a matter of fact, to pay their taxes but we know that in respect of that, that we would want to recognised that the money to do these things have to come from somewhere. One of the passions that we have noted in the past in relation to Barbadians and road repairs is that very often whenever there has been a major road repair project, there is also a major loan going onto the books of Government, whether from the Inter-American Development Bank or the Caribbean Development Bank.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that a lot of our road network has been financed from loans and not from taxation. We have already established the point that if we have to take a loan let it be for a project that will lead to development. Hence, the reason we have to pay careful attention to the issue of the payment of taxes and how do we encourage Barbadians to pay taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I really think that this particular measure would offer those Barbadians in the past who would have failed to pay their taxes on time it would give them the opportunity to right themselves and to contribute to the taxation system which often basically helps to finance the major projects and to provide the services that has to provide to the citizens of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I know that sometimes in the jest of things there are some Barbadians who might want to encourage Barbadians not to pay their taxes. Again we need to desist from these kinds of things and to recognise that very often a lot of the subsidies that we pay either to State institutions, to voluntary organisations a lot of these moneys come from taxes. Therefore, if Government is unable to collect the money to be able to pay these institutions, of course the whole society...

Mr. Speaker, some of these institutions do extremely great work in the community and I want therefore to compliment the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs at this particular measure at this point in time. I think it is timely. I think too it offers Barbadians the opportunity in

circumstances where there might be some Barbadians who owe, this now gives them the opportunity to right-size that and to bring themselves appropriately onto the books and let us ensure that we have more Barbadians who are contributing to the payment of taxes and in that way the Government will be able to provide a greater amount of services and benefits to citizens of this country without at the same time pushing up the national debt more than it should be.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for my brief contribution.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of Government Business.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I want to endorse the contribution of the Honourable Member in leading off this amendment and of course the contribution from the Honourable Member who has just sat down. As the Honourable Member made the point at again giving Barbadians another opportunity to make right what essentially is broken, the Honourable Member made the point that this country's development depend significantly on the contribution we make by way of taxation and that it become legally binding once that taxation has been put in place by the Administration. The Honourable Member made the point too, and I would want to repeat it, it is often described about the level of taxation in Barbados that we are a highly taxed jurisdiction but a cursory glance around the international world will tell you that does not sit right and that when we look at countries like Canada, Europe and indeed Britain, Sweden, we recognised that the taxation levels are way beyond what is being asked in Barbados. of course, the argument would be to look at their services, the conditions of their roads, their entire infrastructure, etc. cetera but it is because of our noncompliance, our short collection, that although we would have budgeted for a certain level of expenditure annually during our Estimate exercise any shortfall of that expenditure has to be made up in essential areas, by borrowing, grants or whatever kind of interventions that the Government is able to access. This now adds to our overall national debt and starts to warp our figures in the eyes of the purists, so is all a vicious circle Mr. Speaker, which we have to recognise as a very important responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, the point must be made that in large measure we are talking to private sector personnel because Government workers essentially pay their taxes before their receive their salaries, so I do not think that there is a large amount of default in the area of public workers but we are dealing with professionals and other private sector employees in Barbados who need to be challenged from time to time to make sure that they pay their taxes.

Mr. Speaker, it is not a popular debate and I am sure that as Member of Parliament you would hear the other

side of the story. I make the point again yes, there is a genuine cause for concern if our infrastructure and the services which we offer as a Government fail and therefore we have a duty as an Administration to make sure that these situations are corrected. I know that later on today I believe we are going to be looking at some amendments and some Bills which will help us to put in place some essential road works that must be carried out. We are all aware of the interventions that is going to be required at our sewerage plants, for example, the South Coast Sewerage Plant which is very topical now, then of course the entire question of the Bridgetown Sewerage Plant which is under tremendous pressure and indeed, the entire West Coast Sewerage Plant project which is now been spoken of for many years. Mr. Speaker, I believe you were still in secondary school when that discussion on the West Coast Sewerage Plant would have started. These things have been designed, redesigned and reworked and that is where we are going.

Mr. Speaker, let me go back to the question of the professionals. We looked at the idea of attaching the tax period for professionals. This has not been fully worked out but it is again a matter which we have to be as Administration concerned about. How do we efficiently or effectively collect our taxes so the business of running our country can be properly carried out? If we do not collect the taxes, as I indicated, it will result in having to resort to borrowings to take up whatever slack there is.

Sir, the fact that the Minister is again offering amnesty, so to speak, to taxpayers is honourable. I want to join in the call by the Minister, the Honourable Member who just sat, in asking Barbadians to cooperate with the arrangement. The Minister even went as far as to indicate, even where there have been orders by the court, the Barbados Revenue Authority is prepared to work with the individual to make sure that these matters are properly tidied up.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is Bill which really needs our full support of this Honourable Chamber, and I certainly want to join in commending this amendment to this House of Assembly, and certainly want to urge Barbadians to buy into the idea and support the Government in this important exercise. With those few words, Sir, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Rt. Hon. F.J. STUART: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Very briefly, I rise to give my support to this measure, amendment to the Tax Act to make provision for relief of penalties and interest where taxpayers have

defaulted. It is not without significance that this debate is taking place in the month of December, the Season of Advent, because 2000 years ago, around this very time, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. That decree led to the journey taken by Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. So taxes and tax paying were around for a very long time. If we use the quotation of the reference I just made, upwards to 2000 years ago. Sometimes when you hear discussion on taxation in Barbados you get the impression that taxes were the creation of the Government of Barbados. Taxes were around for a very long time, and their payment absolutely necessary if Governments are to be able to meet the diverse needs of their populations for better health, better housing, better education, better infrastructure, and so on. I know that the law makes a distinction between tax avoidance, which is a wholly legitimate exercise, that is why corporate entities employ tax lawyers and tax experts to show them how best they can get around the tax laws and to make their businesses more financially efficient and, of course, make their shareholders happier. Tax evasion is what the law prohibits. That distinction is a legal distinction. There is nothing wrong with tax avoidance, but there is everything wrong with tax evasion. I think that with tax evasion this amendment is concerned, because there are people who have been assessed to tax who are required to pay their taxes, and who either by virtue of what they call necessity or by virtue of their own prioritising, the taxes do not get paid and then the tax authorities have to impose penalties, and, of course, for as long as the assessment remains unsatisfied, interest accrues. The time sooner or later comes when businesses find it very difficult to access financing and so on from commercial banks because they have large amounts of taxes outstanding. It is in the context of understanding this, that the Government took the decision, the Ministry of Finance very creatively took the decision to introduce this measure.

I was sitting next to the Minister of Finance when he introduced this measure, and I heard him urge Barbadians who are in default of the payment of their taxes and who have been assessed with large penalties and payments of interest to take advantage of this facility being offered and to come forward and pay their taxes free of interest, free of penalties, so that they can get their businesses back together, so that they can organize themselves for a great takeoff in their personal fortunes.

Sir, it has to be conceded that over the last few years, certainly since the events of the last quarter of 2007, businesses have not had an easy time and the Government has had to from time to time respond to the exigencies of the business environment to help businesses to stay afloat in a very treacherous and a very difficult commercial and business environment. Of course, we have had to do the same thing for workers. I well recall when we extended the period during which workers who were laid off could get

unemployment benefits, so that we would mitigate as far as possible any hardship that had resulted to them. These are measures that Governments have to take from time to time, and I want to join the Minister of Finance in urging all those persons to whom this piece of legislation applies to take full advantage of the opportunity for the waiver of penalties and interest being offered by the amendment and come forward and pay their taxes.

Ultimately, Governments need all the taxes, as I said, to meet the diverse needs of the population, and if taxes are not paid, then the quality of services which any Government is capable of offering will be correspondingly

Mr. Speaker, I think this amendment deserves the support of the House. It certainly has my full support and I just want to express the hope that full advantage will be taken of the facilities being offered. I know the Minister of Finance emphasised that once the expiry date has been past, and he does not want to hear people complaining they want a little more time. I think they have had a lot of time to deal with this and full advantage should be taken.

We are doing a number of reforms to make our tax collection more efficient, but even while those reforms are going on, this facility is being offered and I think it deserves the full support of the House and therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to give it my support.

I am obliged to you.

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

Hon. S.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity. Also joining in this discussion on what I consider, of course, is a very important amendment to the Income Tax Act. First, the purpose of the amendment as the Minister of Finance said, is to provide for a waiver of penalties and interest incurred on the arrears of tax. I certainly am applauding the Ministry of Finance for continuing to find innovative ways to assist taxpayers who may have entered into a period of difficulty in terms of their compliance with their tax obligations to have in this case a very expanded period of time to pay those arrears which would have been owed. I think it is a laudable act on the part of the Ministry of Finance.

I also believe, Mr. Speaker, that within the context of the ongoing discussion, certainly in Barbados, about obligation of persons to assist the Government in relation to raising revenue which, of course, is needed to service the various requirements of the Government, I think this is important to have a discussion on this matter. The amendment does allow us to do that, but it does it within the context of providing an avenue for the revenue authorities to utilise and age old tool of tax planning, which

is the who question of the waiver, or waiver of penalties to really in a way secure tax compliance, which is really what this is about. We want to ensure everyone recognizes the obligation to pay their taxes, but the Government also recognized, as other Governments in the past, that there is need often times to come up with various methods of encouragement and assistance, to really aid those persons who may have had a period of not being able to, for whatever reason, meet their tax obligation and provide with a period in which, of course, there is no penalty or interest which will be charged to allow them to pay their taxes.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we have to find every opportunity particularly when we are debating measures in the House to also educate our listening public about what the Government is doing. This is an opportunity, I believe, that affords us the opportunity of doing that. The area of tax waivers and amnesty and so on has been used successfully, certainly over the past 50 years by various Governments for different reasons. Whether those Governments have been in the developing world, we have seen countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Brazil and India, they have certainly over a very wide span of time, the last 50 years, used the tax amnesty to assist them in tax planning. We have also seen developed countries, as well, faced with a myriad of challenges whether it be the ongoing recession, whether it be the whole question of fiscal deficits. Mr. Speaker, fiscal deficits are not only a reality for countries such as Barbados, or countries in the Caribbean. Fiscal deficits have been a very troubling phenomena across financial systems, and the amnesty has been used both -- certainly in North America in particular, in various States in the United States of America amnesty has been used to a large extent to really achieve a measure of compliance. Of course, sometimes it is used often in a rather discriminatory way to reach out to various taxpayers who themselves may not have been touched by past amnesties. As you heard from the Minister of Finance, this is certainly not the first opportunity or first occasion since we assumed office in 2008, that this Government would have offered an amnesty. I believe he said it is the third occasion on which we have offered an amnesty. I think that is certainly an indication, Mr. Speaker, of a Government that responds to various concerns.

Of course, the interesting thing about an amnesty -- and I mentioned the word discriminatory because by and large, even before an amnesty is provided, the State would have hoped, and I think it is the reality that most taxpayers meet their tax obligations, because if that was the case the Government would not have been able, certainly, to fulfill the mammoth task of running the very complicated machinery of Government, by extension fulfilling its mandate to its people to provide social services and certainly to allow for the public service to function in an efficient manner.

This is interesting because the amnesty really speaks to those people who have been delinquent. So in that sense the amnesty is really a discriminatory tool of tax planning aimed essentially... in most cases there are many mechanisms that have been used and different ways the amnesty has been used, but essentially to really reach out to those taxpayers who really are in breach of the law. They have not complied with paying their taxes for various reasons. Rather than enforce compliance through legal methods, through the court system and so on as is allowable under the Income Tax Act, the Governments from time to time, and we have done it as has been indicated. This is another opportunity where those persons who hopefully in the minority would have an opportunity to visit the Barbados Revenue Authority's offices to make good on paying their taxes, and to do so without having to bother about the penalties and interest, that would have been lawfully accrued over the period of time.

Of course the amendment does provide for a period of time in which this amnesty would be effective. In fact, the Bill before the House requires that the full tax, in other words the arrears, are to be paid in full no later than February 15, 2017. So there is a period time. I believe this period started September 15th. This is really a good opportunity for persons who have been delinquent to meet their obligations and assist the Government in ensuring that its revenue base, which is by and large informed by taxation of varying types, can be appropriately beefed up so that the Government can be in a position to fulfil its requirements in relation to the country's finances. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to also say that any time we are dealing with income tax or looking at our revenue base, we have to confront the whole question of managing fiscal deficits and managing small, open economies such as Barbados in rather difficult economic times. It requires, of course, not only the scrutinising of Government finances but it also requires a wider public discussion in relation to how both Opposition and Government follow the path of ensuring that they also encourage everyone to meet their obligations in terms of payment of tax. This is the kind of Debate that I believe would never or ought not to be a divide in relation to the lawful obligations of Barbadians, Mr. Speaker. It is hoped that once these Debates arise in the House, both sides of the House would use the opportunity to really appeal to and encourage Barbadians to take advantage of this tax amnesty.

Mr. Speaker, in winding up my contribution I would like to certainly also appeal and suggest to those persons who may have been delinquent to use this opportunity to meet with the officials of the Barbados Revenue Authority and to pay their taxes now that they do not have to pay the arrears or penalties. I think it is a fantastic opportunity, particularly for businesses that may also have been in this category, to be able to rid themselves of the interest and penalties that they would have had to pay without this

measure. Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is a good decision, a good policy initiative of the Government, and I certainly would commend it to Barbadians, and certainly this measure has my full support. I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, we would have dealt with this matter in the Budget Debate, as the Honourable Minister of Finance indicated when it was introduced. I see no reason to delay or detain the House any further on this matter. The Opposition has already provided its support. We believe that there are far more fundamental things that this House should be dealing with today. I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. Yes, Hononourable Member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D.ST.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I too rise to support this measure and to make a fundamental point, which is that we are going to have to look at this. You would have heard on many occasions that the country is overtaxed, but I fundamentally believe that it is not a situation where the country is overtaxed. What we might have to look at is the way we tend to tax. As I have been saying in this House for many years, we have to recognise that because of the technological changes and so on, we have to be very careful that we are not using our tax systems to support the external forces more so than the internal forces. The reason why I am making this point is because over the years we have recognised that this country has been built more so on direct taxation, and with the advent of technology which has now replaced man, it makes for a diminishing return. We need to look to see where we can find a taxation system that, instead of it being a diminishing return, can be one that would allow the country to have an adequate supply of taxes. For example, when we introduced the computer, instead of people using the computer to expand on the number of people employed and take advantage of the computer, what you saw was a diminishing of the number of people employed, and it meant a reduction in taxes.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be very careful, in the way we administer taxes, that we do not interfere with the productive sectors. One thing we also have to watch is that while we may be reducing the productive sectors which would give you a diminishing return, you have a situation where you may be allowing a consuming public but you do not get the punishment from that aspect of it. That is why I have advocated over the years that we need to look at the aspect of Government which is expanding, and one would recognise that consumption not only means an expansion of the cost of the foreign exchange and so on, but it also

means that you are building an economy externally when in truth and in fact you should be building it internally. We therefore have to ask ourselves whether over the years our taxation systems as we knew them are still working the way we want them to, or whether we need to restructure them to appreciate what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that if the consumption aspect is growing, then we need to focus more on the consumption aspect of the economy and not ignore the effect it might be having on the productive side of the economy. There is no doubt that you need the workers and you need the investors. If you have workers, investors and consumers, you have to ask yourself where the incidence of taxation should come. Everybody knows that the workers and the investors are the ones to propel the economy. It is the consumers who would be using the foreign exchange and would be using it against the country, but an investor and a worker should not be seen as a person working against the country because, in another breath, they are all still consumers. It does not matter what you do, they have to consume and there must be a penalty for consumption. Whenever you use the consumption aspect of it, what you are doing is using foreign exchange, which is a great cost to the country. You would therefore hope that the worker and the investor are people who would be helping you either to create import substitution or to expand your foreign exchange bases. Mr. Speaker, it is in that light that I would like to contribute to this Debate and welcome the waivers on the penalties and interest; but we also have to understand that we have to look at it from a macro level and look at what is actually happening in the world. We must ask ourselves whether technology has worked for or against us, because what we have seen is a throwaway society where people now, because of things coming into the country, are not creating that service industry as we had before, because of costs. That is another thing, because we also have to ask ourselves whether we can continue to have certain goods coming into our country at such a low cost and then afford just to dump it or throw it away without looking at what it is costing the country to supply it as it relates to foreign exchange.

Previously, when we had substantial items, we tended to look to service them and we created employment for our people. Nowadays, that aspect of it is not there anymore. As soon as you have, for example, a television which has a problem, you just dump it and go and buy another one without looking at the foreign exchange impact which it is having on the country.

11.41 a.m.

Insert s8 juliette

Tuesday, December 13, 2016

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE
WITH
SECTION 5 OF THE LAND ACQUISITION ACT,
CAP. 228, THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION BY
THE CROWN OF THE PARCEL OF LAND, THE
PROPERTY OF MILDRED
PRINCE-CUMBERBATCH, SITUATE AT
PRINCE ROAD, UPPER COLLYMORE ROCK
IN THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL
IN THIS ISLAND FOR THE PUBLIC
PURPOSE OF THE CONSTRUCTION
OF A ROUNDABOUT AND PRINCE
ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Minister.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, this Resolution deals with another road project of this Government where we are seeking to alleviate the problems as it relates to traffic gridlock especially in the St. Michael area, and in this case we are dealing with Upper Collymore Rock.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this is a very busy highway and we are ensuring that wherever there is gridlock that we provide a solution to it. This is the last parcel of land to be acquired, the property Mrs. Mildred Prince-Cumberbatch situated at Prince Road, Upper Collymore Rock. This would be one of many of these seminal Resolutions where we will be asking to come to the House to ensure that wherever there is gridlock that we acquire the necessary parcels of land to allow the Ministry of Transport and Works to be able to carry out their programme and to ensure that we ease the traffic congestion that we have in the country.

One would recognise, Mr. Speaker, that over the years the citizens of Barbados have moved towards purchasing a large number of vehicles whether it be reconditioned vehicles or new vehicles and as the number of vehicles increased in Barbados we would have to seek to ensure that we make the necessary adjustments to the roads whether we put in lights where there is a need for lights or put in roundabouts where we figure that the problem is much greater. We would also have to look at the possibility of expanding the road or even building new roads because there is a belief that whenever you have a situation like this where there is traffic gridlock that it is sometimes better to build a new road because as you tend to expand the road or build a roundabout or put down lights people tend to gravitate towards that area more and the more they gravitate towards that area the more they create confusion, so Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this simple Resolution do now pass.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Honourable Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development has said in introducing this Resolution, it is indeed a very simple Resolution for the compulsory acquisition of land at Prince Road, Upper Collymore Rock, St. Michael and therefore the Barbados Labour Party has no objection generally to the acquisition of land for public purposes and certainly in this case it is to construct a roundabout to ease traffic congestion in the Upper Collymore Rock area.

Mr. Speaker, what concerns the Opposition while not objecting to the Resolution is that I believe that Government must ask itself some serious questions as it relates to whether this particular Resolution at this point in juncture in the fiscal situation of Barbados is indeed necessary. Mr. Speaker, while there is an acquisition, we have not heard anything in relation to the cost of constructing the roundabout and I would hope that the Honourable Minister would be able to shed some light on that in respect of his wrap up. The cost of acquiring the land is also of critical importance and certainly should require some discussion by the Honourable Minister. It does not appear to be a large parcel of land but certainly it would be interesting to hear how much is actually going to be paid for this piece of land particularly since we know that Government resources are certainly constrained at this stage and we have had a number of complaints as it relates to persons who have been promised that they would be paid money for the acquisition of their land who to this day have not received the moneys that were due to them.

Mr. Speaker, there are other matters at this juncture of our history and certainly in present-day Barbados that I believe are of more serious importance than for us to be debating this particular Resolution today in terms of acquiring this particular parcel of land. Certainly, I think that all Barbadians would be interested to hear what is actually happening with the sewerage system in Barbados. That is something that is on the buzz of all Barbadians who are trying to ascertain exactly what is happening. There is a lot of information in the public's domain. A roundabout while it is important in the grand scheme of things certainly is not as important at this point in time today for all Barbadians to appreciate what is happening to the inflow and outflow of the sewerage system in Barbados, so I think the Honourable Minister would be well aware that to bring this Resolution requires a little more explanation in terms of what is the cost and allowing the public of Barbados to fully appreciate when this would actually be constructed and what is the cost it would be constructed at and place it in a context alongside what Barbadians certainly are questioning in relation the clear breakdown of our sewerage system across Barbados at this present time.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Resolution. I speak after the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East and I am a little puzzled by that contribution. Prince Road is at the border of the constituency St. Michael South Central and St. Michael South East and one would have thought that an effort to improve the safety of her constituents and my constituents would have been reasons to simply laud the Resolution.

The decision that you are not according priority to something like this is puzzling to me. Highway 6 is the busiest highway in Barbados. There is a problem especially in Upper Collymore Rock with the interface between traffic and pedestrians. I understand the issue of the moment and the wanting to play a little politics but the fact that the Government is moving towards improving the safety situation for the Honourable Member's constituents, pedestrians and road users, should be something that the Honourable Member should laud directly.

Indeed, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition even tried to blame the loss of lives on businessmen and road construction. People have lost their lives at that junction there already before the Honourable Member was the Member of Parliament for St. Michael South East so I am simply saying that this is a good opportunity for a young parliamentary representative to say clearly this is a good thing.

I am simply saying, and I speak now as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, that we are glad to see that this effort is being made to improve the traffic flow in this particular scenario. As I said earlier, Highway 6 is an extremely busy artery in and out of Bridgetown and it has transformed in terms of the demographics. It has gone from a predominately residential community to one that involves residential and businesses as well. Indeed, you have the largest Pentecostal church in Barbados, the People's Cathedral, on Highway 6, you have a number of accounting firms and the international business sector is well represented there so the dynamic has changed tremendously in Upper Collymore Rock. I know that, for example, when the roundabout was done further up going towards Wildey where you have what is now called Rubis, what used to be called Texaco at the Y, that it inconvenient a number of residents initially but I think we all have realised in the shakedown that it has certainly improved the traffic situation overall on Highway 6, so this effort now coming a little further down Collymore Rock, I think, is a very good initiative.

I am happy to hear that the Opposition is supporting the Government on this albeit in a very convoluted manner but it is good to still have the support of the Opposition because I think clearly something needs to be done in that Collymore Rock area. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the possibility widening the road making it dual carriage, I do not see that as practical option, the land acquisition cost etc. cetera does not facilitate that and it is precisely the reason a roundabout by Prince Road makes sense. I did not even talk about the new Caribbean Examination Council building that should come into the equation. Therefore, in itself seeing few more people come into the area, more traffic coming into the areas but as the same time you still have to be aware of the residents and the pedestrian who are going about their daily business.

Mr. Speaker, I think in that context we have to support effort. We, of course, look forward to seeing the roundabout arrangements, to see how the traffic flow can improve and that it can be safe, not only for drivers but for the pedestrian. It is still a very densely populated area: the Princess Royal Avenue, Pineland, Valery, and Collymore Rock. There are still a number of people who still in that area so that I think that even though we welcome the economic activity, the commercial activity, the Caribbean Examination Council Headquarters, I understand going even further up to the Old BET building has also been purchased that there will be more traffic coming into the area. That Highway stretch, particularly that stretch will probably the busiest road in Barbados, certainly of the seven major highways. I am not getting into the other ABC Highway and so forth but that Highway 6 in terms of the movement of people from St. Philip and Christ Church in and out of Bridgetown is extremely busy and therefore we need to make sure that adequate planning is done.

Mr. Speaker, I want to salute the Ministry of Transport and Works and the technical people. Again, this is not necessarily a partisan issue per se because I know a lot of this work has been going on for quite a while. I remember when the first time an engineer from that Ministry went overseas to study traffic management, who is now the Deputy Chief Technical Officer and is also a young lady and so I think we appreciate the need for greater traffic planning and we must always be conscious especially in cases like this one where you have communities with a high residential component as well.

Mr. Speaker, in that context, I am satisfied that we are taking that into consideration. Sir, while we welcome the roundabout I think it sort of goes without saying that along with the roundabout would be appropriate crossings, the sidewalks and that sort of thing that will allow for the constituents of St. Michael South East and South Central to make sure that they can still go about their business without being necessarily impacted upon negatively.

Mr. Speaker, I did mention that we have a large church, there is also the Caribbean Examination Council Headquarters and there will be lots of activity going on and so indeed there will be pedestrian crossings all over but I am thinking about those persons actually living in the area who cannot be forgotten because there is the temptation, as the area becomes more and more commercialized, that we forget that there are still residents whose concerns must not be forgotten or sacrificed. Mr. Speaker, it is in that context therefore I think this is good work by the technical team, indeed, by the Minister and others who would have supported them to get this effort going. This is the last parcel of land and with this they can get that situation organised and hopefully not only facilitate better traffic flow but also greater levels of vehicle safety and last and by no means least, safety for the pedestrians who also have to use these byways. I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can put this into clearer context very quickly. The Honourable Member who has just spoken should know better than to suggest that they can be no pedestrian safety unless there is a roundabout, pedestrian safety can be easily acquired through a crossing for the persons who have to walk.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. I never said that the only way to get to pedestrian safety is by a roundabout. I never said that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, the Honourable Member said that you suggested it. I cannot fault the Honourable Member for trying to interpret what it is that you said. Please let us move on.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I was indicating, pedestrian safety can be secured and ought to be secured with an appropriate crossing for the persons who are there. There are people who have been traversing that road for years, we would like to do it but in the context in which we live today, there are more pressing needs on the Government of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago I went into White Hill and the residents of White Hill have to go down a slope that is slippery, it is a gully, it is precipitous, it is perilous, they are walking on a step that is half concrete block in one instant, a full block in another instance, you are going down at an angle that is at least 60 degrees and coming back up. Then, Mr. Speaker, at night you have no lighting. Mr. Speaker, it is easy for the Honourable Member for Christ Church South to refer to this as harry-carry as an aside because the Honourable Member is also putting his constituents on a harry-carry mission by refusing to do his job as Minister of Health in

relation to the exposure of the South Coast Sewerage System.

Mr. Speaker, of course, the Honourable Member can speak and that is what this Floor is for, but the bottom line is that if any reasonable Barbadian looks today at what are the immediate priorities for the Ministry of Transport and Works in relation to the thousands of people who have been forced to wait for three, four, five hours to get a bus; in relation to the conditions of the people in White Hill; in relation to the conditions of the people on the south coast and in spite of the purported sea bath of the Honourable Member for Christ Church South and the last Honourable Member who has just spoken, the people in St. Matthias and the south coast this weekend have continued...

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is an amazing thing that those charged with the responsibility of securing the safety of the people of this country do not understand the prioritization of needs. I say, Sir, that if this Government does not have money to buy buses to get people home; if this Government cannot find money to get the South Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant functioning, or even to do the emergency fix that is necessary to stop those people like the apartments on the front page of today's paper from having to turn away all of the guests who are staying there, how can we now find money to do new projects that are not yet on the table?

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East has made the simple point. What is the cost of constructing this new roundabout? Can it be priority over the other things that the Government of Barbados now has to deal with? Can it be a priority over things related to the payment of arrears that businesses in Barbados as a result suffering from? Sir, this Government has to wake up and smell the coffee and deal with its priorities. This Government has to stop running people into a false sense of what else you can do when you cannot even get that done which you are required by law or required in the interest of public safety to be able to do. I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: ... I am obliged. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, just a few words on the acquisition that is before us and to indicate that road improvement is always a priority in a small island like Barbados. Traffic management is always an issue and priority, and this is something which always gets the attention of the planners in any Ministry of Transport and Works, and indeed the attention of Cabinet. A lot of what we talk about when we are looking at matters like road improvements is information which is gathered from interaction with members of our constituencies, with the

working public. Everyone is aware, and the Member for St. Michael South Central was at pains to point out, that this Highway 6 is probably one of the busier highways in Barbados; but then again you can take your pick as to which one is the busiest. I use Highway 7 every morning and I use Highway 6 sometimes, and there is the vast population from St. Philip which tends to use Highway 5, and we go on and on. This is a factor in Barbados which will constantly have the attention of the public; not to the exclusion of other areas, and that point must be made, Mr. Speaker.

To pretend that we can only focus on one area of repair or development or improvement is to really reduce this discussion to a very puerile level, so the Honourable Members cannot present as their only reason or their only proposal that we need to focus on something else. We are focusing on all the things which the Honourable Member has raised, and she knows that. The Honourable Member is fully aware of what is going on. As a matter of fact, Sir, the Honourable Member boasts that sometimes she is more aware than us and has the common practice these days -- we saw it on Sunday night -- of displaying all kinds of Cabinet Papers and loan agreements. Whatever she can rake up, she brings to the people of Barbados and presents it as some new find. I wait for the Honourable Member to rake up some essential information which we need to satisfy a lot of questions that are still to be answered in respect of the performance of the Barbados Labour Party and in particular, the Honourable Member, Sir. That time will come. We tend to think that the only persons involved in these exercises are ourselves, but there are a number of contributing factors.

Sir, the question of this road improvement is one which I can speak very intimately about because this all was being sort of focused on while we were completing the ABC Highway improvement around 2008 to 2011. It would have been a period when I also had the honour of serving as Minister of Transport and Works in this country, Sir. This acquisition has that kind of history, and as quite rightly pointed out, the development of the CXC (Caribbean Examinations Council) building in the Prince Road area has also added to the need to create some level of improvement in that area. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East should have been aware, in driving around that area, that there is need for simple improvements to occur so that the CXC building can present itself in a manner befitting a regional institution. It is all of these factors which should be taken into consideration.

Traffic flow is important, and the jury is still out indeed in terms of what is the better solution. Is a roundabout the better solution? Are traffic lights a better solution? We have seen in Barbados where we have moved from traffic lights to roundabouts and back to traffic lights.

The Lower Collymore Rock junction is a classic example of that. As to whether the traffic flows better now or is slower is still under debate. There are views, certainly in the Ministry of Transport and Works, which diverge in this regard. We are simply in this Resolution seeking to acquire, and they want to know the cost of the land. The cost of the land is not included in the Resolution, but at 1 557 square metres we can make a sensible estimate as to what that cost is. The information on that can be easily obtained. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy can easily obtain that information if it is going to make the day of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East. If that is going to make her day, I would suggest that the Honourable Member get the number from his Ministry so he can share it with us. I would love to hear that too, because that is important. In terms of the cost of the improvement, again that will now have to be a matter for consideration once the land has been identified and the measurements and the surveying for the road are complete. The surveying for the land acquisitions will be complete but the surveying for the road would then be a matter which would engage the team at the Ministry of Transport and Works, I am sure, and at that time a cost would be available in terms of the construction of the road.

Again, I think if you use a facility, you start to understand the urgency, and certainly those people who use that junction understand the need for controlled flow. It is not a question of whether it is a threat, but it is definitely a threat. The Collymore Rock Junction, the Gertz junction because that is the familiar name that is used to describe it, is a potentially extremely dangerous junction and there is absolutely need for control. We must look at if we can introduce a means by which traffic travelling east from Upper Collymore Rock can proceed on the left along Prince Road and make a circle -- a controlled, roundabout circle -- around that junction and proceed towards the former Cable & Wireless building; you want to call it Cable & Wireless but it does not exist anymore but you know what I am talking about. Similarly, traffic travelling from the east down Collymore Rock, as they say, into Bridgetown would travel in a natural flow again. The circle would be achieved. Those people therefore coming out from the Pine area, for instance, would not have to butting and peeping and squeezing out as they have to now to achieve some level of priority. That is what we are driving at when we talk about control.

Access for pedestrians will be created and has been traditionally created by way of marking of pedestrian crossings, and whether we introduce lighted pedestrian crossings or not is another matter. These are constant road improvements which are necessary in order to have a controlled environment, Mr. Speaker. It is he who feels it that knows it, and it is important that when we consider these items in this Honourable Chamber, we understand what the priorities are.

We talk about development. There are plans to create a police headquarters in the area next to the CXC building, so these are development plans. Must we, because we have an urgent national priority dealing with at the South Coast, say we do no other business in the House of Assembly? How puerile can we get? How simplistic can we get in terms of our work? There are those charged with the responsibility of bringing about that effective repair on the South Coast, and we are monitoring every hour of the day. We are monitoring the situation and the implementation of the solutions which have been put to the country every hour of the day. The technical people, not the politicians, are putting in place the correct solutions, and the funds have been made available and will continue to be monitored so that the correction at the South Coast can be achieved.

12.20 p.m.

Insert s12 juliette

Tuesday, December 13, 2016

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.00 p.m. today.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 2.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Good afternoon, Honourable Members, this Sitting is resumed.

PAPERS (Recommitted)

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of Government Business.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (China National Complete Plan Import and Export Corporation) (Barbados Limited) Order, 2016;
2. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Sam Lord's Property Development Incorporated) Order, 2016.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES (Recommitted) Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of Government Business. Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I am commended to lay the following:

1. Local Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2016;
2. Resolution that Parliament approves the borrowing of the sum of US\$15 million from the First Citizens Bank Limited of Trinidad and Tobago. The proceeds of the loan will be used to fund projects approved by the Government of Barbados which meet all the requisite criteria for the utilisation of funding available to the Government of Barbados from the Development Bank of Latin America.

FIRST READING OF BILLS (Recommitted)

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of Government Business.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I want to move the following Bill be read a first time:

1. The Local Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2016.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Recommitted)

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, before we recommitted, we were on Order No. 21 and with that we shall continue. The Honourable Member for Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I would just wish in a brief intervention refer this compulsory acquisition of land in the Collymore area. Mr. Speaker, I will support any effort for the compulsory acquisition of land or property if it is to improve the quality of our roads, or whether it is another project for housing or whatever.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the lives of Barbadians and indeed their welfare is very critical and that therefore we really must put projects in place that will ensure that we look after the needs of our locals, as well as the visitors among us in large numbers.

Mr. Speaker, I too would like to know the cost of this project because I know that across the island we are looking at cost, in this serious economic period that we have been going through and therefore I think it is critical that the public as well should know about this project.

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware that much of our national budget is expended as a result of accidents on the road, careless driving, and negligence and so on, and of course the injury or death, the replacement for material and equipment, including property are extremely costly. Sir, a lot of our road users, drivers, pedestrians, cyclists are not moving or operating in any defensive manner. As a matter of fact, driving on our roads now, particularly riding, seems to be the most offensive aspects of our culture that we would never have countenanced at all. Mr. Speaker, it bothers me when I see what is happening, especially with a lot of our motorists who are males and particularly on the motorcycles...

Mr. Speaker, we know of what transpired only this weekend and indeed every weekend we see it. I believe that it really is putting a tremendous burden on our health and welfare services because of what has been happening in relation to injuries received, with some people becoming disabled and so on, and these people get the priority when they play the fool on our roads.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate, however, that in this juncture of our history, the serious economic crisis that we are going through, that there should be some priorities being placed. I agree that the Collymore Rock Road and the general areas of Prince Road are areas that are congested but it is so if only if motorists would be conformed and be well disciplined I believe would minimise what we witness on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that once priorities are given to the needs across the entire island that it would make a difference in what happens in other communities. Mr. Speaker, you would agree with me that there are a lot of link roads that will lead into that environment that will ease the pressure on that road. Sir, a lot of it has to do with its smoothness of the roads, people avoid going through some of the link roads that have a lot of potholes in circumstances where they have to be skipping here and there or buying shots for their vehicles. Sir, as long as we can have those link roads properly prepared and operable, it reduces the use of the highway and in a number of those communities that are similar to the Collymore Rock area.

Mr. Speaker, I thought what the Honourable Member for Christ Church South was saying earlier this morning was so ironic. I do not think that being a former Minister of Public Works and Transport clearly understood his role in relation to what was happening, where the Honourable Member was that Minister for five years. I believe that a little more planning must be done in prioritising what should take place in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I know for a fact that many areas on our streets have either fallen apart or are falling apart by the minute and require urgent attention. Therefore I will

ask the Honourable Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development and the Minister of Public Works and Transport to let us see how we could look at prioritising a lot of what is going on in our various communities.

I know that we have roads, bridges, drains and particularly signage that are posing tremendous problems across the island and I would like to beg for the Minister of Works and Transport and any of the other agencies that work in synergy with that Ministry to be looking and paying closer attention and as I said, prioritising certain matters or certain sections of road that are now in a worse condition than ever before. Even we had these heavy rains in the last month things were bad. The heavy rains and the blockage of the drains have caused the situation to become worse.

Mr. Speaker, you know that I am a hometown girl and therefore I would wish to make mention of some of the roads that I would like to ask this Government to prioritise, despite the fact that I am not criticising in the way that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South seemed to have put it over, as though the Barbados Labour Party is not in favour of the roundabout being done. Mr. Speaker, I want to focus on areas like Mount Misery, Airie Cot, Canefield, Hangman's Hill, Vauxcluse, and Endeavour where the bridge has collapsed.

Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South was the then Minister and the bridge had collapsed and instructed his officers not to deal with that now, that I had 14 years in which I could have done it. Sir, that hurt the people of Lion Castle and Endeavour and to this day there is no linkage in that area. If persons who live in Lion Castle and Endeavour have to rely on an ambulance or any other services or if there is an emergency, they are all marooned. In that community they always had a way out. I believe that needs attention. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South was the Minister when I sent photographs and correspondence about Bloomsbury Hill, and I know I am not a prophet or anything, neither do I want to be since I am just an ordinary human being; but that road is ready to collapse. Why would we want to wait for a road like that to go the route of what happened in White Hill? This is now about five or six years that we have been waiting for at least some attention to be paid to have that road corrected. Sir, I think it would be a terrible travesty if the children going up to Grantley Adams Secondary School had to meet any accident there. It hurts my heart to see the condition and nothing being done, Sir. The comment, made by the Honourable Minister that we had 14 years to do it, I thought was very immature and not in keeping with the standards that we know in terms of the kind of governance Barbados has grown accustomed to. I therefore would want to indicate to the Honourable Minister, just in case he does not know, that if the Springvale Road goes now that the White Hill Road is

gone, the only way to get to St. Andrew or St. Joseph beyond the Turner's Hall Road would be that same Bloomsbury Road that leads into Mount Wilton; and I know that needs urgent attention before it collapses and causes any danger.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I am making this plea is because I invited the Honourable Minister in 2013 to make a visit. I know his hands are tied, but at least the cosmetic things would help. When little or nothing is being done, it causes alarm. People are afraid because of the way that Airy Cot is slipping. We are not getting the Soil Conservation department to work with us. I do not know what the confusion may be, but it really is important that we bring those agencies on board. I talk about Airy Cot and about Vauxcluse being impassable where there is still more than two feet of water; and we know that it is a good link road. I might have said it in here more than once, but I have to keep repeating it because it is impassable, and despite simple telephone calls and communication with the Ministry of Public Works, nothing is happening to put up a simple sign or two to say, "This road is impassable." We cannot be talking about booming tourism. That is a particularly popular road to be able to get from the West Coast onto Highland outdoor tours. Sir, only yesterday I saw about eight coaches, one behind the other, but they have to either come up Fortress Hill or find another way to get to Highland when that Vauxcluse Road is there. Whatever wells seem to have been capped, whatever challenge there is, to my mind it just needs a bobcat and some other equipment to be able to clear that road. That is one which I believe should be prioritised; not because it is in St. Thomas but because it is a part of this country where the taxpayers' funds are being used to make sure that the Government's purse is healthy.

Mr. Speaker, there is also Redman's Village Road. The Honourable Member for St. James Central may want to speak; this is his opportunity. That is another road which, for me, needs completion. I know that we had voted for some funds, and perhaps they might have been to pay those persons from whom we had compulsorily acquired land, but that road is another death trap. Every day we see it, but that road has been in existence for many years now and it is not coming to completion. Lighting on that road is another challenge. Lighting on the section of the roundabout from the junction of Waterford is also a challenge. Hothersal Turning down to the Warrens Roundabout is another serious matter. These I believe are less costly and require urgent attention. The removal of the pedestrian crossing at the Pine to cross over from the old Pine Hill Dairy, if that is no longer functional, to get to Parkinson School, what is the point, Mr. Speaker? After building a structure called a cross-over for \$2.5 million, according to what the Honourable Member laid in the House at that time, people are still at risk trying to cross a pedestrian crossing that has been recently repainted. We

have schools where the pedestrian crossings have not been touched for the year. We have communities where the pedestrian crossings have not been touched. We have signs that are falling apart, which are supposed to show where you get to Belleplaine or Grantley Adams Airport. A lot of them are on the islands of the roads where the poles with the arrows have been knocked down, and nothing is being done. I am saying that if we say we want to make sure that our citizens and our visitors are safe, then those are the things which I consider to be priorities at this time. Perhaps, when the economy gets better, let us treat to that area because it is an area that is a popular route to be organised.

Sir, the other area which I would wish to speak to is the removal of what I consider a death trap at Coverley; and I am not a technical person. We know that a child who had just gone to his graduation in July 2015 lost his life there. For me, that is a priority because there has been another three-collision accident there, and whenever you are passing there you wonder, "What madness is this?" I believe that is another priority which the Government should have been looking at; to have it removed or whatever has to be done, because it has already been a serious threat to motorists and pedestrians alike. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Government needs to look at prioritising and let us see how best we can have the police.... I do not even know if I should say the police either, because they are trying, but when you have people who are riding in fives and sixes and doing 'wheelies' in between traffic and on sidewalks and on road reserves and so on, it seems to me as though there is a madness about some of our people who care nothing about anybody, not even themselves. Some of them do not even wear a helmet. Something has to be wrong. Mr. Speaker, I would have felt better if now at Christmas time we had some form of legislation to be able to upgrade that aspect of the Road Traffic Act to make sure that these culprits are brought to justice. It is working the police officers hard; it is creating an element of fear in the hearts of other motorists and pedestrians, and somehow most people are silent. It is wrong. For me, that is a matter that should be attended to.

As I close, Sir, there is the matter of potholes. There is no point in bringing bitumen in places like St. Joseph, St. Andrew and St. Thomas, in particular, where the rain falls every day. When the bitumen is brought, the workers are glad to work because some of them have no tools or anything, but when that bitumen is put down, there is no roller. Ten minutes later when the rain comes down, the bitumen is gone again and the potholes are opened up again. I have some fluorescent orange paint which I promised to give a fellow a little change to go and at least paint around those potholes, so that people can see them from a distance because they are destroying people's vehicles and people are wringing their ankles and so on. They do not know how to pursue it, and therefore they are

not litigious in the way that some of us are. They are suffering the indignity of having to go to the polyclinic or the doctor and paying the little bit they have because of injuries on our roads. We must prioritise the upgrades of our roads.

Mr. Speaker, the other final thing is that I would want to indicate that while I support any effort to be able to improve the quality and management of our roads, I am going to beg that due consideration be given to how we are placing down our pedestrian crossings. I am not talking now about the schools and so on; I am talking about the pedestrian crossings at our roundabouts. The pedestrian crossings are put in the broadest section of our roads that are nearest to roundabouts, and before the tails of our vehicles can get out of the roundabouts, traffic backs up and then motorists just go crazy trying to overtake and pull in a corner and do all kinds of strange things. We are seeing that there are thousands more vehicles on the roads, many of them uninsured and many without road tax. I agree to a point with what the Honourable Minister was saying this morning. People must pay their taxes because they want to enjoy whatever services are being offered; but those pedestrian crossings at our roundabouts across the length and breadth of Barbados require re-examination to make sure that they fit the profile. The one at Warrens is the one that bothers me most. Mr. Speaker, you are talking about people who have injuries, some have to use walkers and have no transportation but the public transportation, and by the time they come out of Warrens they have to walk all the way closest to the roundabout with their walkers or with whatever their impediment is and then cross the road.

2.36 p.m.

Insert s16 juliette

Tuesday, December 13, 2016

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that we support the easing of the traffic by constructing a roundabout. I respect the decision of the experts. If the experts on the other side believe that this is wrong, well then what they need to do is to continue to challenge the experts within the ministry but for now I would have to go along with the experts within the ministry because it would have been them who would have requested us to acquire this land and I am here doing the job that they have requested. If the other side is saying that they are not experts and we should not take their advice on whether it should be prioritised or not, well then they need to take that to the public, but as it stands I am prepared to go along with the experts within the Ministry of Transport and Works at this time.

Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER No. 24

LOCAL LOANS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2016

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Minister.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The matter before the House is one that is not entirely unfamiliar to Honourable Members of the House as it would not be to persons who follow these exercises with some degree of keenness. The Government of Barbados establishes for the purpose of the servicing of Barbados, the meeting of its commitments and the provision of goods and services, the capacity under law to borrow money from various agent and agencies to facilitate that work. Such capacities in law can be found in different pieces of legislation whether it is in the Foreign Loans Act, the Special Loans Act or, as in the case with this one, the Local Loans Act.

It has always been an established process of Government, an established reality of governing, that most countries big or small but certainly small countries, with resource constraints will be unable to meet the commitments for the demands for the provisions of goods and services and the orderly management of the country only from the resources which it brings in from its taxes and other fees and impositions that it does on the public of Barbados or on the country and so it is a necessary requirement that facilities be put in place to allow and permit for borrowing for various purposes which are designated by the Government as the necessary priorities for the smooth and orderly management of the country. In doing so, of course, we are called upon through the seeking of the permission of Parliament to establish these centres of capacity to allow for loans to be underwritten in the name of the taxpayers of Barbados for the purposes which I have previously spoken about. In this case, the Local Loans Act, Cap. 98 was an Act created specifically for this purpose to allow Government to borrow resources under domestic market from various resource providers and lenders to facilitate basically domestic work. It is supposed when, for example, we borrow under the Foreign Loans Act where we borrow from external sources that allow the Government to meet either financial commitments that are required to be paid through foreign exchange or to do other things that as are required by raising foreign capital... In this case this is entirely domestic.

Now, as Government has had certainly since 2009 to run deficits that have been in our view too high and in some instances reaching unsustainable levels to which we have had to implement programmes to bring them down, in addition to the work which we are doing generally in relation to project work to build capacity in the country, to create employment, to advance social activity infrastructure or whatever the case may be, the Government has had to draw reasonably heavily on domestic sources of financing to meet its commitment. This has become even more so as the case since Government has had to curtail how much foreign money it has borrowed. We have done so to some extent affected by the credit ratings which we now have which of course are no longer investment grade and also because it has been a deliberate strategy of the Government not to borrow too much foreign money because when matched against borrowing domestically it is advised that if you have to incur debt that more of it should be domestic than foreign because you have a lot more control over your domestic circumstances in terms of debt than you would over your foreign. Fortunately for Barbados we have been able to keep that differential more in the favour of domestic borrowing largely from our domestic financial sources, commercial banks, non-bank financial institutions, the National Insurance Scheme, the Central Bank of Barbados and so forth and so on. In order to be able to continue to service those deficits that we have but also to meet other commitments to provide resources for infrastructural upgrades and for the installation of new systems in the country, whether it is in education, health, public transport or whatever the case may be, it is going to be necessary for us to ensure that we have enough space under the Local Loans Act to accommodate that. As I said a lot of this has been impinged upon because of the deficits that we have been running and until we get those deficits down below 5 per cent consistently every year and moving more towards 3 and 2.5 per cent which we feel is a reasonable settling point we are going to continue to have to borrow to finance those deficits. Mr. Speaker, a large part of some of that borrowing is indeed rolled over, as we would say in the language, so that it does not necessarily all lead to the creation of new debt, however, it is important that that space be available because some issuance of new debt is going to be required.

Mr. Speaker, at the last issuance of the Central Bank Securities Notice Report, the stock of Debentures and Treasury Notes stood at \$6.173.8 billion, of which \$6.0425 billion was outstanding. As you know, in 2012 when we last moved this limit, we moved it from \$5 billion to \$6.5 billion. It would mean therefore by simple arithmetic that we would only have relatively about \$500 million space of new issuance to be done. For this financial year alone, for example, \$1 billion in Securities have been approved for issuance and of those, \$538.6 million are rollovers, the balance is new issuance, so that if we were to utilise the remaining balance of the \$500 million of the \$1 billion

approved for this year in new issuance, given that we only have roughly just under \$500 million left for the year, it means that we would start next year without enough space to do things and since we know that we are going to run a deficit next year, the deficit is not going to be zero or in surplus, then you will still have to come back and do it.

Mr. Speaker, so that to be on the safe side and give the Government the capacity to be able to function in terms of issuance of new debt locally but also to do other things that I have identified for 2017, 2018, and 2018-2019, at least for the next couple of financial years, we believe that it was necessary to make an adjustment to the Local Loans Act by increasing it by \$1 billion, from \$6.5 billion to BD\$7.5 billion.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is not a new or unfamiliar matter that we have dealt with before and we are engaging the attention of this Honourable House to this matter and are hoping that this Honourable House would, of course, approve for this new limit to be put in place to give the Government the authority and space for when it becomes necessary and due. It is not necessary to be utilised now but we can envisage within the next year or two that it will be necessary to have it in place. Of course, we will continue to work to see how we can bring that deficit down in an orderly fashion and hopefully, by the end of this financial year we are expecting to see some really pretty good progress. I am satisfied that we can, in fact, get it around 5 per cent or below. We are keeping our fingers crossed in that particular regard but that relates, of course, to how we contain our expenditures in particular and get our revenues up to the levels that we would need to have them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend this Resolution to this Honourable House as an important matter for which we should lend our support. With those few words I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to give this Honourable House the assurance that the Barbados Labour Party will not do anything to obstruct the Government as it embarks on this perilous and precipitous course of preparing itself for what ultimately would be, based on the Minister's comments, even more borrowing. Neither, Sir, will we aide or be party to acts of what we consider to be preparation for further financial recklessness.

Mr. Speaker, the country has every reason and justification to believe that we are on the precipice or that we have come to the point where there are grave matters concerning the public finances about which the Government of Barbados needs to take the country into its confidence. Mr. Speaker, Sir, those matters obviously turn on questions of trust and utmost good faith and the Opposition will simply await Government's engagement with the country on those further matters. I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs.

Hon. C. P. SINKLER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Opposition Member for his brevity, if not clarity, in relation to the matter. I am not quite sure what issues or matter it is that we are supposed to be holding out on from the public. I know what has been said at public meetings in Barbados and what makes 'round the cooler' chat in Barbados. I try not to get involved in those things because you tend to give more publicity to that than it deserves.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing other than to give a full financial report to the public of Barbados when the time is appropriate on the accounts of the country and that will be coming up shortly, of course, as we open the New Year and we go towards the Estimates. There are a few more Ministries before we finish the mid-term review. We practically know where everybody is in relation to that matter. We have already issued ceilings for the Government Ministries in relation to their work for 2017-2018 and we will update the public on all of those matters, as we have always done.

Mr. Speaker, in this day and age now you really can hide these things. Well, I do not know, in any age you could have hidden them because they would have still be seen. There are no secrets now, as everything is out there in the open, it goes on a web site and people can find information and so forth and so on, so there is nothing really to share but I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member can rest assure that as usual we will be up-front and transparent in all of our dealings in this particular regard.

Mr. Speaker, with those words, I beg to move that this Resolution be now read a second time.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Hon. C. P. SINKLER, seconded by Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, the House resolved itself into

Committee on the Bill. Mr. J. D. PAUL, Chairman of Committees in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. C.P. SINCKLER, seconded by Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motion of Hon. C.P. SINCKLER, seconded by Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Local Loans (Amendment) Act, 2016.

ORDER NO. 25

THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION THAT PARLIAMENT APPROVE THE BORROWING OF THE SUM OF US\$15 MILLION FROM THE FIRST CITIZENS BANK LIMITED IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO. THE PROCEEDS OF THE LOAN WILL BE USED TO FUND PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BARBADOS, WHICH MEET ALL THE REQUISITE CRITERIA FOR THE UTILISATION OF FUNDING AVAILABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BARBADOS FROM THE DEVELOPMENT BANK OF LATIN AMERICA.

Notice of the Resolution was given on December 13, 2016.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Finance.

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, this loan really is a small loan but it is a very critical one and comes in the form of a revolving line facility made available to the Government for six months, to be set aside to be used as a bridging between the processes of approval from the Development Bank of Latin America, or CAF as we so commonly call it, for the provision of resources to be used for very critical installations for two very central entities in Barbados. The facility is being provided by First Citizens Bank Limited of Trinidad and Tobago. First, I should give a little history about this actual line of credit. A line of credit was approved by this Parliament previously to be used by the Bridgetown Port for the buildout of what is called Berth 5, to facilitate what we now see as the two or three megaships; the mineshaft ships that come into the Port when the Port was unable in its then capacity to accommodate those ships. CAF had agreed that they would

make US\$25 million available to the Bridgetown Port. I believe there is a Resolution for the Guarantee of those resources, if my memory serves me correctly. It is a Supplementary of BDS\$50 million or US\$25 million to be brought to book. It was made available two years ago to the Bridgetown Port to facilitate the building of that. In lieu of it or just prior to that, given the urgency with which those resources were required, First Citizens Bank offered a line of credit to the Government. We actually had the facility approved, it went through all of their risk management exercises and processes, and it was approved and made available. In the process of getting that loan for the Bridgetown Port from CAF done, we were able to actually get the loan done a lot more quickly than was anticipated at the time, given the nature of the work which was being done at the Port. Therefore, the CAF money actually came through before it was necessary for us to download the original facility from First Citizens of US\$25 million; so we never utilised the facility because the CAF money came in time, so it has always been there.

If we fast-forward now to 2016, two matters obtained in relation to our decision to reactivate this particular facility, but for a smaller amount of US\$15 million. The two relate to two different but critical agencies, which have some connection in some respects. The first is for the Barbados Revenue Authority (BRA) - and I spoke this morning when I introduced the matter relative to the tax amnesties -- which, in moving through the stages of its development to a full operable agency, had as one of its original areas of work to be done the establishment of a single taxpayer identification number system which, as I indicated, would bring a central coordinating software point for all taxpayers who engage the BRA. As I said this morning, therefore, if you come with an intervention for income tax, you would have one taxpayer number. If it is Value-Added Tax (VAT) or Excise Tax, it would also be one taxpayer number. At present, we do taxpayer numbers for every different application. That has run us into some problems in terms of the levels of efficiency, the capacity of the tax authorities to identify different taxpayer interventions, the capacity to police the system and to also develop systems of compliance. The BRA has asked, and in fairness to them they are quite right to ask, because in all modern tax administrations across the world -- United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Brazil and any of the other major developing countries that have central tax authorities -- you will see that they operate a single taxpayer system.

3.15 p.m.

Insert s20 juliette

Tuesday, December 13, 2016

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: ...frustration of passengers both local and visitors, issues pertaining to the shortness of staff at Customs to cover enough wickets or desks at Terminal 1, it really has not been the most sightly and comfortable thing practically for a destination like Barbados. One thing that I have said, and I spoke with the Minister of Tourism about it and we spoke about it as a team in Cabinet, is that something had to be done about this and done as quickly as possible. One of the areas that we identified was a problem, apart from the issues that we know, issues with the Customs, the unions and the transition to the Barbados Revenue Authority and issues pertaining to staffing and so forth, that could give some relief is the installation of scanning equipment at the airport in particular where thousands of passengers bags are dealt with on an hourly basis.

As our capacity to attract visitors has expanded exponentially on the improvement in the airlift in the tourism sector in the last two seasons in particular we have seen a huge crush of persons coming through that airport particularly in the peak periods between 2 and 6 o'clock. Sometimes we could have as many as eight or nine wide-body aircraft on the tarmac at the same time. We know that do not care how efficient you are in any airport in the world if you have that number of volume of persons coming through roughly within the same time frame between 2 and 5 o'clock, two British Airways flights, two Virgin Atlantic flights, an American flight, a JetBlue Airways flight and how many ever else they have there and then the charters, that it takes a remarkable set of people to be able to usher everybody out of there in the half-of-an-hour or the 15 minutes that they want to get out, that is just simply a fact.

All of the other issues we have notwithstanding, the experts have identified and said that one of the things we need to do is to put in some more scanning equipment to allow for passenger bags to be scanned more completely outside of the airport so that when they come inside the airport the officers really just have to do their regular onsite inspections and we would not have to do as many and we can be far more random because we feel relatively comfortable that no contraband, no illegal weapons or illegal drugs are being filtered through at an unacceptable or unusual rate, so we have decided that we will invest up to US\$10 million in some of that scanning equipment to be made available to our staff at the airport and at the seaport to ensure that we keep ever vigilant and be more efficient and effective in working passengers through and getting them on their way while still keeping the country safe and relatively secure.

Mr. Speaker, the CAF who has been in here on missions on more than one occasion in the last year or so expressed some eagerness to support the installation of additional security equipment for this airport and as they have of course to support the work of the Barbados

Revenue Authority because if you remember, Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the things with the original submission to CAF which we had approved and passed in this House of Assembly as an Act in itself was that we had to be able to demonstrate to the CAF that we were moving forward with completing the Barbados Revenue Authority project. This installation of the new software, Single Tax ID Number Software and Management System is one of those things, so CAF saw it fit or seen it fit or is seeing it fit to give support to this facility to be provided. I believe their Executive Board will meet on the 17th of this month and are expected, since they have now reached accord with the domestic authorities, to approve this facility to support both the national security and tourism development in Barbados and also the tax administration reform process as well in the country.

Mr. Speaker, it is for this reason that we have reactivated this facility. As I said it was here before. We did not utilise it. It was much higher. It was US\$25 million. We knew that we did not need US\$25 million so we said we would not go for that amount. It was reoffered to us that we can utilise it if we want since it already had prior approval within the banking system in FirstCitizens and we decided that we would go ahead and do it particularly since the Barbados Revenue Authority wanted to move ahead with their particular project and of course because the Customs would only be glad to procure this equipment which they have identified already from a number of external sources and have in place for at least part of this winter season and moving into the summer of next year, so we thought that now is a useful time that we should make the line of credit available to the Government and therefore we brought it here to Parliament to ask Parliament to approve for the Government to have this facility available for usage as we so require in this particular regard.

With those explanations, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER No. 23

MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2016

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Mr. Minister.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Sir. This is a bit of housekeeping work that has to be done. As you know, Sir, a few years ago we had introduced a Municipal Solid Waste Tax which ran for a specific period of time which the Government had

indicated that at the end of the financial year March 31, 2015 would not be extended or continued. However, as is the case with most of these things, bills of that nature, particularly when they relate to tax have a running period. Therefore, though the legislation might have ceased to be applied at that particular date, as it was, there were still things that are happening under that legislation that had to be facilitated. For example, one of the things that came about in the middle of that tax, very controversial as it was, was that relief should be given to certain groups within the community, for example, the elderly, farmers, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, while the Cabinet on request to the Ministry had agreed that those things should be provided, they can only really effectively be provided and covered in law. They can be done administratively but legally that has to be covered by way of amendment to the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I think I must say that when this matter first came down to the House of Assembly, I think it was misread a bit and we took it off, because the first thing that it read was an extension of the time of the Bill. It was not supposed to be an extension of the Act but an extension of the payment time, meaning that even though the Act had come to an end on 31st, the Barbados Revenue Authority should still have had the legal authority to collect moneys which were outstanding when it was an effective piece of legislation, and also to give remittances, either whole or in part to those pensioners and other certain persons who own agricultural land who were given 50 per cent rebate on the Municipal Solid Waste Tax, those persons who live in a house with a value of \$150 000 or less also had to be given coverage under the law because they were exempted from the tax and the Act had to be amended to reflect that. These amendments are also here.

Also for international institutions and organisations headquartered in Barbados which under international law the tax could not have been applied to them anyway. I speak of agencies like the United Nations agencies, Diplomatic Missions, University of the West Indies and so forth and so on. The Act would also have to reflect that those institutions were given the necessary waivers. The Caribbean Development Bank, Red Cross, Inter-American Development Bank, Pan American Health Organisation, the Salvation Army, United Nations agencies all would have had to be listed as exempted, as was the case when the Cabinet of course, enforced the laws in relation to that. Also, Government public schools and the Ministry of Health installations as well under the various pieces of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this seeks to amend the Act to reflect those provisions and I therefore beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Hon. C. P. SINKLER, seconded by Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill. Mr. J. D. PAUL, Chairman of Committees in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 6, inclusive, were called and passed.

On the separate motion of Hon. C. P. SINKLER, seconded by Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. C. P. SINKLER, seconded by Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Municipal Tax (Amendment) Act, 2016.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, with that we have come to the end of Government Business for today, and I beg to move that the Sitting be now adjourned until Tuesday, January 17, in the Year of Our Lord 2017, at 10 o' clock in the morning. Speaking on the Adjournment, Sir, during the intervening period we will of course be celebrating Christmas Day, which is a symbolic time for all Christians, and Barbados is largely a Christian society observing the Birth of Christ and all that attends to that very memorable event. Christmas is a special time of the year, Sir; a time for giving and not necessarily receiving. We seek to give as we can to make people happy. We try to especially bring comfort to the elderly in our communities, and of course to our cherished children. It is a time when families can use the opportunity to reflect and come closer together in what is recognised as a very challenging social environment. It also signals, of course, the passing of another year in this wonderful experience called Life, and we give thanks for that event, Sir. We remember all that we have been able to achieve, and in this year, a very special year for Barbados, we remember the wonderful celebration of our 50th Anniversary of Independence. Sir, we look forward to building that which was much promised during that celebration; that is, a society to face the next 50 years. Sir, this is a special Christmas again and indeed, a special New Year. I want to take this opportunity to wish all Barbadians a very merry Christmas and a happy 2017. I hope that we are able to face the challenges as well as we can, and seek and find support wherever necessary.

Sir, I want to especially recognise the Clerk and his staff at the table, the support staff of Parliament, those who provide security, including the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force, our caterers, and of course Members on this side, Government benches, and Her Majesty's loyal Opposition. We want, as I said, to wish everyone a very special Christmas greeting at this time, and to look forward as we return on January 17 to continuing the work for the people of this wonderful island of ours, Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore beg to move that the Sitting be adjourned until Tuesday, January 17, 2017 at 10 o' clock in the morning.

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. Yes, Honourable Member.

Miss S.J.O. BRADSHAW: Sir, I too would wish to convey sentiments on the behalf of not only myself and my family but also the Members of the Barbados Labour Party, to wish all Barbadians a merry Christmas and certainly indeed a happy New Year. I would also wish to extend that to my colleagues on the other side and certainly to you as well, Sir. I would also take the opportunity to thank all Members of the ancillary staff of Parliament who have supported us throughout the entire year; and as we take this time to reflect on the past year and look forward to the year ahead, I know that this is a very difficult time, not only for the Government but for the Opposition and also for many Barbadians who are facing very challenging times. We have just celebrated, yes, 50 years of Independence, and it has caused us certainly to reflect on much of what this country has been able to achieve and to reflect on where this country is going. Perhaps the greatest thing that we have reflected on is where we are going and how far we have come as a Parliament, and I would hope again, as I have expressed over the past few years in fulfilling my role as the Leader of Opposition Business, that this would be an opportunity for Members on the other side and certainly on this side -- because I am sure that at some point we will also be the Government of the day -- to reflect on whether we have been as efficient as a Parliament in doing the people's business. I think we can all take the moment to reflect on whether we have made full use of the machinery of Parliament, and whether we have been as full and frank with the public of Barbados as it relates to the state of affairs of the country and the economy. Perhaps as we reflect on those things, we can reflect on whether we can do an even better job of ensuring that, going into 2017, wherever we have been deficient, wherever we have been inefficient or wherever there have been things that are clearly gaping in terms of doing better as a country and as a people, we will be able to do so as we approach 2017, Sir.

I would take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and enjoyable Christmas period. I would hope that Bajans do not spend too much, and certainly hold strain for whatever announcements may be coming in the new year, but do so where they can enjoy family and spend that time with family. It is a time where even as politicians we are away from our families because we are spending a significant amount of time with constituents. I would hope that while we are giving and in the spirit of sharing that we also take the time to educate our people as it relates to how to spend and what not to spend on as well; how not to be too lavish as these celebrations and these festivities take place. Sir, I would again wish to express thanks to all of the staff. Certainly, it has been an enjoyable year. There have been many ups and downs, we have not always agreed with each other on everything, but I do feel that at the core of all 30 Members who sit in this Chamber, the interests of the people must always be at the forefront of whatever we do, whether it is at the close of the year or at the beginning of the year. I thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. Let me endorse the well wishes from both sides of the divide to say 'thank you' also to the staff here and the support systems here at Parliament; to wish the good people of St. Michael West and all Barbados all the very best; to wish you Members all the very best too and to express the view that you would celebrate Christmas with some degree of sobriety. Because I look at the Attorney General, it does not mean that I mean him. Anyway, I wish that we will all come back refreshed to take on the challenges of a new year. Finally but not least, we cannot as a Christian society celebrate Christmas unless we seek out the Christ child.

The question that the Sitting be adjourned until January 17, 2017 at 10 a.m., was put to the Honourable House and was resolved in the affirmative without division, and His Honour THE SPEAKER adjourned the Sitting accordingly.

3.54 p.m.

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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 preparing this report from the edited transcript. The text has not been altered except where stated.

Q1. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q2. Order No. 19, take-slip H:No.C46 (7) 11.41 a.m.. The source carries the note ‘Insert s8 juliette’ in place of a reporter’s take. The debate on the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2016 breaks off in Hon. D. St.E. Kellman’s speech; the Minister’s reply, the question on the second reading, the Committee stage and the third reading are not recorded, and the Resolution on the Prince Road land follows without an Order number. Please supply the missing take or confirm.

Q3. Prince Road Resolution, take-slips H:No.C46 (11) 12.20 p.m. and before Hon. D. St.E. Kellman’s reply. Notes ‘Insert s12 juliette’ (at the end of Hon. J. D. E. Boyce’s speech, before the suspension) and ‘Insert s16 juliette’ (after Miss C. Y. Forde’s speech) mark further missing takes; the Minister’s reply begins mid-argument (‘Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is ...’). Please supply or confirm.

Q4. Order No. 25. A fourth note, ‘Insert s20 juliette’, appears in Hon. C. P. Sinckler’s speech on the US\$15 million loan, which resumes with ‘...frustration of passengers’. Please supply or confirm.

Q5. After the resumption. ‘PAPERS (Recommitted)’, ‘GOVERNMENT NOTICES (Recommitted)’, ‘FIRST READING OF BILLS (Recommitted)’ and ‘GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Recommitted)’ are printed as ordinary paragraphs, and the Government Notices paragraph runs the Speaker’s call and Hon. J. D. E. Boyce’s words (‘I am commended to lay’) into one line. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 24, Local Loans (Amendment) Bill. The Minister ends his opening by moving ‘that this Resolution do now pass’ and the question is recorded as resolved before Mr. K. D. Symmonds speaks; after the reply he moves ‘that this Resolution be now read a second time’ and the question is recorded again. He also gives the stock of debentures and Treasury notes as ‘\$6.173.8 billion’. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Order No. 23, Municipal Solid Waste Tax (Amendment) Bill. The Committee note reads ‘Clauses 1 and 6, inclusive, were called and passed’, presumably

clauses 1 to 6, and the Bill is cited as ‘the Municipal Tax (Amendment) Act, 2016’. The Minister’s name is spelt ‘SINKLER’ in several procedural notes. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Tuesday, 13th December, 2016 at 10.00 a.m., with Mr. SPEAKER in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Father Mark Harewood. The Minutes were deferred, and Hon. C. P. Sinckler laid the Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) British American Insurance Company (Barbados) Limited Order, 2016. Standing Orders were suspended for the rest of the Sitting on the motion of Hon. J. D. E. Boyce.

Hon. C. P. Sinckler moved the second reading of the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2016, which completes the legal basis for the amnesty announced in the 2016 Financial Statement, waiving penalties and interest for taxpayers who bring their arrears up to date, even where judgments had been obtained against them. Mr. J. D. Paul supported it and raised businesses that had failed to remit National Insurance contributions. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, Rt. Hon. F. J. Stuart, who recalled the decree of Caesar Augustus at Advent, and Hon. S. A. Lashley also spoke in support. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley said the Opposition had already given its support in the Budget debate and saw no reason to delay the House. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman argued that the issue was not overtaxation but the way the country taxed. The record of this debate stops at that point.

Hon. D. St.E. Kellman, Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development, moved the Resolution to approve, under section 5 of the Land Acquisition Act, Cap. 228, the compulsory acquisition of the land of Mildred Prince-Cumberbatch at Prince Road, Upper Collymore Rock, St. Michael, for a roundabout and the Prince Road Improvement Project; he said it was the last parcel needed. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw did not oppose it but asked whether it was necessary in the fiscal situation and what the construction would cost. Hon. R. L. Sealy stressed pedestrian safety on Highway 6. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley argued that a crossing would do and that there were more pressing needs, and Hon. J. D. E. Boyce replied that road improvement was always a priority.

After the suspension, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce laid duty exemption orders for China National Complete Plant Import and Export Corporation (Barbados) Limited and Sam Lord’s Property Development Incorporated, gave

notice of the Local Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2016 and a US\$15 million borrowing Resolution, and moved the first reading of the Bill. Miss C. Y. Forde also asked the cost of the Prince Road project, and the Resolution was agreed to after the Minister's reply.

Hon. C. P. Sinckler moved the Local Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2016, raising the limit by \$1 billion, from \$6.5 billion to \$7.5 billion, as only about \$500 million of space remained. Mr. K. D. Symmonds said the Barbados Labour Party would not obstruct the Bill but that the Government should take the country into its confidence on the public finances; the Minister replied that a full report would come with the Estimates. The Bill passed all stages. The Resolution to borrow US\$15 million from First

Citizens Bank Limited of Trinidad and Tobago, a six-month bridging facility pending approval by the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), for the Barbados Revenue Authority and scanning equipment at the airport, was agreed to. The Municipal Solid Waste Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2016, which extended the time for payment and exempted international organisations, passed all stages.

On the adjournment Hon. J. D. E. Boyce and Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw thanked the staff and wished Barbadians a happy Christmas, and the Speaker added his good wishes. The House was adjourned until Tuesday, 17th January, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.