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Seq. 1

RESUMPTION

MR. SPEAKER: Good morning, this Sitting is resumed. Last evening when the Suspension was taken, we were on Order No. 21, the Debate of the Appropriation Bill, and with that we shall continue. Yes, the Honourable Member for St. George South.

Mr. DWIGHT A. SUTHERLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to add my voice to this 2016 Estimates Debate and, having been assigned the responsibility of Shadow Minister of Health, Labour and Social Security and, of course, Human Resource Management, I want to premise my contribution on how health, labour, social security and indeed, human resource management, contribute to a good society. They are underpinnings, in my view. A good society is a Barbados where people effectively participate in decision-making that impacts their lives. It is a system where stakeholders and indeed social partners are consulted on a regular basis. It is a system where people are given regular updates. It is a system of good governance. A good society is a place where people are able to live healthy lives and where access to health services is not based on income but is a right. A good society is a place where labour policies focus on creating healthy workplaces and good work life balance. It is a place where industrial relations policies effectively prevent and address conflict, and it is a place where accountability at all levels is paramount.

Mr. Speaker, time does not allow me go on but each and every one of us here in this Lower House would agree that a good society would provide Barbadians with the

opportunity to flourish, live long and healthy lives, have access to decent educational and economic opportunities, and of course to participate in the political process. However, I must say, Mr. Speaker, that in the year of this, the 50th Anniversary of our Independence, that these Estimates laid in this Lower House do not do anything to advance a good society. These represent, once again, missed opportunities. I wish now to begin with the area of health, and I will premise it, as I said earlier in my preamble, with what I have seen in the Estimates and what I have seen within the health sector. We can be our own judge to ask ourselves if what we are seeing represents a good society.

Firstly, recently Government has spent its time testing the political temperature and the public's appetite for change as it relates to healthcare financing, but my challenge with this, even though this is something that we as a party welcome and it is long outstanding by the Democratic Labour Party, is that you cannot have real and substantial discourse when discussion papers were not sent to the Barbados Labour Party, which is a key stakeholder. You started your discussion with the public, which is good - and I admire you for that -- on health reform and healthcare financing, but we as a party were not privy to documents or any discussion papers from the Ministry of Health. You therefore cannot have real and substantial discourse when the main stakeholder, the Barbados Labour Party, was not privy at the inception to the documents that would give demographic trends, epidemiological trends and financial analysis. We were not privileged to see that, but having said that, that is a problem with governance. In a good society, the Barbados Labour Party would have been given that privilege in any discourse of this sort to review the documents and then, of course, to get involved. However, like I stated before, it is a very critical area - healthcare financing and reform -- and we do not have a position on it right now because there is underlying source data which we need to see before we can arrive at a position.

Mr. Speaker, let me go further because the Government's health investment strategy is questionable by this party, and when we look at the Estimates, we know of course that within the health sector the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) takes up the majority of the budget annually. Let me say here that while I expect most of the money to go to the QEH, of course, I will speak to the statement that was made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West when he said that the QEH is not underfunded. I will speak to that shortly.

When you look at the statistics within this country with respect to strokes.... Let me pause here to compliment the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East yesterday in her sterling contribution because she, indeed, laid the platform in the area of health and indeed other areas. She touched on every single sector in her reply to the Estimates yesterday, and I want to compliment her for that. Indeed, they were sterling. My issue here is this whole aspect of preventive care and the promotion of healthcare within the healthcare sector. Why would we want to spend money on treatments? I believe that the time has come for us to focus most of our energy and strategies on preventive care and promoting healthcare, because I want to make this document here a document of the House. It is 'Prevention Evidence Based in Reform Healthcare Systems, US Department of Health and Human Services'. Why I am saying that is that when we looked at the statistics yesterday, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East looked at them as they related to diabetes and cardiovascular events, and she noted that there was a 50 per cent increase between 2010 and 2012, with respect to cardiovascular events which we call strokes. It is true, because the statistics here given from the public healthcare attendance at the polyclinics show that strokes moved from 224 to 348 in two years, and diabetes rose from 23 000 to 24 000 within that two-year period; an increase of 1 000 persons diagnosed with diabetes. She did not touch on hypertension but when you look at hypertension over the two-year period -- and this is the Barbados Economic and Social Report 2014 which I am referencing -- hypertension would have moved from 39 700 persons up to 41 300 persons over the two-year period; an increase of 1 500 persons diagnosed with hypertension. It is with that that I am saying we need to foster a preventive culture of wellness within the healthcare sector and stop being reactive. Investment in strengthening the preventive infrastructure and also science are needed within the healthcare sector. A clear strategy should be articulated in the area of prevention and healthcare promotion. From these Estimates and what I have read, that has not been articulated.

Mr. Speaker, in any good society I expect to see more money allocated in the area of prevention and promotion within the health care sector. Sir, I also want to reply to the comment made by the Honourable Member for

St. Michael North West when he said that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was underfunded. When you look at the Estimates 2016/2017, you see the funds budgeted for Estimates for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is \$146.25 million and over the years, again I beg to refer to a few documents here. Sir, over the years you would have seen a deficit as far back as 2008 of \$11 000. The approved Ministry of Finance then was \$144 million and the budget from the Ministry of Health was \$155 million and it comes down year by year, 2008 down to 2014, where the Ministry of Finance approved budget was \$156 million and the budget from the Ministry of Health was \$185 million. Sir, that was an underfunded deficit of \$29 million, so for the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West to come to this Honourable House and to state categorically that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is not under-funded is grossly misleading. If we cap off the Queen Elizabeth Hospital spending at \$185 million, we would see that from the 2016/2017 Estimates laid in this House that we are \$40 million under-funded for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at the issues at Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH), this paints the real picture. Sir, people are kicking around the QEH like a political football because some of the issues at QEH with this under-funding it begs to ask the question why are we expecting so many challenges at QEH, and I will list just a few of them.

Mr. Speaker, you do not have basis equipment for joint replacement, so we have a number of persons within the constituency of St. George South who are waiting for hip replacement surgery and there is no equipment. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South needs to tell this Lower House if indeed that is true because from all reports at the QEH, they are saying that there is no equipment for joint replacement surgery.

Mr. Speaker, there are also inadequate working conditions. There are shortage of supplies and monies given to the QEH was only money to pay off debt for supplies because we still have issues with this equipment and a shortage of drugs. Sir, we need to know when this Government will indeed focus and put its energy on ensuring that QEH returns to respectability.

Mr. Speaker, QEH was once the beacon in the Caribbean with respect to health care but we are seeing everybody now diverting to Trinidad. There are all of these issues with the inventory procurement management process. Sir, as a former inventory manager what I am seeing at QEH is that the QEH needs to cut out the middle man so they can achieve more economies of scales. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is assisting the middle man but when you continue to assist the middle man, then you will not achieve economies of scale. You have placed your persons as middle men to reap the benefits off QEH, when you can buy directly from the suppliers in the first world

and this is a fundamental issue. Sir, these are some of the issues that we need to address with our inventory and procurement management policies at the QEH.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, we also have shortage of nurses. There is a high ratio of patients to nurses and it is making it difficult for the nurses to execute their duties especially at night and these are some of the issues that the Minister of Health, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South need to tell this Lower House, when he will be addressing these issues. These issues have been highlighted on numerous occasions from the time I came to this Lower House and every year, year on year, there are the same issues at QEH and we need to find a solution. I just gave you one because you need to look at more preventive health care reform in this country and at promotion.

Asides.

Mr. D. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, I am saying “preventive” and not “preventative”. I wish you to reference that I have made it a document of the House and the Honourable Member St. James South can read it.

Mr. Speaker, when we move the emergency ambulance service, it is really dilapidated. You have this critical service working in squalor and recently, the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South would have seen that the floor of the emergency service has been caving in. There is rat infestation around the building in Jemmotts Lane and these are some of the areas that we need to address. I have not seen anything in the capital works budget to tell us that the Minister of Health will be addressing the emergency ambulance service issues. You have moved these gentlemen and ladies from dilapidated to most dilapidated conditions. They have been moved within the last years and you have been treated them like second class citizens. This needs to stop. I am calling on the Minister of Health to address these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I move the Psychiatric Hospital because within the last year some pictures were made documents of the House to show the squalor and dire conditions at the Psychiatric Hospital. Sir, on behalf of the Barbados Labour Party, we have not received any report or any updates on whether these issues have been addressed. I want to ask the Minister in his Second Reading speech to tell this Lower House whether the issues at the Psychiatric Hospital have been addressed. We have a kitchen at the Psychiatric Hospital that has taken four to five years to rehabilitate. Sir, those are some of the challenges that we have with this Government. They are spending too much time procrastinating as opposed to addressing issues. Sir, to refurbish a kitchen took them four years to five years and you have persons living where they are eating and they are

also stooling. Sir, these are major health issues at the Psychiatric Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, my assessment of these Estimates is that it missed the opportunity to advance the national health goals. They have also missed the opportunity to advance prevention and health promotion by real and substantive multi-sectoral investments and it missed the opportunity to revisit governance and management at the QEH. That is what these Estimates have said to us, there will not be anything major being done, anything strategic interventions in the area of prevention and promotions as it relates to the healthcare sector. Mr. Speaker, I give these Estimates a failing grade once again especially in the area of health.

Mr. Speaker, forgive me if the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) place good labour relations at the heart of a good society because indeed, in our view, we believe good labour relations is at the heart of a good society and we as a party were part of the Right Excellent Sir Grantley Adams and Sir Hugh Springer, we birth out of the labour movement in the post 1937 era. Our party fought for the upliftment of the masses in this country and indeed we ushered in a modern Barbados so that is why any 50th anniversary celebrations in this country should take note, record and publicise the efforts and the achievements of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP), if it is supposed to be apolitical.

Asides.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: You are the pioneers, we will do our own work in terms of letting this country know that the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) fought for the upliftment of the masses in this country and we are the party that innovated the social partnership, Mr. Speaker, and this Government is the most anti-level Government that I have ever seen in the history of politics in this country. They have applied the anti-labour tactics on the people of this country and I will list a few. The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) labour party ...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member just keep it down a bit please.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) has experience the most callous expression of indifference I have ever seen and the Minister of Labour will go down in history as the worst Minister of Labour in this history of ministerial Governments in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen so much unhappiness in workplaces, strikes, treats of industrial action within the last four to five years, I have seen more than I have seen in

prior years and this Government - it is worth repeating - is an anti-labour Government. Let me tell you why. We have a litany of woes, a litany of industrial labour relation bad practices employed by the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) that have the people in this country, as we would say in the country wheeling and let me list a few. Mr. Speaker, workers upset over the move to a 24-hour system in the Laboratory Department because if you move to a 24-hour system you will need more labour force to address the issues and you will also need to find suitable accommodation. This is at the crux of the matter with the QEH Laboratory Department. One technician working on a shift at night when you have test being done that people lives and decision making by doctors depend on these issues and you have one person working. Mr. Speaker, tell me if this is right. This cannot be right, this cannot be a good society that we are living in. For this 24-hour system to be implemented effectively we need more staff. I am not saying that we need to hire 1 000 persons but we need to properly that Laboratory Department.

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

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, let me move on. Grantley Adams International Airport (GAIA) issue a 3.5 per cent wage increase that was promised to the GAIA workers back in 2010. Meetings were held dated back in October 2010 where the 3.5 increase in the year 2011 was promised and now, Mr. Speaker, the same Cabinet that went in December and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South who met with the employees independent of the union and changed the 3.5 per cent, now you are asking this same Cabinet to preside over or should I use the word "arbitrage" and to come up with a decision. Of course, that decision by the Minister of Labour will not go against what was made in the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) Cabinet, not to give the GAIA workers 3.5 per cent increase that was promised to them so I do not expect the Minister of Labour to say anything different because that was articulated by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South in his meeting of December 2010, this was after the October meeting 2010 when the workers were promised the 3.5 per cent increase in a meeting with the president of the union. Then the Prime Minister came after and met the workers independent of the union, a breach of trust and credibility issue. Can this be a good society where there is no trust and where the Government's credibility is being questioned, you cannot have a good society?

Mr. Speaker, let highlight this issue with the Employment Rights Tribunal because this is fundamental. At the last hearing of the National Conservation Commission (NCC) workers - let us not forget that the NCC workers have not received their money as yet - the Chairman of the Employment Rights Tribunal has gone on

record as saying that there will be no re-engagement or no reinstatement since the Government has no money. Now pray tell me, the Chairman of a Tribunal who is supposed to be independent, who is supposed to listen to evidence and determine right or wrong is saying the to Tribunal in the public domain at a hearing that the Government has no money so those NCC workers will not be re-engaged or reinstated. That is what we are seeing in a Government run by the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). Of course, the Chairman of the Tribunal is a friend of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South so you do not expect anything different. That is a credibility issue and he needs to step aside if these workers are to get justice. Mr. Speaker, these are fundamental issues that I have just listed and you can ask yourself, Honourable Members of this Chamber, if that constitutes a good society. I also wish to state this Customs Officers fiasco where you have had Customs Officers acting for over 19 years in posts as Customs Officers 1, 2, 3 whatever. They move from Clerical Officers, acting in a post of Customs Officers, they have been interviewed in the moved to Barbados Revenue Authority (BRA) and some of them have been told they are not suitable for the jobs. These are Customs Officers that have been acting, supervising juniors and those juniors have superceded them also. The law says that after one year and vacancies exist within the public service then the vacancy should be filled. You cannot have people acting for 19 years and then want to revert them from Customs Officer 2 and 3 back to Clerical Officer

These are people with families. It a dent in their pay pack. That is the fundamental issue. It is a dent in their pay pack. They are now being demoted two and three levels at a time when this country is being run poorly, mismanaged, by the Democratic Labour Party, so you are compounding the issues that you have created. I am saying that is not fair to the people. This cannot be a good society that we are living in. I am saying that the time is now when we need to address these issues not for the Barbados Labour Party but for the citizens of this country, please. We do not have to benefit.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you time has expired, please wrap up on this point.

Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND: Mr. Speaker, in closing, I am asking the Democratic Labour Party to revisit the healthcare strategy in this country and I am calling on the Minister of Labour to address these many industrial relations issues. We have a very turbulent industrial relations climate in this country that is not conducive to productivity, and I am calling on these Ministers and the Government of the day to address the issues in these two sectors.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. M-J. M. THOMPSON: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning.

Mrs. M-J. M. THOMPSON: I too rise to speak in this debate and to lend my support to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West who so ably presented Government's Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue here yesterday. I am content with lending this support because I have no time for infantile behaviour that involves simply looking at arithmetic when looking at Estimates. I am not going beyond that because the task of governing is certainly more than just figures.

As has always been the case the Democratic Labour Party is committed to a social democratic agenda that endeavours to ensure that the most vulnerable in the society are not left to the vagaries of the most powerful. Perhaps in more recent times we have had to discriminate to a certain extent as we grapple with financial constrain but we still continued to pursue the ideal of ensuring the welfare of all citizens especially the most vulnerable. I implore you, Mr. Speaker, to recognise that decisions made cannot be cast in stone and that governing sometimes means adjustments must be made along the way according to how the game unfolds.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, has stated that in the course of the fiscal year we have reduced the deficit and that contrary to all that is being spewed out there, VAT collection at 17.5 per cent has not resulted in less VAT being collected. We are doing well on the revenue side and our expenditure patterns are beginning to shift. We have brought about much needed reform and we have prepared a wicket on which we can continue to bat.

Mr. Speaker, at the risk of my speech sounding as disjointed but not as repetitive as that of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, I wish to turn my attention to St. John, the constituency that I have the honour to represent here in this Parliament. Mr. Speaker, I would like to report for your benefit and for the benefit of the people of St. John on a couple of things that have happened there. Last November we saw the completion and opening of the David Thompson Health and Social Services Complex, and I am pleased to inform you of how well it is doing. The St. John Polyclinic is up and running. To date it has seen 2 345 general practitioner patients; 331 children under five years old; 90 family planning clients; 40 antenatal clients; postnatal services; podiatry is up and running; the physiotherapist comes in three times a week as of March 01; there is visiting services from the Psychiatric

Hospital; there had been 240 assorted blood tests, haemoglobin, blood sugar, liver function; dressings and bandages or what we call wound care, 130 persons roughly are being attended to and they come in two to three times a week; and then the clinic does outside visits to those who cannot come to the clinic.

Mr. Speaker, there is more to come. The Dental Department is not quite in operation as yet, we are still waiting on the equipment, radiology has to move in, and I am hearing rumblings of dialysis possible as well as detox for substance abuse sufferers. The employees of the polyclinic intend to hold health promotions and have that in the courtyard and they intend to have educational session for farmers re pest control and rodent issues and just generally enlightening them on systems that they can put in place to ensure that their farms are protected.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, not only the St. John Polyclinic can be found in this complex. The Environmental Health Department is also there and they are as vibrant as the clinic itself. They apparently have licensed 23 food businesses, four bakeries, four salons and a hotel in St. Joseph. They have responded to complaints from all over the eastern side of the islands in relation to rodents and mosquitoes so much so that they have taken to going out to the community centres and to the schools to give lectures on how to manage or even stop the breeding of mosquitoes in St. John. They have been to St. Margaret's School, St. John's Primary and The Lodge School and they intend to continue giving these lectures around the environs of St. John. They have also dealt with bug infestations in the few dwelling homes that they have found that in and they have liaise with the Welfare Department which is in the same building in terms of getting new bedding for people who needed it. They visit various homes in order to deal with rodent bait and that sort of thing.

The Welfare Department is operational and providing all that it did when it was further down the road at Gall Hill catering to the needy and in some cases the disabled as well.

The Constituency Council Office is in and working and we await the moving in of the Library Service and the starting of the gym, which already has its equipment in, beautiful state-of-the-art equipment, and we just need to get the manager organised and get that up and running as well. However, Mr. Speaker, the Complex, though it is very much in use, needs easier access in terms of people from St. John and I guess elsewhere, getting there. There are transportation problems largely because I guess the way the bus systems arranged in this country, it actually mean that someone who is living in Kendal, St. John, has to take a bus down to Bridgetown and then out to Glebe Land, St. John. Mr. Speaker, people who live in Messiah Street cannot

across to Glebe Land by the ordinary bus system, so we do need the transportation to be more wisely organised so that our citizens on the eastern side of the island can easily access this wonderful working facility.

Mr. Speaker, I did not plan to but I think I would just throw this in for the benefit of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, that if we are going to improve the transportation in terms of the buses getting there, really the roads in St. John need some work on. There are far too many roads that are just in deplorable condition. Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the Honourable Member before, so it is not as though the Honourable Member is now aware of this, but I want to ensure that the constituents know that I have asked yet again to have some of the roads done. Obviously I cannot expect that all of the roads can be done immediately but really we do have to set to work on that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have heard the harangue and I recall a childhood saying, though I am not so sure that I am getting it right. The saying is that you ought not to see the beam in the eye of another when there is one in your own that is even bigger. Sir, up to know we do not know or we have not heard what moneys were raised for Dominica Relief Project, how much money went there, how much money was raised. Sir, we do not have those details.

Mr. Speaker, what are your views on domestic violence? Why would you not participate in a debate on domestic violence? Mr. Speaker, I think I would end by saying that I would like you to stop looking at my daughters the way that you look at them. Mr. Speaker, I completely support these Estimates. I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

Lt. Col. J. D. BOSTIC: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate and I do so first of all, by congratulating the Leader of the Opposition for her presentation yesterday which I am sure brought some clarity to issues raised by Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs during his presentation.

Mr. Speaker, let me declare from early that figures, especially a large number of figures with which we have to deal with in the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue that I find this to be a daunting task at best and at worst it could be quite confusing, especially when you are hearing so many different scenario, so many changes in terms of the figures. In other words, when what I am reading in this book does not correspond with what I am hearing in this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasise for the record that figures by themselves do not tell the complete story and so

I am not one to view Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure in isolation. Sir, Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure to me must relate to Government policy, whether or not that policy is articulated or documented by those Honourable Members on that side or whether or not one can make deductions based on the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure in terms of Government policy based solely on the concentration of resources as articulated in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, therefore for me it has to do with policies and how those policies will impact either negatively or positively on the programmes and projects of the Government that have to be translated down to the citizens of this country. That for me is the important thing here. Mr. Speaker, therefore I am not going to confuse myself with a lot of figures, I am here to deal with policies that impact on the people of this country and the people whom I represent.

Mr. Speaker, therefore in terms of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure I will associated them with some policy decisions that have been taken. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to draw attention to the Medium-Term Growth and Development Strategy, 2013-2020 which states among other things that one of the objectives is for the Barbadian economy to return to a sustainable growth path of about 3 per cent by 2017 and 4.5 per cent by 2020.

Mr. Speaker, certainly, given the figures that were cited by Leader of the Opposition in her presentation yesterday I have to conclude that we are far behind the curve in terms of achieving the 3.5 per cent by 2017 and the 4.5 per cent by 2020. That strategy also spoke to the question of social and human development and I will speak to that later in my presentation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to utilise some information that I read in the country's strategy paper for Barbados, 2015-2018, prepared and issued by the Caribbean Development Bank and to use that as a guide. I decided to go with that because the Caribbean Development Bank as we know, has a long association with this country and the Government which spans over 40 years, over US\$340 million in assistance has been provided and Barbados is No. 3 in terms of borrowing from the bank, so I believe that the bank as a regional institution is one that we can go with and one that I am very happy to use as a guide.

Mr. Speaker, in that report the Caribbean Development Bank posits the view that the key developmental priorities for Barbados are transformative shifts in the policies, practices and institutions that are required to underpin a new developmental paradigm but does four things. I believe that it would be useful to assess these Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure against those four things as articulated in that report.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing that one would ask is does the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure contribute to the first of those imperatives, which is the delivery of higher more inclusive job-led growth and competitiveness. Those on that side would of course say yes. Mr. Speaker, while listening to the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs yesterday in terms of the capital works programme mention was made, for example, the Sam Lord's Project and the Hyatt Hotel. Sir, certainly as the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, I would welcome the Hyatt Hotel in the City of Bridgetown, but the truth is we have been hearing this year after year after year and we don't have anything to show for it so I cannot say that this is going to contribute to the creation of jobs as indicated in that report.

The second question is do the Estimates entrench fiscal and debt sustainability? The Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs stated that GDP growth is still not high enough to see the deficit or debt at desirable levels. Based on the projections that we have heard from the Honourable Minister of Finance and from the Governor of the Central Bank and others, I think the jury is still out on this particular point.

Third point: Do the Estimates preserve hard-won social gains, especially in education and poverty reduction? I think it is very interesting and instructive to look at the United Nations Development Programme HDI report. Barbados has done well over the years and to some extent we continue to do so even though not at the level that we once held. A look at those reports would indicate that there was a steady and continuous rise between 1990 and 2005 when we were able to have the distinction of being the only country in the Caribbean to be ranked very high in the Human Development category and that really was an achievement that was based on the hard work of the past Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Administrations led by the Right Honourable Member for St Peter. A lot of work was done at that time, and of course I am not going to limit it just to that, others would have contributed as well, including Administrations from the Other Side. But between 2010 up to now the curve has been going in the opposite direction so that we have now reached the point where we are ranked 57th in 2015.

And I am not going to stand here, I mean it would be naive of me not to expect the decline in this regard, because the country has some serious finance and economic problems that obviously will continue to have a negative impact on the delivery of social services. However, I do believe, Mr Speaker, that the difficulties and the challenges that we have ought to force us into a situation in which we re-examine the social policy of this country with regard to the economic situation that confronts the country. I do not believe Mr Speaker, even though provisions are made to take care of the most vulnerable in society, I do not believe

the effort is cohesive enough, is comprehensive enough, I think there are still a lot of ad hoc things going on and I believe that it is time to craft a social policy for Barbados that would reflect the current situation and that would take us into the future with confidence. And part of that policy, in my view, has to be related to the whole question of taking people away from welfare and putting them into the world of work. That has to be a primary objective, Mr Speaker. The question of education also has to be taken into consideration because it was through education to a very large extent that we were able to ascend the ladder in terms of the Human Development Index. And what has happened over the last couple of years has really put a dent in that. And once again I believe out of the present situation and the economic constraints that confront us as a country, I believe we have to look at education in a much more serious way, Mr. Speaker. And so I would like to see Estimates that represent a change in the way we look at education where education bears a greater relationship to the requirements and demands of the labour market as well as those policies that have been crafted by the Government for the development of Barbados. I would therefore like to see a situation in which more funding is allocated to technical and vocational training, and that we move in the direction where there are more technical and industrial colleges created in Barbados to be able to take advantage of the new direction in which the world economy is going, the new direction that presents our young people with more opportunities to be able to earn a living.

The fourth of my points, Mr Speaker, has to do with whether or not these Estimates promote environmental sustainability. Do these Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, Mr Speaker, facilitate a better collection of garbage in this country? Are we at a position where more resources are to be allocated for this? Do these estimates deal with the situation of public health in terms of vector control, rodent infestation, mosquitoes and so on? These are the things that should help us to determine whether these Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue stand the test?

Now let me come to the Ministry of Housing which I have the honour to shadow. And this to me is a very interesting scenario. And I say interesting because going through the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, this is one of the ministries where there is very, very little provided in terms of explanatory notes and the little that is provided is really very inadequate in terms of being able to speak to what the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure are doing for that ministry.

I was hoping yesterday that the Honourable Minister with responsibility for housing would have been able to expand or explain things a lot better so that he could put this Honourable Chamber in a better position, as well as the people of this country, in terms of what is going on in that ministry. But I was indeed very disappointed Mr Speaker to

hear the Honourable Minister make the statement that the National Housing Corporation has a very structured programme which he knows about and they know about. I was very disappointed to hear the Honourable Minister with responsibility for Housing make the point that the Grotto would be solved in early 2016 without going into any details whatsoever and not recognising that we are already at the end of the first quarter of 2016 and I want to say, Mr Speaker, to the Honourable Minister, that this is not an episode on St Elmo's Fire. This is not a Moontown situation Mr Speaker. The Honourable Minister presides over a ministry and a department that provides a public good, a social good and therefore anything to do with that, must be and ought to be shared not only in this Honourable Chamber, but with the people of Barbados. It cannot and ought not to be a secret.

Mr Speaker, there was a time when the housing achievements of the Government were touted as a flagship for the Government's flotilla of achievements. That was before the last election and with some justification because the flagship stood out above the other vessels in the flotilla especially in an environment when there were choppy seas, when the weather was bad, but I realise Mr Speaker that the flagship, seems to be experiencing some difficulty. I realised that because I have not been able, Mr. Speaker, to find out in anyway what is happening in the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Corporation.

Looking at the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, I cannot determine what is happening within the National Housing Corporation. I believe, Sir, that it is fair to say, based on what has been observed in the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, based on what has not been seen in the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, based on what has not been said by the Honourable Minister with responsibility for housing, during his presentation, the National Housing Corporation seemed to have failed its fitness for rural inspection and is not operationally incapable of executing its mission. Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? I only deal with what I have before me, the facts.

Mr. Speaker, what has become of the HELP Programme, Housing Every Last Person? There is nothing in the Estimates to tell that. Nothing that was said by the Minister where this concerned. Looking at the Website of the National Housing Corporation, which is outdated, there is nothing there to say what has happened with the HELP Programme. I am of the opinion that the HELP Programme, as I have said before, has now and continues to be 'Houses Empty, Lacking People'. I will continue to say that, Sir, until the Honourable Minister with responsibility for housing comes to this House, and whenever he speaks gives an update, not only to this Chamber but to the people of Barbados because we deserve an update on these matters.

Mr. Speaker, what has become of the HART Programme, Housing Everyone a Realistic Target, nothing at all, I do not

Know because the information is not available. If the Honourable Minister would make it available in this House, then I would know and the rest of Barbados would know. Sir, I am beginning to think that the HART Programme is now a victim of cardiac arrest.

Mr. Speaker, what has become of the low income housing project? I have been shadowing this Ministry for maybe a year or so. I was shadowing another ministry, but I cannot find any information that speaks to this project. Allocations in the Estimates do not tell me anything about this project. The Ministry's Website does not tell me anything about this project. I even went online on the Caribbean Development Bank's Website to see if I could find the information on this project, and I have no wiser. Sir, this is a project, a joint partnership between the Government of Barbados, I think the input from the Government is about US\$11 million, and the Caribbean Development Bank is about US\$34 million, roughly, but there is no information available on this project, and these are things that I would expect that the Honourable Minister, when he is presenting in the House, would be able to provide an update. The people of Barbados demand that.

Mr. Speaker, looking at the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, I have to ask the question, what is happening to the maintenance programme of the National Housing Corporation? Again, I would like to be fair. I am not so naïve as to think that the National Housing Corporation could be building a whole set of new houses in an environment where the Ministry does not have the money, no problem, but Mr. Speaker, I believe, again, when we have challenging situations like we have now, that is the time we ought to look at reshaping policy. There is nothing wrong in coming and saying a policy or programme is being put on hold until, and that we are going in a different direction.

Sir, I would like to suggest to the Honourable Minister with responsibility for the housing that now is perhaps the time to concentrate more on maintaining the current housing estates, some of which have been in existence for many years. We know we had problems, maintenance issues at Deacons, Rosemont and even some of the other ones London Bourne Towers, Kensington Lodge and so on. We have maintenance issues. The allocations that have been made within the Estimates of Expenditure do not tell me anything in terms of what it is that those who are at the Depots at Deacons, Eden Lodge, Gall Hill, Grazettes, Haynesville, Pine Land and Wildey, what it is that they are doing. There are housing estates, Mr. Speaker, that have not had any maintenance for the past five years. There are housing estates that have

plumbing issues, poor lighting along roadways and walkways, structures issues, safety issues, termites, leaking water, landscape issues and certainly electrical issues. Some of the estates require some significant electrical work, and I am saying that now is the time not to be concentrating so much on what you cannot do with what you do not have, especially in a situation, Sir, when there are still several houses that have not been allocated and have been empty. To me, the prudent thing is to try to maintain the existing stock of Government housing. That is something I think would be in the interest of several people in this country.

Sir, even those housing estates or those housing units that are unoccupied, I am not trained and qualified in this area, but I have been advised that a house is living entity and if you do not utilise it, these things will malfunction. So, there ought to be a maintenance programme also for those houses, and it is going to cost a lot of money, Mr. Speaker. I believe wholeheartedly that the prudent thing for the National Housing Corporation to do right now is shift course, go back to one of the core functions of the Corporation and institute a well-designed, well-developed and hopefully a well-executed maintenance plan. That is my advice to the Honourable Minister.

The whole question of urban development, in fact before I go to urban development there are one or two things, Sir. I am not finished with housing yet. Nothing to make the Honourable Minister get worried and upset.

I am wondering what has become of the Urban Tenancies Programme, because once again I do not see anything that tells me where that programme is going. I do not see anything for example the estimation of revenue to be collected from the sale of the \$5 lots that was promised by the Honourable Minister of Housing to the people in the Belle, the squatters, that was laid in this House not reflected in the Estimates of Expenditure. What is happening with the conveyances to the people who are still waiting? These are things I believe -- I am not saying ... you cannot create something out of nothing. In other words, if you do not have the wherewithal one cannot expect to do certain things, but you have duty and responsibility to keep the people of Barbados and this Honourable Chamber informed as to what is going on. That is good governance. This is the duty and responsibility of any Minister of the Crown.

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

Lt. Col. J.D. BOSTIC: Finally, Mr. Speaker, urban development happens to be an area which I shadow, and I represent a constituency that is in the urban corridor. I believe that the question of the urbanisation of Bridgetown and all of the other constituencies is something that must be

dealt with, something that must be planned. This ad hoc arrangement of patching here and there and fixing here and there does not work for the urban areas anymore in my opinion, Mr. Speaker. The direction that is coming from the Urban Development Commission (UDC), no-one can tell exactly where we are going. I want to see a lot more happening from UDC and a lot more of the things that the UDC was created to do. We always hear all of the talk about the eradication of pit toilets and so on, but there is no programme for this. Doing two here and two there is not going to cut it. If we are going to do something that we consider to be important, let us do it well or do not do it at all. That is my view, Mr. Speaker.

As I wind up, I have to say that based on the areas that I have just outlined and what I have said in terms of these Estimates translating into policy, and the impact, negative or positive, of these policies on the delivery of goods and services, projects and programmes to the people that matter - the people of this country - I have to say that I cannot support these Estimates. I thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for St. Michael Central.

Hon. STEPHEN D. BLACKETT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I rise to lend my unswerving support to this Bill that is before this Honourable House, let me first of all congratulate the Minister of Finance for what I consider to be a set of Estimates that clearly indicate that this country has turned the corner for the better, and that the economic projections embedded in this year's document have found the correct trajectory for taking us to brighter and, of course, better times in this country of ours, Mr. Speaker. Our ears were assaulted for about three hours yesterday with a lot of what I consider to be frivolous occurrences.

Asides.

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: A lot of frivolous occurrences and scenarios which could easily have happened during the time of the Barbados Labour Party's administration between 1994 and 2008, if we were to do some fact checks. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member chose to pin on this Government what I consider to be some of the most infantile experiences affecting our citizens in this country, according to her. The Honourable Member went from what I consider to be the bizarre to the ridiculous, and we heard of the poor schools meals that she considers to be the worst in this country in 2016. We heard of more people being afflicted by strokes, as if this Government has set out deliberately to inflict strokes on the people in Barbados. We even heard of Barbadian women refusing, Mr. Speaker, to have children under this administration. We heard, Mr. Speaker, of people dying and falling ill under the watch of this Democratic Labour

Party administration. We also heard for the first time that more companies in Barbados are owed Value Added Tax (VAT). We even heard a comparison of ourselves with the Democratic party of the United States' frontrunner, Hilary Clinton, but I believe that she ought to have compared herself with the frontrunner of the Republican party, Donald Trump, because I believe the kind of bombast and the kind of agitation and inflammatory language that is coming from the Barbados Labour Party more sits squarely with what is happening in the Republican party and with the frontrunner; with all their People Forums and the Rubbing Shoulders and the mass meetings. That is more in line with what is happening in the Republican party. Luckily, Mr. Speaker, there are lots of us who are alive in Barbados whose experience is far different from what was enunciated yesterday, with all of this expansive hyperbole that was spouted by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Before I get into the substance of my presentation, I also want to touch on the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. George South. I believe at night when he goes to sleep, he sees the Honourable Senator from the other place in his sleep. She is a beautiful and attractive woman so she should not really present any nightmares for him, but he seems to have constant nightmares of the Honourable Senator from the other place. He continues to speak of all of the ills that are occurring in the Ministry of Labour. I want to remind him, though, that when he is picking on her and all the ills associated with her in the Ministry of Labour, he should spare some time to shower some commendations on her for lifting the constituency of St. George South out of the mire that it found itself in under a previous Barbados Labour Party representative who considered St. George South to be the outside child of the Barbados Labour Party. It is in the records in this House. This honourable lady from the other place lifted St. George South out of that mire.

Mr. Speaker, I happen to live in that constituency, and as I traverse the length and breadth of that particular constituency, there is a constant call from many people that I encounter to see the back of the present representative of St. George South. He is contributing nothing of worth to the representation in that particular constituency. Mr. Speaker, I want him to give her credit first of all for the project at Greens. She built an entire housing project at Greens, and obliquely opposite that housing project, she built a pavilion, a resource centre and a community centre for the good folks of that catchment and the surrounding areas of St. George South. She went further. She refurbished the daycare at Ellerton and she also did refurbishment at the facility up the Ellerton pasture. She built roads and had roads put in place, especially one that is adjacent to where the Honourable Member for St. George South was, I believe, born and raised: Farm Road. When I moved to Farm Road in 2008 it was a track, all down from

Eastlyn up to Greens. That road was paved and it is now like the proverbial silk cloth in St. George South. All of that was done under the watch of the honourable lady from the other place, and I do not know why he cannot find it in his breast to give commendation and encomia; generous encomia he should be giving to her for bringing some life back to the constituency of St. George South.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on. As a Member of this Cabinet, I can assure all Barbadians that even in the face of all that is going on around us in Barbados on a daily basis, the governance and administration of this country are in good hands, with the genuine welfare and wellbeing of the citizens of this country very much at the core of all decisions we make as an administration, Mr. Speaker. We are also very well aware, Mr. Speaker, of what has brought us to this situation which we have been experiencing since assuming office back in 2008, with some welcome ease in our financial fortunes occurring in the last quarter of 2015. We are also anticipating what can be considered wonderful and exciting prospects forecast for the remainder of this financial year, the next financial year and certainly moving forward, Mr. Speaker. I would be the first to admit that we, as a Government, experience some difficulties sometimes selling some of the ideas on turning around this economy. Sir, we were confronted with a set of circumstances that no other administration had to deal with at any time in the history of this country. Sir, that must be stated and stated clearly. This period, Mr. Speaker, has been a difficult time for all Barbadians and especially this Democratic Labour Party administration but with resolute determination and steady matured and assured leadership, we have met the challenge squarely, frontally and from all indications, we are seeing the benefits of that stick-to-it-ness with several ... appearing in many of our productive sectors led by robust tourism resurgence in all of the subsectors of that particular main engine of our economy and I believe touching on all of the ancillary services that are associated with tourism.

Mr. Speaker, despite what negativity we have been hearing and in some cases experiencing recently, Barbados continues to be a good place to live, work and play and do business. It continues to be despite all of the negative talk. This is a preferred place to live, work and play. Sir, we continue to enjoy a high standard of living in this country. We continue to access relatively free health care at the point of delivery which includes hospitalization, free or subsidized medication, we have polyclinic services, we have ambulance service and accommodation at our district hospitals for our elderly. We have sound and affordable educational opportunities still exist in this country of Barbados. We have free nursery, free primary and secondary schooling available with heavily subsidized daily school meals to each and every single student in our school system along with the payment of 80 per cent of economic cost at our tertiary levels institution.

Mr. Speaker, this is all complimented with a minimum charge of \$20 per week for our day care facilities for our children zero to three years and the accommodation of hundreds of our wards in the residential care provided by the Child Care Board, the main child protection agency in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we in Barbados are exposed to many services, despite the fact that some of them have become less efficient, we have to admit that up front. They have become less efficient and that is because of our fiscal constraints and economic contractions. Sir, I am speaking of our garbage collection, for instance, which we must admit that in recent times, it is not what it used to be but we nonetheless, have the assurances from the Minister of Environment that relief is on the horizon, with the acquisition of some additional garbage collection units and this will be happening very shortly. We have to face Barbadians squarely in the face and tell them that we are going through some economic times, the fiscal constraints are against us, things are not what they use to be but, please wait, things will get better and get better shortly.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to have one of the better postal system delivery services in Barbados, having our mail delivered to our door quite unlike other countries in this very region, who have to go to Post Offices to collect their mail. This is still a wonderful country.

Mr. Speaker, in this island, the social safety net is still very much intact with the daily delivery of a wide range of services ranging from the 3 500 clients that present to the Welfare Department every single month for benefits, for monetary grants, food vouchers and other assistance in kind. Sir, it does not stop there. We have our home help recipients from across the island who are catered to through the Home Help Programme of the National Assistance Board with their washing, cooking and cleaning. We, as a Government, provide for the people of this country through our residential care for 30 seniors at the Vauxhall Senior Citizens Village and our elderly care at the newly refurbished George Dunner Day Care in the Pine. I had the good fortune of having the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East at that opening and she was pleased as punch with it. Sir, at that particular centre.

Mr. Speaker, at the George Dunner Centre in the Pine, we have accommodate close to 20 clients daily with the oldest there being 99 years of age. This comes along with the accommodation of the 32 homeless men at the Clyde Gollop Centre providing them with somewhere to rest their heads at night and have something to eat in the morning before setting off for the day. We also have a refurbished facility at Lancaster House to accommodate fire victims on a short term basis until the other agencies can find a more long term arrangement for them.

Mr. Speaker, this country benefits from subsidized potable water that is currently presenting some challenges for the Barbados Water Authority because of some of the worse drought conditions we have been experiencing. Mr. Speaker, from what I have also been hearing the Minister and the Barbados Water Authority have introduced some corrective measures within the scope of their own ability to bring some relief to the residents that are affected by water shortage and outages in some parts of this island.

Mr. Speaker, as we equally enjoy a generously subsidized bus transportation despite its challenges where we can ride from the airport in the south to St. Lucy Parish Church in the north for just \$2.50 being a fare. If you calculate it purely on an economic basis this should really be in the vicinity of about \$5 per trip.

Mr. Speaker, our crime statistics when compared to other countries in the region in the region are relatively low, with our police and security forces doing an exceptional job with the resources they have been allocated. I want to commend the Attorney-General and the Royal Barbados Police Force for the fine job that they are currently doing.

Mr. Speaker, our industrial relations climate in Barbados remains stable despite recent protestations from the union, as is their right to do as unions. Mr. Speaker, despite all the talk you hear daily from this Government's detractors, this country is not a failed State or a backward banana republic tottering on the brink of falling apart at the seams. We are a country where most services and processes work and deliver well to our individual citizens. We have a public service in this country that is second to none populated by the public servants that are exemplary, professional for the most part. This is a country also that is the envy of our neighbours in the car and one that continues to be attractive to our visitors outside the region who come in droves and sometimes choose to live, invest and buy homes right here in this country.

Mr. Speaker, what I have just outlined to this Honourable House are all ...

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: I am sorry I have stolen the thunder of some of my colleagues but if I provide the thunder you could provide the lightning because ...

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Let us move on smartly, Mr. Speaker. What I just outlined to this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, are all indicators that what we, as a country, continue to achieve using our compass and road map to accept the mantra and grounding philosophy of this

Government that Barbados is socially balance, economically viable, environmentally sound and characterised by good governance and that is the common thread that runs through each and everyone of us on This Side of the Isle.

We in the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development have accepted our role in ensuring this model of governance is achieve in our own policies, our own programming and our own projects especially in the area of socially balancing our country. We have undertaken, through the 11 agencies, departments and statutory boards that fall under our direct superintendence, Mr. Speaker, to deliver almost 50 per cent of the social services available to the citizens of this country. We must go about this tasks by, first of all, planning for the individual demographic spread of the persons who present to our agencies on a daily basis. This planning is informed by our deliberate focus on Barbados as a society, simultaneous with being an economy. That is another one of our grounded philosophies. All of this, Mr. Speaker, is predicated on the long established fact that this Democratic Labour Party (DLP) founding fathers bequeathed to us, this present generation of politicians, a clear mandate, that mandate was given to us and a very clear one, to pursue an agenda that is imbedded in a pursuit of a solid social democratic philosophy from which we have pledged not to resile and this is borne out in the Ministry of Social Care where we, first of all, looked at the National Assistance Board (NAB) and the services they are presently offering. Mr. Speaker, we found that those services were being delivered adequately in the dispensing of the home care, like I said before, with just about 1 050 clients and what is being offered at the Clyde Gollop Centre and I want to specially single out some people who have been assisting us in that particular Clyde Gollop Centre, the Restorations Ministries through Senator Durants, the Mount of Praise Wesleyan Holiness, Monica's Kitchen, and especially Carter's Bakery and Zephirins Bakeries for coming to the assistance of the National Assistance Board (NAB) and providing meals at night and in the morning for those homeless men at the Clyde Gollop Centre. The disused Jorris Dunner Centre, as I said before, was lying unoccupied for a number of months and we made a decision to re-operationalise that facility to provide daycare accommodation for our elderly. From what I have observed regarding this facilities that I spoke of earlier, the Jorris Dunner Centre, has been going from strength to strength and an anticipated decrease in the intake as the services offered are known for our clients as they present.

We did not stop there though, we went over to the Lancaster House. That property, in the past, was given to the Salvation Army for their superintendents but over the last year I instructed the National Assistance Board (NAB) to bring that property back into its portfolio and its refurbishment and accommodation for fire victims and

other natural or manmade disasters. At present, we have a number of fire victims being accommodated there as we speak and there has been a prevalence of house fires over the last few months in Barbados especially concentrated in areas where there are a number of wooden houses. As you know, especially in the St. Michael area, when a fire starts at one house, more often than not, it spreads to the adjoining properties because when I hear people talk about the zero-lot-line being a new introduction at Coverley, sometimes I smile because those who were born and raised in the St. Michael area, especially in The City, we had zero-lot-line from the time Adam was a lad.

Asides.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: It used to be argued that one time in The City you had to get home first to get your window opened because the houses were so tightly stacked but that is not an indictment on the people of The City but, of course, a reality and therefore we have to address those matters for closely-knitted houses.

Mr. Speaker, by and large, as I said before, when these fires start they spread to adjoining properties and one of the programmes I have mandated the Department of Constituency Empowerment and the Constituency Councils to undertake from this financial year a comprehensive and extensive distribution of our fire prevention equipment. This equipment will include in the first place, 3 000 extinguishers and 3 000 fire alarms. This will start initially with the distribution of these 6 000 items to 100 households in each of the 30 constituencies and I believe that this would assist in the early alerting of the occupants of the house and, of course, if they move quickly to use this equipment they could extinguish the fire before it spreads and becomes uncontrollable consuming the entire house and, of course, the adjoining facilities. This programme will be done in collaboration with the Fire Department with whom we will be interfacing to launch an awareness campaign because we have to bring the experts on board to assist us with a programme of this nature and I am please, as Minister, to report that all of the Councils are now in operation and will be pursuing an aggressive agenda in the new financial year with the additional resources that we have been given. The Councils are making an impact on the lives of the people of Barbados and with this new, renewed and aggressive agenda, going forward there presence will be felt in the communities.

We have met recently with the Community Development Department, I had a meeting with both them and the Constituency Empowerment Department and we have arranged accommodation where there is none and at the closest community centre in the particular constituency I am going to designate offices for the Constituency Councils will occupy spaces at community centres in the particular constituency so that we will have presence in the

constituency and this, of course, is the first step towards moving to our next phase of the Constituency Empowerment Department and that is the establishment of what we will categorise as Constituency Empowerment Centres. I want to bring all of the synergies of both departments together so that we would not duplicate programmes but we will enhance one programme of the other department.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is also adopted as a deliberate policy to use as much as possible sports and culture and we are not encroaching on the remit of the Honourable Minister of Sports but we will use sports and culture as catalyst to promote our programmes both in the Community Development Department and the Constituency Empowerment Department. It is with this in mind that we are yearly enhancing the David Thompson Constituency Council Football Tournament that has now found its place as one of the premier out of season tournaments in Barbados. I want to thank the Honourable Member for St. John who has, on a yearly basis, given her nod to this competition and, of course, is one of the most vociferous supporters of the tournament for the losing St. John but nevertheless I want to thank the Honourable Member for St. John for consenting to give her permission and blessings to this tournament ever since its inception. :

It is thrown into a three-month event that really spawns not only community participation and camaraderie among the players and officials but at the same time it engenders the spirit of entrepreneurship allowing small business persons the opportunity to sell their wares on a nightly basis. I consider that period between October, the beginning of the tournament, and December, the end of the tournament to be a mini stimulus across this island for many of the small entrepreneurs who on a nightly basis sell their wares and give them an opportunity to earn some money for themselves. Mr. Speaker, the competition not only provides that kind of atmosphere and environment for our young people but it also extends its wide arm and embraces the people who sell their wares on a nightly basis.

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

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To further permit this thrift and enterprise to flourish, the constituency councils programme will from this year stage a major fair and exhibition over a two-day period at a central location to be announced very shortly. Of course, we have as a template what the Agrofest is doing. Of course, I will be leaning very heavily on the shoulders of the my Honourable friend to give some ideas on how we should pursue this. We are planning this a two-day exhibit over a central location which would allow participants of

course to showcase exhibits and to sell their wares and items especially those of indigenous nature.

Mr. Speaker, for Barbados to be socially balanced, my ministry must play a pivotal role in the process. To propel this mandate the Ministry has embarked on pursuing and aggressive legislative policy agenda to realise these programmes. We have implemented the National Policy on Ageing. We have completed the National Strategic Plan of HIV 2014-2018. We have shepherded and passed legislation on the Domestic Violence Protection Order, Act. We are on the cusp, Mr. Speaker, of completing the National Policy on Gender. We have signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and we currently revamping the Child Rights legislation, and we have signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. All of these things represent Barbados' commitment to being a compliant country and staying solidly on the side of the disadvantaged and dispossessed in this country.

Mr. Speaker, before I close I want to thank the constituents of St. Michael Central for reposing their confidence in me and in sending me to this Honourable House to represent their interest, and that I will do to the best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, this Appropriation Bill before us this day indicates clearly that there is imminent growth; strident discipline in our finances; reduced spending but still attendant service delivery; increased efficiency in our tax collection revenues; the maintenance of a solid social service net for our indigent and our poor; and a general overall good governance in this country.

The people of this country, Mr. Speaker, have nothing whatsoever to fear when it comes to the future of this country we called Barbados. We came to office confronted, Mr. Speaker, with an economic world recession. We made the necessary adjustments, some with resulting pain, but as they say sometimes, no pain no gain. We have passed the worst. The Good Book says to us, weeping may endure for the night, but I want to assure you Mr. Speaker and the people of this country, that joy, wonderful joy cometh in the morning.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am impressed with the presentation from the Honourable Member, the Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, and Community Development, but when it comes to the situation in Barbados today rhetoric will not make a difference in a people who have grown accustomed to living a quality life

and being accustomed to working hard to earn their money. Barbadians are proud people and they are not going to sit back and wait for handouts as we are witnessing day by day.

Mr. Speaker, our history has been dotted with a lot of hardship. Barbadians have been resilient, strong people, with a commitment to work honestly for what they will receive, they have been patriotic. We know coming out of slavery what it would have been like and that I believe have helped us to be able to be more cohesive in coming together as a people and working together to build our dear country. We can boast of our freedoms, our rights and the strides we have made over the years in health, education, and many other areas in social living.

It hurts, Mr. Speaker, to see where we have come over the last eight years under the Democratic Labour Party Administration knowing that in 2008 when we left office unemployment stood at 6 per cent. Barbadians were working, they were earning, they were spending and they were happy and families were happy too. Visitors came from among us from the Caribbean and other parts of the world and they preferred to live in Barbados and work and to help to build our economy because they paid taxes, they contributed directly and indirectly to the system.

I find, Mr. Speaker, that over the those eight years there has been a serious deterioration in our social fabric and in the financial area as well. The Barbados Labour Party would have handed \$2.8 billion in foreign reserves to the Democratic Labour Party on assuming office in January 2008, and I would like to know the status of it now. Eight years later there has been a tremendous reverse in our social, political, moral, financial and infrastructural standards. Barbados of 2016 is not the same Barbados that has been handed to the Democratic Labour Party and I blame the Democratic Labour Party for poor governance. The Manifesto of 2008 spoke about transparency, good governance, equity and things of that nature and when I listen to the Honourable Ministers and others on the other side none of them can show me or demonstrate to me where the equity is, so the Honourable Member for St. Lucy who speaks about rural needs to step back a little bit and make sure that the figures are right. I will never say that he would lie to this Honourable Chamber, I would be out of place, but the Honourable Member needs to look at rural Barbados again and see what expenditure through projects and other training and other things that have been done to be able to say rural Barbados, especially the northern section of this, country has been given a fair opportunity for the people of those constituencies to survive. I say in this Honourable Chamber that the people of northern rural Barbados have been given a bad deal by this Democratic Labour Party as a Government where they think that the Members of Parliament should be begging for the resources that taxpayers money have been put in the

pool to service all of this country. Mr. Speaker, I will stop at that point because there are so much more to be said.

Mr. Speaker, I consider the governance of this Democratic Labour Party to be poor in governance and lacking in accountability. Mr. Speaker, I like the comments that were made by the Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford when he asked them a year and a half ago, how did we get here and how can I help, nobody has even sought to reach out to me an elder. Sir, in essence those are my words, so even that Right Honourable Member who would have been a Leader in 1986 and 1994, had his challenges, he was adamant about a number of things but even he understands why have we dropped to this low level now, when we were ready as a country and as a people to be on the stepping stones of becoming a developed country. Sir, nobody has answered the Honourable elder as yet.

Mr. Speaker, the 50 years of celebration, and I believe that whenever there is jubilee that people should celebrate, but I was dumbfounded, I was amazed at what I saw in January this year when children were to start school and one day after they had to stay at home because there was going to be a celebration. Sir, the glitz and glamour, it did not make sense to me, the children could have gone to school the day after because many of them did not go because parents did not have the food to give them. They did not have to pay bus fare as such but some of them did not even have the text books to use in schools, as I speak and the Minister of Education, Science and Technology, and Innovation will tell us because the Text Book Loan Scheme needs to be revisited.

There is no point in Principals having text books at schools locked away on the cupboards and poor people's children cannot get an exercise book, and the exercise book comes when they pay petty fees, of which some of them cannot pay either. Sir, but text books are shut up in the schools and people's children are going to school day after day and without text books.

Mr. Speaker, already school closes by the end of next week, it is the end of the second term, and many of these children do not have a single book. Sir, further, there are some teachers who are heartless, the percentage of whom is very small, they do not allow the children to share books. Sir, while at school we all had to share, sometimes we even shared shoes and lunches. Sir, it is a hurtful thing that so many thousands of Barbadians -- and persons are saying 3 000, perhaps it is was 3 000 from the Government's end but the private sector also sent home thousands of Barbadians. Sir, when people have been reduced to the level where they have to literally beg in order to survive, it hurts.

Mr. Speaker, many Honourable Members on that side who have been canvassing and who have been

interfacing with constituents and others can attest to the fact that thousands of Barbadians have been displaced in one way or another, as a result of some of the failed policies of this Government, and the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs is the person who presides in that area.

Mr. Speaker, it is hurtful, it is shameful, it is disgraceful that in 2016 there are people down the islands who are asking what has happened to Barbados, while people in the international world are saying this is not the Barbados that they know. They are asking what has gone wrong. Sir, I say poor governance, misplaced priorities by this Democratic Labour Party Administration.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about the police now and the Honourable Member for St. Philip South needs to leave me alone. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I received a letter from the Right Honourable Prime Minister telling me about this. For me it is a waste of the Government's paper, it is a waste of the printing or the ink and the depositing of them in our households. Sir, I am interesting in knowing from the Right Honourable Prime Minister and others on that side how many of them were returned to the agency from which they came, the Prime Minister's Office for persons who are long dead or who do not at all exist.

Mr. Speaker, there is no way in this world that

261 000 people could be registered to vote in a society that does not have 300 000. Where are the primary school children coming in there? Where are the secondary school children who have not as yet reached 18 years of age? Where are the young babies or the toddlers? Mr. Speaker, I am waiting to hear, because my grandson has been told to bring to school a roll of toilet issue. Sir, not only him but his entire class, the school. Sir, at the beginning of the school year in September children asked to bring to school these things while there are poor parents, some of them are not working, some are eking out a dollar bill, some are waiting on Welfare services, yet they are told to bring a realm of photocopying paper.

Mr. Speaker, many of them have to resort to taking lunch to school, so that the Honourable Member and the Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development are not really familiar with a lot of what is happening. Mr. Speaker, if I am complaining about what is happening in rural Barbados where people can find breadfruits, potatoes or yams to help to feed themselves and their neighbours, what about the people in urban Barbados who have nothing.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I know that because I look through the window on evenings once I am in this Honourable Chamber or moving through Bridgetown and I see the crowds of people growing week by week over by the Cenotaph and the Fountain in order to receive meals. Many of them do not go there because they want to partake in a meal, they go there because there is nothing at home for them to eat. Sir, it was never like that before.

Mr. Speaker, this bring me forward to what I wanted to say because I want to highly commend those organisations: the non-governmental organisations, Government departments, individual groups, volunteers, et cetera, who ensure that meals are prepared to feed the homeless and the hungry in this country. There are a lot of organisations who will not come to the City of Bridgetown to do it but they do it in the communities in which they live and my hat goes off to them.

Mr. Speaker, I want publicly to express my gratitude to the Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development because the Honourable Member is really carrying a portfolio that shows me that he cares. Mr. Speaker, unlike many of the Ministers on the other side, you can call this Minister and say to him you have just had a house fire, or you have residents who are facing eviction notices, would you please give me some guidance, or that you have got constituents who had nothing to eat, could you please assist. Mr. Speaker, I reduce my request to writing because it is important that is done, but the phone call alone adds to bring some ease to what is happening and something does happen. Sir, I want to publicly thank the Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development.

Mr. Speaker, there are few others, if any. I would not even look in the direction of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy who is not in his seat now because the Honourable Member may have gone out on Government business or on personal matters, I am not reflecting on that, for a road called Rockhampton Road, Jackson, that only needed the hot mix or whatever it is called to put on the top. This road is still without a cover eight years later. Sir, I could talk until the cows come home, the people of Rockhampton Gap, Jackson, seem to be nobody.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East could call from now till the cows come home, Canewood Road that was started around the same time with the Rural Development Commission has not been touched, it is all overgrown, while residents are still living in those communities. Sir, hundreds of residents are in Rockhampton Road. Sir, but it is telling me that the equity is not there, that once they are living in Jackson that is onto the St. Thomas constituency, that they can do without a road.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member and former Minister of Transport and Works, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, in a callous way, Mr. Speaker, came to St. Thomas one day when the men at the Bagatelle Depot were going to pave the section of the road from Jackson, Cane Garden to go towards the Caribbean Confectionary Company. That was a road that was up and down and the men fixed up the corners and so on. Sir, the Honourable Member instructed them on spot not to touch it, that Cynthia had enough already. Sir, for the whole of Barbados to be passing on that road going to their homes and to places of interest, because St. Thomas has many places of interest where we traverse every day...

Mr. Speaker, we cannot be talking about tourism while every step that one makes or every wheel that goes up has to drop into a pot hole to break people's leg. The Ministry of Transport and Works will have to spend more money than ever before to be able to compensate persons because of the poor conditions of the road in St. Thomas that were presided over by an Honourable Minister who said that Cynthia has enough. Sir, I do not know the Honourable Member did not give me anything, we are not friends in that way. He Honourable Member never will be either. His voice alone frightens me. I am a strong woman and so I am not interested in anything that anybody would say beyond that.

Mr. Speaker, another Minister chose on the request of one couple in Cane Garden, St. Thomas to close off an entire public road that has been an egress for more than 100 years. On the 15th June, 2015, the day of the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 2015, workmen from the Bagatelle Depot were instructed to close the road. Sir, the reason was that the trucks of B's Bottling Depot were passing through at 4.00 a.m. and annoying this couple, they were also digging up dust in the day time and so that road has been closed off by concrete pillars where only a bicycle or pedestrians can cross. June this year will be one whole year. If a Minister can go and look on the scene himself with a team from the Ministry of Transport and Works (MTW) to say "close off a road. I would like Bloomsbury Road to be fixed". It is only a matter of time before persons will lose their lives going up that road. Mr. Speaker, it is one of the very few roads which one can travel on if the Chapman Village-Springvale road is closed. Hillaby-Turner's Hall road is going, sections of St. Joseph have gone already, and it amazes me how frivolous things like that -- closing off a road to accommodate a couple -- could attract a Minister's attention. That would be the fourth attempt from the former Minister, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, to the now Minister, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, to pay attention to a request of one couple, and to put up a two-ton sign to stop vehicles from going through Sunflower Avenue where businesspeople live. For about six weeks, Mr. Speaker, the road has been closed. There are people in there with trucks.

There are businesspeople. The undertaker lives at the corner. He was reported three times by the police for bringing in his corpses in a vehicle that was considered to be more than two tons. It went on and on until even the Transport Board bus stopped going through that road for six weeks, so people in Cane Garden suffered as a result of a foolish action by whoever. I cannot even blame the Minister himself on this one. I cannot blame you, Sir, because you did not even know that the two-ton sign was put up. Somebody has to govern in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport.

Mr. Speaker, somebody also has to govern in the Attorney General's Chambers. I have requests for expungement for six young men in St. Thomas who would have thrown a stone and broken a glass window and it is written at the back of the Police Certificate of Character; who would have had a difficulty with the wife and the wife gave a chuck and the person gave a slap and that is still on the Certificate of Character. People cannot get their renewals in the little jobs they are in. It has taken more than a year and a half, and then two of them got calls three weeks ago to say, "please send back in the information. It got misplaced". Mr. Speaker, this is a bureaucratic bungle that frightens me because most ordinary people would have done some little infraction when they were young. It should never be shown on the Police Certificate of Character. That is what we are living under at this time in the year 2016.

Mr. Speaker, let me move on. The Child Care Board is under the Ministry of Social Care and Constituency Empowerment, and it is a topic that is dear to my heart when it comes to dealing with children, Mr. Speaker. I believe that children are special. They are made in God's image and they should be given the best care possible. Too many of them are being treated unkindly. They are ill-treated, maltreated, and some parents must be held to account for allowing their children to fall through the cracks because they have not been supervising their children properly. I see small children in the supermarket running wild and I am begging parents to please let the child step off the trolley before it hits the back of its head. The trolley is not for a child to stand behind, so even that says that our parents need a lot of training. I trust that the Ministry of Social Care and Constituency Empowerment, the Ministry of Education and other Ministries will come together to work toward parental training for our parents who require it, and require it really badly.

Too many of our children are wandering. I do not want to talk about some videos I saw that people have accused these young people of being engaged in, but I know that it is happening and there are some hard-backed men who are taking advantage of our young children. Too many paedophiles are in this country, walking scot-free because they are somebody. Some have a business, some are known by a Minister, they and the police are friends, all

kinds of nonsense. Our children are falling through the cracks. When children are scarred through rape, molestation, abuse in whatever form, it lasts with them forever. It is not only males. There are some females who have boyfriends 14 and 15 years old. Something has to be done, Mr. Speaker, and I want the justice system to be able to be as effective as possible. The wheels of justice must turn, and perpetrators must be brought to justice. We lost two or three children last year in circumstances that still have me, other Barbadians and the rest of the world startled.

Our children must be well cared for, so I want to congratulate the staff at the Child Care Board and the other associated institutions such as the day nurseries and so on for their efforts; but they need training too. They need the necessary resources to be able to carry out their mandates and be able to assist, and I call on Barbadians who have not got children in their families and who are interested, to get into foster care; once they know they have the ability, the time, the space, the resources and the care to offer to some of those little children, because it reduces the numbers that will be in care in Barbados.

I want to make some recommendations otherwise, Sir. I want to indicate that I have noticed the budget has been reduced from \$21.7 million to \$20 million for the grants to non-profit organisations that I know work in association with the Ministry. I want to recommend a standing committee with inter-ministerial coordination to look at children in a holistic way. There is no point in our children having to be picked up for wandering and put in Dodds and then the school does not know where the child is. No records, no information. We had school attendance officers who would go into the bus-stand and to various places and work with the parents and children to get them in school and to find out where they were. It seems to me now as though children can stay away for three weeks or three months from school and nobody reports where this child is. The Ministry of Health's protocol says that as long as the child is out of school for two days or three days, I think, a formal letter should come from the Ministry of Health indicating that the child is free to come to school again. However, when the children go to Dodds or Summervale, the industrial schools, nobody has any record from them in the Ministry. I know and I read about the IC Bridge project, and I am happy to hear that such a project is happening. I would like to hear from the Honourable Minister where we are with it, because the homes from which these children come really need to get professional guidance, assistance and whatever resources are necessary to be able to keep those children in the homes. Many of them wander because they are being molested and ill-treated. Not all of them are out there looking for any pleasure. They just cannot take it anymore, and when parents can say "I cannot give you, I have no money, I have lost my work", it takes a toll on them because there is so

much pressure; peer pressure coming from others with whom they want to fit in.

A parent said to me only on the weekend, "I have got a child in a rural school. She has just gone into first form in secondary school". She said that just because her daughter does not unpick her hair or plait anybody's own in the school, the children are picking on her, telling her she feels she is more than anybody else. Already the bullying has started, and she is a simple little girl. I believe that we need to have that inter-ministerial committee to look at challenges within homes, especially those which are most impoverished, to be able to work on projects to help to lift them out of it. There is too much bureaucracy, and therefore if that committee constitutes agencies such as the Child Care Board, Ministry of Education, the same Government Industrial School's leaders, the Welfare Department, the Ministry of Health and the police and so on, I am sure that we will get better treatment, and programmes and policies coming through to be able to help these parents over that situation. That knowledge will assist.

The second thing, Sir, is to do with additional psychologists. Many of our children have got challenges in the homes and they come to school with them sometimes. We know about drug babies. Nowadays, a man and woman who are smoking weed and taking whatever illicit drugs may produce a baby, but we do not know what impact may have been passed on through the genes of those children at birth. They are showing a lot of signs in the nursery and primary schools, but we have limited psychologists, both at the Ministry of Education and, I believe, the Child Care Board, and unless parents can get the necessary kind of assistance, nobody should be on a waiting list for a whole year to get an appointment with a child who has psychological problems. Sir, sometimes the children are spoilt, rude and so on and parents feel that to put this child in a corner and sit down the child care board will come for me. Well, I tell the Child Care Board to come for me when I have to deal with my grandchildren. I tell them to sit right there and have manner but everybody is not strong in that way and, therefore, many people are afraid.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have five more minutes.

Miss C. FORDE: Yes, sir. I want for the inter-Ministry Committee as well to work towards a facility for the young drug offenders. The stigma at the Psychiatric Hospital is growing even bigger and a lot of young people do not want to go there. There has to be some separate and distinct clinic where they can go, get their treatment and whatever training and assistance to get the help they need to bring them back into society. The Psychiatric Hospital has been doing a great job. I know one or two of the counsellors there but the young people do not want to be

seen because others in the community will be saying: Do not mind him, he went to Psychiatric Hospital. Sir, Verdun House is doing a fantastic job but that is only limited but we need a separate and distinct one for new young offenders as well as those young people who are into drugs. It is not always the males because the videos we see with our school children, our girls are fighting and fighting like animals and some of them too need the help that is necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to deal with the constituency empowerment aspect of it now, except to say that I lament that the Skills Training Programme that was being carried out at the Holy Innocents' pavilion in St. Thomas has been closed off and those young men and women who were able to receive the necessary training to hone their skills have now gone back on 'the block' or gone somewhere else to lime and the constituency Council occupies that venue that those young people were offered the training. I would like it back there so that I could get those young people back on stream to be able to go forward.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying that we the people of St. Thomas are suffering like most other Barbadians. Sir, that is my personal view and nobody can change that. Sir, as a concerted efforts when the layoffs were taking place in 2013, we were told that there would be no layoffs in the General Election leading up, that Barbadians would be allowed to work but my constituents, I do not care who voted for, that does not interest me and they know that. I want them to vote for me but if they do not, they are still residents of the parish, they are human beings and they are Barbadians and I do not make those kinds of distinctions like the Democratic Labour Party does. If you are not carrying a Democratic Labour Party card, you will be shuffled aside. If you are in a job and you are not a Democratic Labour Party friend and family, you are thrown in the corner. Sir, that is not good politics for Barbados. We see that being practised in other Caribbean islands. We have never seen it so bad yet, Mr. Speaker, the all-time low is here in this country practised by a Government that we expect to know better because they talk about good governance and socially balanced policies, economically viable development and environmentally sound practices. Sir, I cannot get to the dumping in St. Thomas and about Cahill but, Sir, we will get there. We need good honest governance and we still have not seen anything come to light yet.

Mr. Speaker, my people are suffering. The Beautiful Barbados Contingent, some of the NCC workers, one of my dearest constituent, whose children I taught has 15 people in her household and nobody is working. She has a daughter who was just accepted at the University of the West Indies and that poor young woman is suffering badly and cannot feed her children and I know the Honourable

Minister will give me some assistance when I call on him again because she deserves it after working for 16 years in NCC and being sent home unceremoniously because she lives in St. Thomas. Sir, the young men with MTW and those in sanitation and so on were unceremoniously sent home because of where they live. Sir, Barbados has gone to the lowest ebb when this has happened.

Mr. Speaker, I close by saying that if the Democratic Labour Party Government, the Honourable Members on the other side under the leadership now of the Right Honourable Prime Minister had made better priorities in the past to ensure that Barbadians got the best of whatever was available, some failed projects would never have been touched. Sir, 72 guard huts by the Minister of Education and nobody is in them where they are at the school. Sir, the cost of living is climbing and they said the cost of living would come down. Sir, handling fees at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, families have to take their own gauges and so on to the hospital. They now have to pay for ambulances. There are so many failed project and even the chandeliers at Government House that should be of heritage value \$100 000. Sir, a cross over for \$2.5 million and still a pedestrian crossing painted in the road. Sir, I will die saying that perhaps, that is why that woman lost here life. Sir, these are wasted funds. The Redman Village section from Warrens of that Highway 2A, where 3S was fired, is still in utter confusion and it cannot come to the end in eight years. There is so much wasted funds in the place and for Barbadians to be sent home unceremoniously to have to go the Welfare Department begging cap in hand for assistance with water bills, light bills and so on, the humiliation of neighbors looking out and see you with no water because your pipes are locked off and your light being off and the saddest situation of all, where there is no water in the country and we have to be shuffling for survival in a country that says it is 50 years old, celebrating but we have now been pushed back by nearly 20 years as a result of the poor management and governance of a Democratic Labour Party that says it is about the people, by the people and for the people.

Mr. Speaker, I thank God that I have never ever paid a cent to anyone to vote for me and I never will because I am accustomed to decency. I want the Honourable Prime Minister to continue with that investigation, if he has started at all, to be able to say to us that we are investigating the buying of votes on polling day. It is the worse step, it is a retrograde step in our history in the 50 years that we are celebrating Independence.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank you for giving me the privilege and I support sections of these Estimates but there are many other areas where I have some major concerns that I hope the respective and other would speak to those issues and give us clarification.

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

Mr. J. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to make my contribution to the debate on the Estimates for 2016/2017. I also want to indicate my support for the Estimates as proposed by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and to say to Barbadians that if better could be done, it will be done and that this Democratic Labour Party administration has made a determined effort to provide all citizens of this country with the best that this country can afford. When I listen to the contribution of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East yesterday... I want to begin by saying that most recently, we had a statement in the Press by a civil servant, to all intents and purposes, in which it was indicated that a particular principal of a school should be dismissed, fired or whatever.

Mr. Speaker, here it is that we are a Parliament in which both the Opposition and Government support certain principles and when we appear to support intransigence, when we appear to support indiscipline we have to be careful about the messages that we send to people. We have young people out there who listen to us and who stand by every word that we say and when our leader, irrespective of Opposition or Government, make certain statements that undermine the very foundations upon which we stand we have to ask ourselves, to what end are we trying to achieve. This is the "Public Service Code of Conduct and Ethics" and I read from it, CAP 29 which says all officers in the Public Service, while carrying out the role referred to at sub-paragraph (1), shall uphold those values that reflect a Service that maintains the highest ethical standards. It says so and it also says provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and promotes

the fair treatment of officers. It also talks about impartiality, having leadership of the highest quality all of these things are written into it. It goes on to say that officers shall conduct themselves with integrity, impartiality and honesty, giving honest and impartial advice to the Minister, not knowingly deceive ministers, all of these things it says. Not only that it talks about disclosure, and yet yesterday we had a situation where a Leader of an Opposition would comment on a matter in which clearly a public official might have overstep the bounds. I think, as a Parliament, we are sending the wrong signals to our population.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say this, when we listen to the Opposition Benches you will gather that everything that is happening in Barbados today is new. Under the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Administration the Clyde Gollop Centre was built for the homeless and we get on as if homelessness is a feature of our society just today. What we recognise and we must admit, that there are certain things which are with us, which we are challenged in terms

of trying to deal with but the point that I think we need to appreciate and to understand is that with challenges that we have today the Government is doing its best with the resources that it has at its disposal to try to address the issues that we face today.

Sir, one of the points I want to make is that I believe that one of the things we need to admit is that if we are to recover, if the economy, as it stands, is to make the kind of growth that we expect to see the productive sectors in this country would have to play a critical role in facilitating that growth and we have to be able to mobilise the type of resource that would permit those productive sectors to be able to do it, but we are faced with a problem in which when you look at the way in which, traditionally, we have spent our moneys considerable emphasis has been placed on the welfare aspect and with good reason. Largely we have been placing great emphasis on the building of the human capital and trying to ensure that we produce a population which has the necessary skills to be able to deliver in the workplace.

During the presentation of the Leader of the Opposition yesterday we heard that for instance, the leading banks in this country, whether or not the FirstCaribbean, they also talked about the Royal Bank, Scotia Bank and to me it implied that the reason why the banks were hesitant to provide finance for the critical growth areas in this country was because of the fact that there was crisis of confidence somehow on the part of these financial institutions. When you look at the tradition patterns of lending in the banking sector in this country and not only in this country but across the Caribbean the banking sector across the Caribbean has not played much of a role when it comes to the development of our productive sectors, it has not. In fact, we can say that in many cases, what we have seen instead is that they have gone after the soft underbelly of the economy. They have gone after the areas related to mostly the spending on cars, consumerables, entertainment, these are the areas that they have shown most willingness. I think it is kind of disingenuous to suggest that the current pattern of investment that we see in banks and in economy development in this country is based on the fact that banks have any dimmer view of this Government as they have had of previous Governments. I think that we need to make that point to members of the public because in order to create mayhem and in order to create uncertainty on the part of Barbadians in terms of the policies of the this Government we have a determined attempt on the part of the Leader of the Opposition and I would say the Leader of the Opposition really because of the fact that, I know that I have listened to the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown and the Honourable Member for St. James Central I notice that they take a different angle to what is taken from the Leader of the Opposition. I noted that carefully in their speeches and what we see on the part of

the Leader of the Opposition is an attempt to create a picture to the Barbadians public of the lack of confidence and that is very, very unfortunate. We know the history of lending on the part of banks in the region has been that they have not shown the type of support for the productive sectors that they probably should have. In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to compliment the Government for at least presiding over some growth in the non-sugar agricultural sector.

If we recall, when this Government came in the poultry industry was challenged in terms of its performance, we also had uncertainty in the dairy sector, we had most levels of uncertainty in all aspects of the productive sectors as it relates to agriculture and manufacturing. What we have seen in the last year or two are, in the case of the poultry sector, record levels of performance and in large part, it has been done as the renewed sense of confidence that we see from stakeholders in the sector. What we are seeing today is that milk production is on the rebound, again a renewed sense of confidence. What we are seeing today is that every square foot of land that could probably be cultivated is cultivated. In other words, what we are seeing is a heightened level of interest.

What I would say, Mr. Speaker, is that what we also want to see is us getting across the historical blockages that have existed in our bureaucracy because some parts of our Civil Service have sometimes demonstrated a lack of understanding in the way in which our private sector operates. Not only that, they have not been sometimes unwilling to enter into constructive engagement with our private sector. I think that we need to sometimes remove the type of scenario in our society where we seem to think that sometimes Government operates at one pace and the private sector operates at another pace.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I want to also say that even the very institutions that I think need to play a pivotal role in the development of the productive sectors to come up with what I would call imaginative ways to propel them to be able to compete further have to understand the role that they have play.

I think we want to compliment the Minister of Tourism and International Transport for the performance that we have seen in the tourism sector over the last year. The Minister of Tourism and International Transport has done something which the previous Barbados Labour Party Administration has found difficult to achieve. I know that if there are well-thinking Members on the other side, that they would have to agree that basically this Minister of Tourism and International Transport has done well under very trying circumstances and in a world economic climate which is relatively hostile, and we have to give him credit. What though we need to do is to recognise that things have

changed to the point where our ability to benefit from the number of tourists that are travelling to this country have been compromised by the world economic environment in which our tourists coming here have less disposable incomes in order to be able to impart as much money as possible into the economy. We have to come up with strategies to be able to help them to be able to spend more so that producers of goods and services in this economy will be able to derive greater benefits from the large numbers of tourists that we have coming here to this country. In that respect, I therefore want to say that this Government therefore has to come up with strategies that are able to build our productive sectors to be able to take advantage of that huge tourists presence because we do not understand that our productive sectors have the ability to earn that hard foreign exchange that we need in order to be able to ensure that this country can be able to survive and to buy the goods and services that it needs from overseas in order to support our population here.

Again, I talk about the University of the West Indies. I think that as an institution in which Government spends a considerable amount of its budget in, the University of the West Indies has an obligation and a duty to assist in the development of the productive sectors. It does not have a duty, however, to compete with the productive sectors. I want to make that very clear because I was listening to the Principal just lately talking about the planned development in St. Thomas and I note that one of the things that they are planning to put up there is a sweet potato factory or something like that. In that regard I would want to appeal to them that in making plans to put these things there, to take into consideration what is already happening in the agricultural sector because many planners do things without referring to the stakeholders. I have constantly made the point that there are too many people in our bureaucracies, whether or not it be the University of the West Indies or wherever, who sometimes make plans in isolation of what our private sector is doing, and many times they take up scarce Government resources to do things which are not needed and will be better done if they cooperate with our local private sector. The fact that we already have a person in the private sector who is engaged in sweet potato processing, why would you want to go ahead with the huge advantage that you have of using the State's money or whatever to establish a business that would compete with that. You are not in the business of competing with the private sector, you are in the business of facilitation development in the private sector, helping them to develop their activities, that is what you are in the business of. A lot of these people take the State's resources and run away with it but if they had to earn it they cannot earn it. We have people in the private sector who have it who are the true entrepreneurs.

I also want to make the point that apprenticeships is something that we have had in the past. When I go through

my constituency, St. Michael West Central, and I talk to young people they come and say they would like to be a mechanic, a carpenter or whatever. One of the issues that we have to face in this country is the issue of apprenticeships, how do we get our young people more amenable to the idea of apprenticeship.

We have many skilled people in our country, whether or not they be joiners, masons, carpenters or whatever, who have good skills which when they die it may die with them. Our young people are not being encouraged to be able to go to these people and be subjected to that type of training. We need to get our young people in a position where they do it. Maybe I would suggest that we need to look to see if we can rope in more of our skilled artisans who have special skills and see how we can use them to help to impart those skills to young our people to help them to establish businesses.

Most of all our young people need to start to move into areas where they are actually in work because too many of our young people when they want to start to work want to start to work at the top end. Many of us know that when we start to work in our day that the wage was not a competitive wage by no stretch of the imagination but the point is you had to learn, and very often we do not understand that we might come up with a certificate in something but there is a cost to learning and many businesses do not have the resources to help to train young people who have just come out of school or whoever to work because they do not have the level of understanding of the job that they go into that would help them to be as efficient as someone who has had years of experience. Mr. Speaker, we know though that after years in it they are able at the same time to catch up, and they catch up very quickly once they have the skills but we need to have that apprenticeship system in which a lot of these people that we train, whether or not it is in skills training or whatever, how can we apply them to tradesmen over them for them to be able to learn the skills and to bring them up.

Mr. Speaker, one thing I must say, we have immigrants who come here to Barbados and are able to go into carpentry, plumbing or whatever trade and make a living from it, then what is wrong with our Barbadian boys and girls that they cannot do the same thing. Sir, we must not go back to the point where we give the impression to them that they are only entitled to certain jobs because at the end of the day, it does not serve our interest well. That is why I am saying that we need to look at the matter of apprenticeships to see how we could involve our artisans in a very creative way to be able to take those young people who come out of the Government training schemes and start to get them into the world of work. We seriously need to look to see how we can do that.

Mr. Speaker, again I would want to applaud some of the initiatives that I see coming out of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Innovation in order to do that, because these are the types of initiatives that we need to start practicing. Even in terms of the initiatives I see coming out of the community development. These are the areas that we need to start looking at because in a sense we cannot fool ourselves that we do not need to have that system where we help our young people to actually ease them into the world of work as we should.

Mr. Speaker, another issue when we look at the question of the productive sectors. We spoke about it some time ago and I think that maybe we could look at it again. Mr. Speaker, for instance it might not be known but we have now cotton being grown in the fields of this country which is ready to be harvested. Sir, I guess it maybe is the best kept secret but we cannot find enough workers to harvest this cotton, yet we hear doom and gloom from the Opposition Benches saying that there are not enough jobs available. Sir, if you were to put blinkers onto a horse and tell it to go in that direction then that horse cannot see the other things that are around it.

Mr. Speaker, I really want to say this, we have to be careful that what we are doing is that we are limiting our young people from seeing opportunities that are there for them to make at least some income from those opportunities that would help them to be able to feed their families.

Mr. Speaker, we have to get away from this idea where we want to so much diminish Barbados in a way that would prevent our people from seeing the opportunities for them to be able to feed their families. Sir, we know we will tell our children that no matter what the job is to do it because at the end of the day you are not stealing nor engaging in prostitution -- and some people may want to think that is okay -- but you are not selling any drugs in order to bring damage to people. You are not doing those things but there are some people who would want to encourage people to think that is the way that they should go.

Mr. Speaker, there are some people in this country today who would want to encourage others that is the way to go. I see young people out there who go into agriculture on a daily basis, who are very interested. I think that maybe we need to come up with some special programme to help those young people to go into fields especially within the productive sectors such as these.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes left in which to conclude.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, what we need to recognise is that we need to stop talking about

entrepreneurship as if we do not need to provide the resources to potential entrepreneurs in order for them to be able to go into business. Sir, we talk about it but we do not understand a lot of countries that we see a healthy private sector has made a lot of investment on the part of Government in terms of helping those people to be able to get to where they are. They did that. That is why I believe that we have to come up with creative means of helping to provide young people with the necessary capital to help them to get into the areas of the productive sectors that require much capital.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of people do not recognise it but right now you take something as simple as dairy farming, the amount of money that you have to look to get to invest to be able to get into that sector is tremendous, you have to have land, and a plant can cost you at least \$500 000 to get there right away. Where is it going to come from?

Mr. Speaker, that is where sometimes I believe that that partnership between the private sector and Government must obtain. Sir, I go back to where I started in terms of commercial banks and credit unions. The attitudes of our commercial banks and credit unions in this country must change. We cannot continue to think that Government on their own can finance development in the areas that we need to go. We have too many instances in the past where Government have gone about taking valuable resources and investing them into the private sector and instead of our commercial banks and credit unions helping to push people in the areas that would at least lead to sustainable long-term business activities, instead what we have seen is that those same resources go into the area of eh consumer good that does not build long-term productive capacity in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we need to see a fundamental change in the way in which our financial institutions operate and that they understand that you cannot just expect to come into a country, make huge profits off the backs of the working class people in the country, because when you look at it when you go to a bank nowadays you have to pay for everything that you do. For instance, if you go to a teller you have to pay for the teller's transaction, a cost is attached to that. These are things that you did not have to pay for in the past. Sir, banks now are figuring out every possible way to push in user fees.

Mr. Speaker, when I listen to the whole thing about the economy in all of this when business are struggling I do not hear the banks struggling, banks do not struggle yet a heard a leader of the Opposition who to my mind should be saying to the banking sector that they need to come on board with the development efforts of the Government of this country of the day that is required.

Mr. Speaker, let us understand that solving the problems that we face today cannot rest on Government alone, it means that there has to be a partnership between the private sector in terms of the initiatives that they undertake, and Government being able to mobilise resources that would help them to achieve their long-term objectives to create a sustainable economy as we are trying to do. When you hear the approach of the Leader of the Opposition in this regard, you have to wonder in whose interest does she speak. In whose interest does the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East speak? Is it in the interest of capital? Of the owners of businesses? If we are to appreciate why we are in the position that we are in today, we have to appreciate the fact that all of us as Barbadians contributed to it. We have to appreciate that. When you have the kinds of statements coming that do not help Barbadians to understand why we got here, of course the recommended solutions then are at odds.

Let me go back to what I was saying. The only way that we can have a society in which we all feel comfortable is if those persons who are charged to uphold the law do not encourage people to break it, and do not at the same time encourage people to feel they are right in what they are doing when they break the law. Maybe sometimes it is best not to comment. With that, Sir, I want to say that these Estimates have my support in terms of the development of this country. Thank you very much, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: I am obliged. Yes, Honourable Leader of the House.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended for lunch until two o'clock this afternoon.

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

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 2 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

RESUMPTION

When the Suspension was taken, we were on Order 21 and that we shall return. The Honourable Member St. James Central.

Mr. K. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I would in the period of time allocated to me wish to make a few remarks within the context of two concerns that I have about these Estimates. The first is that I do share the view expressed by others on this side who have spoken before me that we are enduring a period during which we are committed to the

wrong course and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because I believe this debate thus far has been conducted at a level which has been at some time heavily academic, not necessarily economic but heavily academic and may have transcended an ability to impact on the daily lives of the average persons in Barbados. I would want to speak directly to them in the context of some of the facilitators and the enablers of the Barbados' economy so as to set a context within which we may understand how these Estimates not only work but impact on this economy as a whole and all of its subsectors.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday morning, the Minister of Finance treated this House to what the late Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Sir Winston Churchill would have described as a riddle wrapped in a mystery and package inside of an enigma. Sir, he came to Parliament last week and laid these Estimates and proclaimed the Estimates as his own but yesterday, the Minister of Finance spent much time and made heavy weather about the effort of trying to convince us that which is found within the Estimates document, the book 2016/2017 is not what we understand it to be but in fact they reveal something else. Sir, most of that self-contradictory rambling though tolerable required me, Sir, to take some time to make some notes.

Mr. Speaker, I was particularly struck by the plea of innocence with respect to the projection of the deficit and the projection of the revenue which is anticipated to be received by Government during the month of March 2016 and the month of February 2016. Sir, the Minister started out by indicating to us that his staff, no else, wrote the financial aspect of his speech, they put in the financial figures and data, that it was not him and had nothing to do with him. Subsequently, Sir, he indicated to us that there was a slight variation on that because the Accountant-General Office sent him the figures for the speech and he delivered the figures and the speech verbatim as it was written for him. When pointed out in *soto voce* remarks that you know Kensington Oval and issues relating to a Dominica Relief event was part and parcel of what he delivered then that became something that the staff did not write. Sir, throughout all of that, the important point was this, that the Minister indicated that he does not count the money at the Barbados Revenue Authority and so, "you cannot say that I make the numbers up". Sir, I found that to be particularly interesting because even before the witness was informed of the intended interrogation, even before the witness had got to the point where the questioning process had begun, the witness was able to identify the existence of a possible offence and to identify the specific nature of the offence and even before he had been informed of the nature of the intended interrogation, he was able to deny allegations that had not yet been made and more importantly, he was able to advance a defence to charges that had not yet been laid.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure this House that as far as I am concerned, I cannot speak for anybody else, this needs not be an issue in which the Minister of Finance is crucified on the basis of cooking books. I think it is sufficient to leave it there because none of us believe that he so manipulated figures as to reflect a 4 per cent deficit in an \$8 billion economy. Sir, that is not my concern. My concern really is that we have to be very wary. Sir, some of us could be weary as well but we have to be wary of Government's underlying policy direction because that underlying policy direction, not so much just the numeracy but the underlying policy direction is a source for considerable concern. Sir, in my view, it continues to be on the wrong course and, as have said, that is the point of departure for.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I read the Estimates in conjunction with the Government's publication which is known as (1) the Revised Medium Term fiscal strategy and before that there was Government's Medium Term Fiscal Strategy. We began in 2010 with the Economic Affairs Ministry publishing a Medium Term Fiscal Strategy. In 2011, that was revised and then we have a Revised Medium Term Fiscal Strategy. I read them in conjunction with these Estimates because it is in the Revised Medium Term Fiscal Strategy that it is clearly stated that there are projections which the Government intended once it held fast to policy intent, and we are told it did, then by 2016/2017 the projection is that we had to be some place. Sir, that particular projection is that the deficit would be one per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, so that according to the Revised Medium Term Fiscal Strategy, today, we should be coming to Parliament and hearing that the deficit has now been so managed that it has come down to one per cent of GDP.

Mr. Speaker, the Revised Medium Term Fiscal Strategy goes a little bit further and says but they may be exogenous or external factors that impact on the Barbados' economy and therefore it creates a worse case scenario and that worse case scenario is that the deficit would be at three per cent of the GDP by this time.

Mr. Speaker, I listen extensively and carefully to the Minister and, as have said, we got into an academic exercise about accrual accounting and cash base accounting but the reality is that whether you are guided by the cash base accounting process, you have a deficit under the cash base accounting of 7.8 per cent of GDP and if you accept the argument that we have to compare oranges with oranges, as the Minister said, and it is an accrual process that he is looking at then, Sir, on the basis of an accrual accounting process, the deficit according to this Estimates book is five per cent of the GDP.

Either way, against Government's own revised medium term fiscal strategy there has been a failure

because the revised medium term fiscal strategy clearly says that at this point today we should be at 3 per cent and, in fact, not only has there been a failure but we are twice as bad as the worst case scenario predicted and projected by this same Government so that if the Minister is tried, Sir, against his own publication and project then the Minister is established to have failed. I take no pleasure in saying that because I am a Barbadian, my family is Barbadian and we all live here so we are all in this soup together. Sir, it is a burdensome and worrisome thing to me that the impression may go out there that you can hawk and spit into the soup, contaminate the whole pot and expect that makes the process anymore wholesome. Sir, we have to look at what can be done in order to rectify this situation and I will come to that but also we need to very clear that Government understands the extent of the problem that it faces. When you look at the fiscal operations statistics of the Government of Barbados you realise that there has been a pattern of overtaxing the Barbados economy, increasing imposing more and more brand new taxes, and more and more higher taxes on what is really a shrinking tax base therefore you have a situation where when you compare and contrast, for example, Corporation Tax and Personal Income Tax between 2008 and 2015 with halcyon days of Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Administration, and I will used 2003 to 2008 for ease of reference you will see the difficulty that we confront.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that in 2003, for the first time in its history, Barbados reached a point in the management of this country's affairs where Personal Income Tax stopped being the basis on which this economy functioned. In 2003 for the first time in its history, Sir, the substantial brunt of the revenue was found via Corporation Taxes so we had effectively transformed the way in which revenue was raised in this country because businesses carried the Barbados economy on their backs. The benefit of that was that the workers of this country were shielded from the glare of direct taxation and that disposable income, that as a consequence they had, could then be ploughed back into productive activity which tended to help promote growth in a variety of area of economic activity in Barbados. In 2008 when we left office, Mr. Speaker, Corporation Tax in Barbados stood at \$500 million, one half of a billion and Personal Income Tax, as I said, stopped being the major source of revenue and fell to just under \$300 million.

At the end of 2015, Sir, we had a situation where Corporation Tax in Barbados has hemorrhaged to \$178 million down from \$500 million a few years ago and what has happened is that we have returned to the bad old days where the workers of this country who had previously been liberated from the burden of carrying the tax load in Barbados are once again carrying it on their backs to the tune of \$500 million. There has been a reversal, Mr. Speaker, with great consequences to the ordinary average

man in your constituency and in mine. The working class in Barbados are paying the price for an economy that has hemorrhaged, corporations that have left and gone abroad, collapsed, dissipated or disappear and the people who pay the penalty for that, Sir, are our constituents. I do not feel that should be right. When you study the other statistic as to the extend to which our constituents are paying the penalty, we realise that we are seeing a human tragedy unfolding.

The Leader of the Opposition collided with an issue that I think we have to expand on a little bit more, the level of lost of savings. I will not call it dis-savings because I think that confuses people, but it is the lost, the diminution or the reduction of savings in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, if you start with a measure of all of the value added in the economic activities in Barbados you are in a position where you are able to measure the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of this country at factor cost. Against that, Sir, it is also possible to measure the extent to which expenditure is incurred on personal consume, the extent to which I buy things, the extent to which you buy things, Mr. Speaker, and all the rest of Barbados buys things, and when you net out taxation involved in the purchases of the transaction, you net out the indirect and direct taxes, you are in a position where you have consumption expenditure as a percentage of the country's Gross Domestic Product.

Mr. Speaker, now this is the point, that which is not spent is mathematically the same thing as that which has been saved so that you are in a position to have as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) this country's rate of savings. Mr. Speaker, this is what alarms me because for 30 years between 1981 and 2011, Barbados saw an ebb and flow and a very gentle fluctuation in terms of the average rate of savings over that 30-year span, three decades, between 21 per cent as a high and 18 per cent as a low, that is the findings of the research. Mr. Speaker, in 2011 the rate of savings in this country fell to 8 per cent and that trajectory has been maintained to this day so that at the end of 2015 the rate of savings in Barbados is .1 of a percentage point. Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the statistics, as I said, revealed a startling tragedy taking place that the ordinary worker in this country is paying the price for a failed, or failing economic policy on the part of Government and that purse is being paid out of the average workers' pocket. You have to put your hand in your pocket to take up your savings in order to maintain the standard or quality of living and the quality of life that you had previously enjoyed for 30 years. Mr. Speaker, that is a reversal. For the first time in Barbados' history if you look at how the sociology now blends with the economy, for the first time in Barbados' history since independence the next generation is worst off than the current one. All of us knew that you get a little something from your parents but you would be in a better position than those who went before you. Sir, now what we are seeing is that those who are here

now are likely to be in a better position than those who come behind them and that is part of the dynamic that sees the level of concern about introduction of fees at the university, it is part of the dynamic that sees the concern about the introduction of potential costs in healthcare, et cetera but that is another debate. This issue for me today, Sir, is how do we turn these fortunes around? How do we reverse the trajectory that we are on? Sir, in my view, the challenge before us is the manage Barbados' fiscal affairs a lot more sensibly in the context of the difficulties that we face. It is not feasible to impose more taxes, as I said, you cannot impose more taxes on a shrinking tax base and expect a better result, that would be a definition of madness so we have to focus - and I respectfully submit - on those things which we call the drivers, the facilitators of this country's economy, the enablers and key among the enablers, Sir, has to be the business climate in Barbados because if we are going to get to a point where we can talk sensibly about growth in the country, then it has to be a growth that is led by small and medium sized and indeed micro businesses being able to stimulate economic activity in order to put the country on a growth platform in order hopefully to generate some foreign exchange, et cetera. Sir, what we cannot do is to sit idly by and watch businesses haemorrhage or die or as you said before disappear to seek life elsewhere and not take corrective measures.

Sir, when I talk about the overarching facilitating environment, I see this as something as a teachable moment because I do not think that people understand that business facilitation as it is loosely called does not impact only on the so-called international business people and the big business people, we are talking about the way in which life in this country on a day-by-day basis is suffocating and suppressing commerce and commercial activity, and it really cannot be allowed to go on not if we are going to be serious about transforming the trajectory that I have just outlined to Barbados, and the difficulty that is being faced by the ordinary average person.

Now, how does this so-called overarching environment impact on the average man? It is no secret, Mr. Speaker, that every week thousands of small business people in Barbados are asked to go and stand in a court yard sometimes for a whole day waiting to be issued a liquor licence. That happened in 1960. I first discovered it when I came to the Bar and I have been at the Bar for 20 years and it continues to happen today. It is not to say that the technology does not exist that there are not planned platforms on which we can transform that reality but we treat to the time of those people who are involved in that type of commercial endeavour and enterprise as though that does not matter. Sir, in doing so you squander their time and their money.

Equally, Mr. Speaker, it is not secret that if you have a bar in Second Street Hometown or a bar or a shop in St.

Lawrence Gap, these are part of the Mecca of the tourist industry, that you need to get what they call a loud noise permit in order to operate have a little music playing at night because you are near residential areas, fine and dandy, but again you are telling the operator of the Bar that he must go down to town, be physically present and be there for half of a day to in order to renew a permit every week. Mr. Speaker, the point I am making to you is that that too is a squandering of people's time and their money, and you can go on and on.

I am told, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to anticipate, but I am advised that this Parliament will look closely at legal affairs in this country as one of the Heads we call and I hope we do because again it gives us an opportunity to understand how something that is seen purely as a social issue has serious economic implications for the Barbados economy. Hundreds and hundreds of and I say even thousands of Barbadian people who are seeking employment especially at low income levels are asked to have at the point of application a police certificate of character. The pressures of obtaining such a certificate in Barbados today see people standing in a line at 5 o'clock and a 4:45 on a morning and they remain in line until mid day or later if they are going to be part of the 100 odd applications that takes place only on any given day. Mr. Speaker, again we treat to this painful reality as though these people do not have work to go and do, as though their employers are not concerned with their level of productivity, as though there is not an implication for what I have called the enabling factors, the drivers, the facilitators of business in Barbados.

Sir, if you take thousands of people out of the economy on any given day and put them to do nothing but to stand up and twiddle their thumbs and wait in line for services that the State must supply because nobody else is in the business of providing it, then, Mr. Speaker, you as part of the Administration is guilty of killing the goose that is supposed to be laying the golden egg.

Mr. Speaker, I can say to you that is not only at the lower end. I have sought to give those examples because I want for us to understand the way in which we are humbugging the lives of ordinary people. Sir, when you speak about a chap whom might be a potential inventor somewhere in Italy and he wants to buy a piece of land in Barbados because he realises Barbados is a lovely destination within which to do business, he may wish to set up some sort of condominium, but he has to go to the Central Bank Department's for processing foreign exchange approvals for land transactions and he be told that at 11 o'clock every morning they are not taking any more applications. The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that if I left here now or you left here and went up to the Ministry of Transport and Works at the Pine to pay at the Licensing Authority up there, it is closed because it is now after 2

o'clock and it was closed since 12 o'clock. Every day for the last six or seven months that has been the case at the Ministry of Transport and Works in the Pine. Mr. Speaker, you can go on and on.

What I am trying to get the Government to appreciate is that there is an implication in all of this for what international organisations who are monitoring what we are doing in Barbados called the Ease of Doing Business. There is an implication in all of this having established that all of the macro fundamentals are pointing in the wrong direction, having established that we are in fact off course when it comes to the deficit, I am not concerned with whether it is cash basis or accrual basis, the point is that we have failed and the data tells us we have failed, then we got to correct the situation as best as we can. The one thing we have control over is the way we do business in this country. Nobody in the world can determine for this country how this country sets up its business affairs.

The fact of the matter is that when you look at the Ease of Doing Business Report for 2016 which came out a few weeks ago we see the extent to which there has been a catastrophic decline confronting Barbados even as we spout the rhetoric of wanting to do better.

Mr. Speaker, if you go to the Ease of Doing Business - and I have done it two ways, I have looked from 2012 to 2016 so that we can see how Barbados has performed or, in my view, under performed - in 2012, Barbados was positioned at number 87 out of 198 countries; in 2013, we were at 88; at 2014 we had fallen to 103; 2015, we were at 106; and now we are at 119 based on what has come out a couple weeks ago under the Ease of Doing Business Report for 2016.

Mr. Speaker, where are we with respect to the rest of the world? Too notches below where Barbados is now is a place that they called the West Bank in Gaza, a strike-torn war-torn place, but that is not our reality on the ground here at least not to the best of my knowledge. They may have an excuse because of conflict and strife for being in that position.

Asides.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Yes, there maybe strife here but there is strife over there too. The point is not whether there is strife in a political party, that is to take a cheap shot at a ver important thing. The important thing, Mr. Speaker, is that there has to be an appreciation of the extent to which Barbados is under performing against economies that are comparable. I want to show you, Sir, again what the 2016 Report says about comparable economies. Let us look here in the Caribbean. While we are at 119 and are on a trajectory downwards, Jamaica has

moved from a position where it was 104 up to 64, St. Lucia, Sir, ahead of us again, is at Mo. 77. Trinidad and Tobago ahead of us again, is at position No. 88. Antigua, Sir, ahead of us again, is at No. 104. The Bahamas, ahead of us again, is at No. 106.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we cannot afford to be locked into a race to the bottom. At a minimum even the Honourable Member for St. Lucy must appreciate the fact that there is a worrisome trend that we are being confronted with in these statistics, that, Sir, while others in this region are improving, Barbados, faced with the same set of macro circumstances, and is not improving.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has three minutes left in which to conclude.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, beyond the ease of doing business is the issue of Barbados' competitiveness and again the indicators are going in the wrong direction. Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that this problem can be solved. In Jamaica, Sir, the Jamaicans sat down and recognised the consequences of the difficulties with which they were confronted and Government, led by the Honourable Prime Minister as she then was, brought all of the department together, including representatives of all departments: Immigration had to sit at the table with Land Tax; Land Tax must sit at the table with Legal Affairs; Legal Affairs must sit at the table with Corporate Affairs. All of us in in it together that was the approach taken in Jamaica and every department was mandated to identify three or four areas of tangible reforms that can be made. Sir, you then set people deadlines within which to implement those reforms and hold persons accountable for it.

Mr. Speaker, here we have had a lot of old talk. I heard that a business facilitation unit was to be set up, not under the Leader of the country who has command and can reach into any ministry, but under the command of an aspirant who means well, but he is but an aspirant, and we know from what is already on record from this Government that if the Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management cares to, he will write a letter to his staff telling them not to attend meetings of the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, well, if the Honourable Member could treat the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs in that way, since the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs has to give the Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management a budget, then how would he treat the Honourable Member for St. James South?

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there are some things that require the command of he who leads the country and I say to you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that was the approach taken in

Jamaica and that is how they reversed their downward trend that we are now on, and moved up to No. 64 in the ranking. Sir, if we treat to the ranking as though they do not matter, we are in danger of letting that complacency allow us to compound the pain and anguish that I have already pointed out to this Honourable House in these few minutes of speaking, that is being felt by Barbadians doing any form of business every single day.

We are betraying our people, Sir, if we do not recognise the anguish that they go through wasting time with administrative bureaucracy that causes them to have greater under-productivity; it causes them to be unable to satisfy their employers; it causes the employers to be in a situation where they are not having profit levels and production levels that they would want, and we all go horribly wrong.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please wind up on this point.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, as I close I say to you that these Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure are also characterised by a 15 per cent increase in expenditure over last year and my real concern is that the Central Bank of Barbados has made it very clear that part and parcel of the containment of the expenditure had to be what we were going to do with statutory corporations. The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs chose to be silent about a matter that he raised in this Honourable House about his handling about the statutory corporations which according to him, Sir, needed to be either amalgamated, merged, or some discontinued.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot keep kicking the can down the road and I think that at a minimum the country needs to hear but more importantly people who work there, people whose lives are now in permanent contingency, you cannot get a bank loan because the banks tell you that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs say that you might not be working much longer.

These things, Sir, are wrong and we need to bring clarity of purpose and certainty of direction. Sir, I want to thank you for your abundance of patience. I am deeply obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence I want to join the discussion to this Appropriation Bill, 2016, and to make my contribution with respect not only to the portfolio for which I hold responsibility at the permission or request of the Right Honourable Prime Minister, but first to record a note of gratitude to the constituents of Christ Church South who

have asked me to share their needs and those things that affect them most, with this Parliament and my colleagues in Cabinet and to try as best as I can to ensure that things are improved in that area.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that it so happens that the constituency of Christ Church South enjoys the arrangement where it is highly impacted by the performance of the tourism industry. Sir, certainly over the last 12 month or so, I have observed and have shared anecdotally and by way of documentation with many residents and business places who operate in that area, the kinds of improvements of which the Minister of Tourism referred to yesterday. Sir, I do this not in a boastful way but in a recognition that the hard work that has been put in by this Government, by the officers who we employ in the ministries to make sure that the details and the legal underpins of our decision are properly ordered, that this hard work has begun to bear some fruit, recognising, however still, that there has to be spending, there has to be continued Government spending by way of investments, encouragement and incentives.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard all that discussion and although the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs in his presentation yesterday was at pains to explain why there would be a spending increase, even from the last contributor from the other side, there was this snide reference to increase spending over projected over 2016-2017 which he is against, because it throws things into another spin.

Sir, we recognised here that we have to make careful decisions almost every day so as to ensure that scarce revenue are allocated in the most effective ways that we can, and that has been a lesson which not only Barbados has had to learn, but many country around the world have recognised the reality that the scarce availability of funds today and the changing realities of world economies dictate that we have to be extremely careful as we set our predictions. Sir, this Government has used this lesson in all of the decisions-making that we have taken or participated in.

Sir, the Honourable Member who just sat spoke to the question of business facilitation and not for one moment would I say that there is not a need for improvement.

My only question, of course, to the Honourable Member is if he could chronicle for this Honourable Chamber what he did while a Minister of the Crown to make sure that there was some improvement in the way that work permits were issued, the way that liquor licences were issued, instead of standing in a line in Coleridge Street -- well you do not have to stand in a line anymore - and the issuing of Certificates of Character. These are

things that have been going on for a long time. We are not saying they do not need improvement, but sometimes you have to find out what you are improving and going to. What are you improving and going to? Sir, we will continue to work on these matters.

Sir, the details of the Estimates have come into question by the Opposition in an almost orchestrated way. The Honourable Member for St. George South spoke this morning in his role as Shadow Minister of Health. Of course, the real Shadow Minister of Health had already said his part. Is it “emigrant” when you leave Barbados and go to live overseas? He is a “returning national”, that is the term; a member of the diaspora who has returned. He made it very clear at a recent town hall meeting on healthcare financing about this cut in spending. Of course, that came after a comment by the head of the Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners that there was a \$35 million cut in spending. Our “returning national” spoke to \$10 million, and the Leader of the Opposition and her “echoes” have continued to rant and rave about this \$10 million. The Minister of Finance has been at pains to point out to the country, because we have to try to let Barbadians understand the mischief which the Barbados Labour Party is up to. We have to try to let them understand, so I did a little assessment of my own as to how monies have been allocated over a ten-year period from 2005 to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH), for instance.

In 2005-2006, the administration of the day allocated in approved estimates \$108 million. The actual expenditure or the revised estimates for that period were \$111 million with a supplementary vote in this House of Assembly of \$3.5 million. In 2006, they allocated again under The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter who now sits at the far end of this side, because he is uncomfortable over there. He is comfortable here. Sir, the Right Honourable Member allocated \$110 million, a supplementary of some \$20 million; so we came to a revised estimate of \$130 million. This is no different to the point that we have made time and time again. We allocate \$146 million in today’s times to the operation of the QEH in these Estimates. We allow the operation to continue. Of course, we try to save as much as we can. We try to meet as many of our payables as we can. Then we come to the House of Assembly after an assessment of the actual spend and tidy the expenditure with a total. The facts are that there was a significant jump in spending at the QEH, for instance in the year 2008-2009, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. That is how we got from the \$110 million to \$145 million today, because we have introduced some six new specialties as we continue to work toward our signed and agreed principle in Barbados of healthcare access for all, healthcare coverage for all. No public charges at the QEH for Barbadians seeking healthcare; that has been and will continue to be the position of the Democratic Labour Party in Government.

Sir, the point is, along with the increase in the number of specialties that we offer, today there are few procedures for which Barbadians have to seek overseas care. This is a fact. Only in the area of paediatric cardiology, as I am informed, do we constantly have to refer Barbadians for overseas care; and that is something that we are working on. In 2008 when the Democratic Labour Party administration came to Government, if we had not taken the position to inject some \$40 million in capital works in the QEH, we would still not be able to plug in a percolator at that facility. So bad, so dilapidated, so broken down, so completely inoperable was the situation at the QEH. We have an Honourable Member coming in here yesterday and trying to refer to the instance of a ceiling tile being missing as an indication of the capabilities of the QEH.

Sir, my responsibility as Minister of Health is to ensure that the confidence at that institution remains so that our professionals, whether they be our doctors, our nurses or our administrators -- all of our professionals and our ancillary staff -- are comfortable and happy to work in an environment where they can be assured of support. We have never said, and I will never say, that everything is fine and absolutely dandy. There are problems and challenges, but that is why we are here; to manage these challenges. We have to continue a programme which sees us with our slender finances. The public of Barbados must remember that the QEH’s revenues are in the order of \$6 million to \$8 million only, so we have to make sure that those resources are so managed that our suppliers remain our suppliers, and that they can comfortably exist in an effective business environment in Barbados.

I want at this point to thank those suppliers to the QEH who have stayed the course with us with some pain, and who we continue to assure that we will make sure that we continue to eat away at those existing debts, and that as soon as we are able to release those funds, which the Minister of Finance has made very clear, they are to be released to the QEH in the order of \$24 million to essentially liquidate the debts to our suppliers at the QEH. In the meantime, the administration of the hospital has worked out a supply arrangement with these providers, which has seen that confidence maintained. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East in her presentation yesterday also sought to refer to a table which she said she was quoting from: Barbados Economic and Social Report.

Of course, her Shadow of Minister of Health also quoted from the same document this morning and the Honourable Member is trying to demonstrate to Barbadians that fiscal measures that we put in place in 2013 when there was some dislocation of jobs in the public sector would have caused rampant evidence of diabetes mellitus, hypertension, ischemic heart disease, et cetera in the year

2011, because she was careful to say that the document which she was quoting from referred to the years 2010/2011. The Honourable Member even said to this Minister that we must try to make sure this data is updated as soon as possible. Sir, fiscal measures that were taken in 2013 are quoted by the Honourable Member to have contributed to the existence of hypertension, diabetes mellitus and heart disease in 2011. This is carrying this debate to the depths of the confusion of the Barbados Labour Party, that is the only thing it reminds me of, the kind of confusion that exist in the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, that is the only thing it reminds me of, the kind of confusion that exists in the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, this is important to understand because I was able to join my team at the Ministry of Health in some of these health finance townhall meetings and listen to the contributions of Barbadians and I took a few notes to keep myself abreast of what thinking is out there. Sir, I am not going to second guess the members of the Ministry, the team at the Ministry and the Ministry of Economic Affairs as they develop whatever new health care financing plan we come up with but the members of the public are so grasped with the realities of health care and the changing realities of health care and the fact that, for instance, Barbados pyramid in respect to our life expectancy has turned upon itself. Sir, today, we have a life expectancy in Barbados in the region of 70 years to 80 years for essentially males and females in Barbados, a figure which once hovered around 65 but now in reality exists in the region of 75 years to 80 years old. Sir, we have a situation where Barbadians are living longer and so may we, and we want to live healthier. The members of the public spoke to health care as being an expensive commodity, something that costs a lot of money. Sir, as a matter of fact, some insurance agencies made the point that where they still offer health care insurance, they were reviewing the situation with a view to probably discontinuing health care insurance. Sir, the volume is not there, so what nonsense are we hearing from the other side, led by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, who seems impatient about herself and seems to be bound up in the presence of a demon that is possessed by something. Sir, she comes in here and speaks to the fact that we treat women in the Barbados Labour Party badly. I do not understand how we arrive at that conclusion. The Honourable Member for St. Peter said he left the Barbados Labour Party primarily because of the way the Honourable Member was treating the ladies of the Party. Sir, that is the best example that we have of the records of the Barbados Labour Party in respect of how they treat their members is my friend, the representative for the constituency of Christ Church West. I pray Marie strength, I honestly do, at this important time of her life. It is unfoe, it is sad and it pains me when I reflect on the way that lady is being treated by her so called colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, the public said too that, yes, health was not always good enough. We needed improvement fit and

that waiting list is too long. Sir, that is the reality but the response is not to make wild promises but we sit down with our professionals and say, where have we fallen short in our rollout of our health care provision at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital? We sought to improve our service at the polyclinics. The Honourable Member for St. John this morning chronicled for us the events at the St. John Polyclinic at David Thompson Complex where we offer state-of-the-art health care to our people in St. John and in all neighbouring areas. I want to invite those who want to enjoy the ambience of being taken care of at St. John. I want them to go to St. John and you will see that the same facilities that exist here in Bridgetown, the Glebe, St. Philip, St. Peter or at Randall Phillips in Oistins, exist up St. John and we look forward to continueing to be able to Parliament provide this very important primary health care. Sir, we understand very clearly that victory in terms of what we offer in primary health care will significantly contribute to our battle with what has become known as ncids in Barbados. If we can offer primary treatment which sees a slew of treatments being available including nutritional management, life style changes, management of our diets so that we eliminate excesses salt, we introduce last year in the Budget a 10 per cent tax on sweetened beverages, yes, because sweetened beverages have been proven worldwide to be contributing to unhealthiness in adults. This is a five to ten year investment in the very least, so that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and Honourable Members, we can look forward to a healthier Barbadian population. Sir, I am persuaded that Barbadians are listening to the message. The amount of persons I encounter when I go exercising, already doing their exercise, I am comfortable about that and we want to encourage it significantly and urge Barbadians that we have within our hands and within our power the ability to turn around a lot of these lifestyle diseases like heart disease, hypertension and some forms of diabetes, respiratory infections to some extend.

Mr. Speaker, you know what the people at these town hall meetings also said, that our health care is good but they wondered if it is sustainable and that is where the discussion is taking place. Is the Ministry of Finance comfortable that they can continue to provide for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital? Sir, I have not even spoken to the wider health care because the entire health care budget in Barbados is around \$840 million. The public portion is in the region of \$530 million. There is a private out of pocket portion hovering around \$240 million to \$275 million and our private spend in health care is actually by world standards a little too high

and we aim as we provide healthcare in Barbados to make sure that in keeping with the dictates of the World Health Organisation (WHO) when we sit at our fora in May and in September in Geneva and in Washington, supported by a strong relationship to that organisation and the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and the Centre for

Disease Control (CDC) in the United States and other organisations which continue to offer important and urgent assistance to our region because we recognise today that a threat to Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago or Jamaica is a threat to the entire world so because Zika exists in Brazil it does not mean that we are free of Zika virus here in Barbados. On the contrary, we have proven otherwise. There are cases now of Zika, as a result of persons travelling among countries. Mr. Speaker, you catch the disease or you become infected in one country, return to your country and the disease goes with you, obviously. We need to look at how to roll out a sustainable solution to healthcare financing which does not does not cause Barbadians to be out of pocket and indeed, which does not cause the Treasury of Barbados or the Consolidated Fund to be so impacted that we cannot meet other urgent and important healthcare needs. We recognise therefore, that our approach to healthcare has got to be driven by a clear directed policy that improves the statistics in respect to the incidences of non-communicable diseases in Barbados.

All of this, therefore, is in the thinking of the Ministry of Health as we contemplate our spend in the delivery of healthcare in Barbados. Yes, there are areas of our healthcare which we are extremely proud of and there are areas of our healthcare where we need to look at improvements. Mention was made of mental health. We, in the Ministry of Health, recognise that there has to be an improved approach to the whole question of mental health, the broadness, the detection and the assistance being offered but these interventions will cost us. As if to whine, not only mental, but dental or oral health, this is an important factor. Our programme in oral health in Barbados now sees us taking care of children who are at primary schools in terms of broad treatment regimes, but in terms of adult interventions at our polyclinics, regrettable or regretfully, the only offer up to now has been the extraction of the offending tooth. This is something which we need to look at but other interventions, Mr. Speaker, in oral and dental health and tooth management are extremely expensive and therefore would have to be very carefully costed into any expansion of healthcare.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes in which to wind up.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Yes, Sir. In terms of our HIV/AIDS prevention and control programme, we need to congratulate ourselves in our achievements in terms of this programme. We have eliminated the mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Barbados and are awaiting our suitable accreditation by the World Health Organisation when everything is in order. We have reached the stage in Barbados where HIV care is to become part of the public healthcare in our polyclinics. We have reached the stage where HIV care is to become non-discriminatory and we are encouraging our team of professionals to so approach

this transition, not to the extent that urgent and essential cases are not dealt with but that once that treatment has begun and our patient is under control, he or she will become part of the general healthcare management in the country. This is another important step and I think this is an area where special funding has been put in place to the tune of something like \$600.

Mr. Speaker, we would have moved to another stage in HIV treatment where we are going to see the administrators, our clinicians, offering what is termed the Test and Treat Programme. Once upon a time, you had to have a certain viral count to be put on the list of patients who would get anti-retroviral treatment but once you are tested, you are going to be immediately put on the list to take advantage of treatment that would see that disease controlled. It is important that we let Barbadians know where we are placing our energies and that the facts are here, and we need to share with Barbadians. Other than that, the kind of mischief which is being perpetuated by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and her cohorts would get abroad and one would start to believe those untruths, Mr. Speaker, that all is falling down in healthcare in Barbados and if there is an absence of a ceiling tile in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) corridor, it is indication enough that the Ministry of Health has failed in its duties. Of course, there is our Environmental Health Unit and we have gone to work and we continue to work and we have moved our programme to the point where we are now saying to Barbadians, we do not want to hear us talk about controlling any Aedes Aegypti mosquito anymore, we want to eradicate the Aedes Aegypti mosquito from Barbados. That is the plan and that will be the subject of a supplementary which we are trying to make sure that it gets here in time to be a part of our Friday afternoon consideration. Sir, I hope in the few minutes that have been available to me that I was able to indicate to Barbadians that healthcare is truly being taken care of in our country, not because of me the Minister of Health, but because of the cadre of people we have employed in our system who see it as their duty to offer the best that they can offer to our Barbadians population. Do you know what my task is, Sir? To make sure that their confidence is never undermined to the extent that they ever change their direction.

I am obliged to you, Sir, for this opportunity.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just before you take your seat, Honourable Member, there is just one little point. You referred to something said by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and you used the word "untruths". I believe you really mean "inaccuracies" and I want you to withdraw that and consider it replaced. Honourable Members do not lie in here. Honourable Members do not tell untruths in here.

Asides.

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

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, before I make a few points and certainly a speech that would be a little longer than the Honourable Member for St. John, I just want to touch on an issue that the previous Honourable Member who spoke touched on. I think that he ought to have been fully aware, especially being the Minister of Health, about the increase in the death rates in Barbados. To make the point without even further expanding that people were living longer conveys the impression that as a consequence of health and social policies across Barbados and certainly attributing some credit to himself that people are living longer in Barbados...

Mr. Speaker, the evidence is not coming from me, it is coming from the Barbados Economic and Social Report 2014 which indicates that the death rates increased by 9.3 per 1 000 compared to 8.2 per 1 000 in 2013. It went on to say, to put it in raw figures, that 2 580 persons died in 2014 representing an increase of 304 when matched to 2 276 persons...

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: You do not want me to expand on that. I am only stating what the empirical evidence is, I am not subjecting it to...

The birth rate also decreased in 2014 and 2015. I am sure that you would see that the birth rates decreased further in 2016, so it is probably best to put it in terms of not a deliberate misrepresentation because you should be fully aware of these circumstances especially as Minister of Health.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member a deliberate misrepresenting, is unparliamentary, please withdraw it.

Senator P. M. T. TODD: No, I said it is not a deliberate misrepresentation and I would hope that it is not. Is there a problem with that language, Sir?

Mr. SPEAKER: You go ahead.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Do not let us argue over it. I genuinely just feel that the Minister of Health ought to be aware of these things and I believe that he was just coming off the cap of his head and not paying any attention to what the official documents are saying.

Sir I must confess that I have examined the Estimates. There is very little movement in the figures outside of the increases in the capital vote and mainly so in the Ministry of Transport and Works. All of the other elements of the budget remained fairly constant. Mr.

Speaker, the Estimates is looking at \$4 billion in spending as we go ahead. I am not going to argue that the laws of nature permits for growth at all times or that it even permits for development at all times. Some people start with that premise in their argument, so depending on the both the exogenous and the endogenous circumstances in the society sometimes the economy fluctuates and so on, and I want to be fair on that. I really believe that we are in a very tough transition period and I believe that it demands of us healthy debate.

The former Minister of Finance, the former Right Honourable Prime Minister, I think it was last week in here, indicated that while he was at the centre of control, he had put a number of financial agencies in place including FundAccess, and he said that these agencies had suited their purpose - not directly his words - in that interim period and there is a need to re-examine these agencies and make them relevant to some of the dynamics that are occurring around us. It would have been most refreshing and enlightening at this point as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Independence - we can argue on who spend 24 years and who spend 26 and all of that but and we can argue in the partisan atmosphere if the policy ought to be more inclusive or not but I do not know how far we are going to get with that now - and I believe that we need to hear not only some refreshing ideas but we need to honour the progressive thinkers that even preceded the 50th Anniversary. During that period even prior to 1966 and even the period that we did not live through we have had the privilege of some of the best minds in this Honourable House of Assembly over those years.

We reconnect with that because it inspires us, and the Estimates ought to inspire us. The Estimates is not raw figures being tossed out, the Estimates itself must process a central element of inspiration that gives us the level of hope and a vision so that all of those people who were bewildered prior to the Estimates must be able to say as a result of what I heard yesterday that I feel a sense of confidence that we are on the right track.

Mr. Speaker, hope does not guarantee success but at least in 24 hours the element of hope should still remain with us and it can only get there if we move beyond the pre-primary discourse on the body politics with people swiping at each other, some people pretending that one Honourable Member from the Government side knows more than English Grammar than the other person who represent the Opposition from St. George and trying to ask questions about pronunciation. You need to bring something fresh on the table because in these Chambers men stood up in here in overalls that made a contribution far superior to any contribution that the Members who come from the University of the West Indies or the ones who purport to be intellectuals made in these Chambers. Fundamental changes were made about how advance the

situation to bring us to the stage where we are at today. You had Ramsay, Beckles; and Duncan Oneale, the uncle of the great late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow against child labour. That is what you call civil behaviour. I made a mistake and the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs did reduced himself to an infantile clown. The Honourable Member suggested you made a mistake and I accept that.

Mr. Speaker, we are in here because we also have to honour the people who were there before us. We have to be able to respect Sir Grantley Herbert Adams and do not get to partisan at this time that we cannot move beyond the Barbados Labour Party/Democratic Labour Party discourse. The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, the former Right Honourable Prime Minister for 13 years, the way in which he attacked the challenges of poverty in an assertive way that we have not ever seen in history, especially in the 20 and 21st century, you must be honoured for it, and the attack on poverty, and some of the institutions which the Honourable Member set up. There are outstanding track records. Sir, I feel that we are at a point that without these prejudiced feelings and these subjective views on politics, the present historical circumstances are demanding something higher of us and I know on the agenda we are hearing discussions on a republican form of Government, but I am only hearing it from one person.

Mr. Speaker, I do not even know if the others are capable of articulating what is a republican form of Government. I do not even know if they could make a distinction between a ceremonial form of Government, a republican form and an executive form of Government. So you can just tag along on the paramouncy of the party, in a situation where you are totally ignorant to what the leadership is carrying forward.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, in a time when we need to use the will of the people, I am concerned about threats to our institutions. This morning when I got up I saw in the back page of the Nation Newspaper an institution that I hold dear to my heart, because it means a lot to me and I would like to believe that it should mean a lot to all of us. Sir, I read in the newspaper that the Government owes that institution \$24 million. Sir, we have to be concerned about that because a lot of the trade unions and Government that institution would have been....

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: It also indicated that for the entire year the institution has not received on cent from the Government in the circumstances and that earlier when a small tranche was supposed to be paid to them, the

Transport Board garnished that money and paid it to the National Insurance Scheme. The article went further, it said that three persons came in from Trinidad and Tobago as engineers and with this company struggling they were asked to bring 14 buses from UCAL and transport those buses up to Mangrove for the three Trinidadian engineers to work on.

Mr. Speaker, now if this company was doing relatively well but the management of the company is saying that they are going through some stressful conditions. They have not received a cent for the year. When we put that on the national agenda as an important institution we were conscious that there are people in Barbados who feel, despite all that we do here in Parliament, that black people do not have any sense and that we cannot manage anything having to do with large sums of money.

Mr. Speaker, we should be doing all that we can to put lie to that because it is a mindset. Mr. Speaker, I want to plead with the Government, never mind how I say it, never mind who does not like me. What I want you to do are to sit and think. I am saying this is what you want. I am hearing a lot of discussions in here, about Sandals, about concessions, about saving Sandals, about how much money they inject in Sam Lord's Castle. I am not hearing that these brands are getting paid, but I am hearing all of these things.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned with the survival of UCAL as an important company that belongs to us. I know that if were to use the other word that a lot of people would begin to get strange chemical reaction.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, all of these things we need to address. Sir, what are some of the things that we need to do? All I am saying is that there are some institutions that we must do our best to preserve. It is not that the idea came from St. Michael East; it has nothing to do with if it relates to my comrade and brother from the Ministry of Transport and Works. He is the last man who I would like to say anything about in here, I am serious but there are some things that we need to put in place, they are simple things.

Mr. Speaker, I know that one of the representatives on this side also represents the disabled community. Sir, a sensible and inclusive programme is what is needed. I do not see these people as being transparent and I think that we could radically change our attitudes towards this specific community. We have been working on it for a considerable time. I rushed up to the United Nation, probably with 24/48 hours' notice when I was Minister and being directed by the them Right Honourable Prime

Minister who told me to go put my bags down and get back to the United Nation to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Disabled. I had just landed one day, I think the second day I was out again. It is a sense of commitment, but more than that, the then Minister of Transport and Works met with me and the disabled community here, and we took a lady by the name of Boneta Phillips and other members of the community across Broad Street and Swan Street. We spoke to some store owners, and I told them that in one week they should see a progressive programme started in Bridgetown. I want to thank the Honourable Member for St. George North for responding in seven or so days. I just want to urge the Minister to reconnect with that important programme. There are so many seniors as well as persons who are physically challenged, who do not have access to the City because we have not been able to do as much as we would like to. We also had the challenges of some of the stores not having the washrooms to facilitate wheelchairs and things of that kind. It is that kind of effort that I would like to see, and while I can understand people dancing and showing their skills in putting flesh to arithmetic in the assessment of the Estimates, I really believe that there are those social planks that are still very important to all of us.

The Minister of Social Care spoke in glorious terms about the work of social care, and there is no need for me to say anything about that. I would not. There will be a time when we get on the battlefield and he will know that it is not Utopia, and therefore there are a couple of things that I will have to unearth, but at this stage I do not have anything to say about that. Do not think I do not understand the latent plan behind the Constituency Councils. I am not so naïve to believe that it is not a good instrument, and I have to keep a close eye on it. I must tell you that I participate in the activities in relation to the David Thompson Classic. I go to the events and make sure I keep close to my football team in the community and everything, but I understand what is happening there. I want the debate to be healthy.

That Ministry, along with Youth Affairs, has some important work to do, especially among the youth in Barbados, and I spoke to the Minister some time ago about the importance of the film industry. There is excellent opportunity for this industry to become very expansive, and I believe this is strictly dependent on the human capital that is available to all of us in this society. It is not a case where we have to look for raw material and set up a manufacturing industry and do anything. We are talking about the natural ability of Barbadian young men and women, and I have seen some of the film produced. There is one called Chrissy; an excellent one, and I have been told it has been doing well in Europe and internationally. The producers responsible for it are producing material. They are both persistent and consistent in their actions, and I feel that a greater effort being applied to the film industry can

provide not only professional opportunities for young people but I have known of young people who were hopeless, and as a consequence of the opening of that programme, have been able to mirror their own creative talent in being part of that film industry which you are carrying on in the Ministry of Youth Affairs.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes in which to conclude.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: Okay, Sir. I will not spend any more time on that because I would be doing an injustice to the people of St. Michael East who I have to at least show some interest in concerning what is happening there. The Minister of Housing and Lands came in here two weeks ago and told us he had 500 house spots that would be sold at \$5 per square foot. I have been asking and searching through the National Housing Corporation and through other persons, and I am trying to find out from the Minister where I can locate this land, and if these house spots are available. I have people in my constituency living in fear. There are some people in the society who believe that the children who worked hard on the Belle Plantation do not have any right to live on land anywhere in Barbados. People who never owned land in their entire lives, people who had nowhere to live, who were homeless, and as a result of all the pressures of society, ended up living on the Belle Plantation land. Since the Town Planner has instilled all this fear in these people, they are asking me every day if I cannot make an arrangement or get involved in an engagement with the Government of Barbados. If the lands are available, I would hope that during the discussion of these Estimates the Minister of Housing and Lands would be able to tell me exactly where the lands are so that I can get a couple buses and carry the people down to the National Housing Corporation so that you would know that all of us were there applying for land to rent. If you do not have land to rent, we are happy to enter into an arrangement with land to be purchased at \$5 a square foot. We are happy to do that, but we need to have the assurance. I do not know if I can feel contented with your word. I do not know if you are as big as you are impressing me that you are, because I have not had that word from anybody else at all.

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: The same Town Planner that you are talking about instructed this big magnate, who I understand is the Government's favourite contractor, not to open that gas station in the middle of Coverley. It is too close to the houses up there. He dismissed the Town Planner and opened the gas station. He went further.

An innocent little child, 10 years old, dressed in his primary school uniform coming from graduation excelled to the optimum, driving home looking forward to going to

Harrison College. You do not understand the pain, you do not understand the elation, you do not understand anything but that young boy's life was curtailed prematurely on that highway because of the negligence and the arrogance of this contractor. Sir, it was unbridled arrogance. There is no respect whatsoever for authority. I have heard things with people coming to me about messages but he does not know who he is dealing with. One person get away with doing wrong things at the level just below treason in this country.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please wind up.

Mr. T. PRESCOD: Sir, I am doing that now. I am just trying to paint a picture of what is happening here. Sir, we have a lot to talk about as representative in this Parliament especially when I see a man walk away from what ought to be a murder charge in Barbados and he ended up with community service. We have a lot of talking to do.

Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate because I have some issues especially in Roberts Road, which I would like the Minister of Transport and Works to focus his attention on, the repaving of the road in Roberts Road when you come across by the hill and the drainage system out there. There is now a great demand for the use of that road. Sir, I am going to wrap it up. I am not unreasonable.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak as long as I did. I thank you very much and I will speak on these other aspects a little later in the session.

The Right Honourable O.S. ARTHUR: Estimates 2016

Mr Speaker Sir, if certain circumstances had been allowed to have been put in place, it is quite possible Sir that I would have been in a position to speak in this debate and to give full-throated support to the policies embedded in the Budget as the Chairman of Government's Economic Council. And may I go on record at the very start of this presentation and say that if the matter had been appropriately pursued, I would have put my country first and I would have accepted to serve as Chairman of an Economic Council in the Government of Barbados. I would have, Sir.

So this evening I am left to speak as the Member of Parliament for St Peter and in doing so to address these Estimates, which constitute the Budget of the Government of Barbados -- not as a flurry of numbers which I think has to date, sadly been the tone and temper of this debate in large measure, but by asking and answering a lot of questions. And I suspect that these questions are the

questions that are being asked and for which answers are being sought out in our heartland.

What do these Estimates really state about the current state of the Barbadian economy. Is our economy becoming more stable? Is it being put on a sound and sustainable growth path? Can we say from these Estimates that an internal balance is being brought back to Barbados; namely that the Government is now having its finances on a sound footing -- efficiently and effectively financed -- and that the crisis in the Government's finances can be brought under control? Is the Barbados economy on a strong growth path and likely to grow? Is there internal balance? Are the Government finances sound and likely to remain sound? And are we in a position to fend off some of the major threats that can destabilise some of the efforts that are being made to stabilise? These are the issues I think I want to address Mr. Speaker and I start with the question of growth.

Is this country being put on a strong growth path? Is it there and is it likely to remain there? I can't over-emphasise how important that is because it is the material growth, growth in the GDP in real terms that allow us to bring down unemployment, fight poverty, pay our bills, and to widen the opportunity for those in Barbados who are coming from the bottom. And let me bring a perspective to these Estimates, because they need perspective.

I had the opportunity to lead this country for 14 years and it was my judgement that Barbados had to realise an annual average rate of growth in real terms of about three per cent because with a population growing at just under one per cent, it is that two per cent difference that will allow us to bring down poverty, to create jobs and to be able to maintain sound public finances.

And I tried over 14 years to make sure that the country was kept with a sound, sustainable, stable growth path. Sir, if I was advising the Minister of Finance, that he has to be sure of making the best decisions on the basis of the best information. Ministers in the Cabinet are not necessarily specialists, but they must always make the best decisions based on the best information. I want to discuss the growth of the Barbados economy in the context of the information that has been put out by the Central Bank.

The growth has to be broad-based...Sir, but over the course of the last five years, rather than growth at about three per cent a year, Barbados has been growing -- and these are the numbers - 2008 - 0.4 per cent; 2009 declined by four per cent; 2010 - 0.3 per cent; 2011 - 0.8 per cent; 2012 - 0.3 per cent; 2013 it fell by - 0.1 per cent; then 2014 - 0.2 per cent ; and 2015 - 0.5.

Mr. Speaker Sir, I say to the House that this measurement of growth will not allow Barbados to be able

to do the essential things to carry the country forward. Because in many instances, this rate of growth is telling us that rather than progressing, if the economy is growing at 0.1 per cent and the population is growing by 0.5 per cent, the standard of living is falling.

Now let us contextualise this in the context of the policy that the Minister elaborated for growth for the Government does have a growth policy. The Minister, last year, and this was the subject of my debate in the House, said he was going to increase taxes by 200 million dollars and he was going try to increase capital inflows and I have just recently given a speech and said that in a sense that is correct. Barbados' growth path used to be trade preference dependent, we then became debt propelled, and to get to a growth path we have to get investment to move to export propelled and if that can be realised Mr. Speaker it would be in fact a valid growth path. The truth is Mr. Speaker, is the growth path being realised?

The Minister has imposed his taxes, but if you would recall, I said in that Budget debate that if you impose 200 million dollars in taxes to get zero growth you would have to have capital inflows of at least 500 million dollars. What does the Central Bank statistics tell us as to whether the growth path is being attained or not, because the numbers are here. What happened Sir: Net capital inflows, it said, in 2015 rather than increasing by 500 million dollars were lower than in 2014 and that on the private sector side, financial inflows for tourism related projects were lower by 85 million dollars. I have already told the Minister, because even if he does not make me his chairman, I will advise him, I speak to him, that in order for him to get his growth to work...he has to make sure that the capital inflows coincide with the plans for growth. Sir, this growth situation is distressing because it also helps to explain why the revenue of Government is in problems.

I tell the Government now and I would have told the Minister if I was advising him, that he must always make the best decisions on the basis of the best information. Yesterday, reference was drawn to the fact that the International Monetary Fund report on Barbados for 2015 was not published. However I am not going to cast aspersions on the motivation as to why it was not published, but I can tell you that I can tell you that at Page 36 in that report that was not published, the International Monetary Fund has things to say. Now members of the House know the difference between real GDP growth and nominal growth. If you produce four pounds of yams in one year and sell them at four dollars per pound, that is 16 dollars. If you produce the same four pounds the next year and sell them at five dollars per pound, you make \$20. Nominal GDP would be 20 dollars but you have produced the same amount of yams so there would be no growth.

Now, the IMF has told the Government, and I not saying this to embarrass anybody, but this is a fact, that in order for us to accept the information published by the Central Bank of Barbados in respect of growth that prices in Barbados would have had to fall by two per cent each year for the last five years and then it goes on to say that far from falling by two per cent each year for each of the last five years, prices in one year alone increased by ten per cent. Then it goes on to make the damning statement that what the Central Bank, every year and quarter, is putting out, are not statistics. These are just projections, just hunches and the IMF urged the Government to take the information published not by the Central Bank, but by the department of statistics which is showing that nominal GDP has in fact been falling.

Mr. Speaker, I am telling the Government that I heard the Leader of the Opposition say yesterday speaking to the fact that the revenue target is not being met. If you are over-estimating the growth of the GDP, then you are also going to over-estimate the revenue; and the sooner the Government gets to the business of basing its projections on correct information, rather than making decisions based on what the IMF has said are not statistics, but hunches; until as such time as that happens Sir, we are going to continue to have this muddle over our economic affairs.

Now Mr Speaker, Government finances have been the subject of discussion. I have had the honour to be a Minister of Finance in this country. In 2007, in my last presentation to this House as Minister of Finance, I told the country that we set a fiscal target to be met -- 2.5 per cent of GDP -- which would have kept us in line with the best practices in the world. And I had said further - that for 14 years except on one occasion we kept the deficit within that 2.5 per cent of GDP, but I said further Mr. Speaker that in order for us not to put ourselves in a debt situation, that although we have realised deficits of less than two per cent of GDP, that I was going to reset our fiscal policy and that if I was leading Barbados, the country would have to realise a deficit of one per cent of GDP per year to avoid getting ourselves in a debt trap. Now Mr Speaker Sir, that was my judgement in 2007 represented in my last statement in this House as Minister of Finance. I am therefore not in a position, with that record, and that projection of what should have been done, to congratulate a Minister of Finance for bringing down a deficit from 11 per cent to four because it should not have been 11 per cent in the first instance. But I am asking the Minister and if I was advising him, I would ask him to judge himself on the basis of what he set as his own targets to be met, not mine, because I said it should have been no more than one per cent.

Sir, in terms of Government's medium term fiscal strategy, in its best case scenario, and I am not going to get into whether it is six per cent this year or four per cent, that

is arithmetic. The Government's medium term fiscal strategy says that the Government's best case scenario should have had a deficit of one per cent this year -- best case, it sounds familiar? That was the target that I set for the country. The worst case scenario, at its very worst, the deficit of the Government should have been this year 3.5 per cent. And we in the House are being asked to accept whether it is a great success whether it be four per cent or six per cent, when at its very worst it should have been no more than three and a half per cent. And I give the house the assurance that when I spoke in 2007, I said that Barbados could not afford to run deficits of more than one per cent per year.

Now Mr Speaker Sir, I have to speak on this matter because the reserves Sir are bothering me, not because they are not still healthy, but they are going in the wrong direction. Barbados' reserves, Mr. Speaker, and again I am using the Central Bank statistics, the reserves held by the Central Bank of Barbados were 1.4 billion dollars in 2008. They have fallen in each year now and Barbados' reserves today are half a billion dollars less than they were in 2009. They are going in the wrong direction, they are falling every year and there has to be a cause for concern that the direction is wrong -- even if they are still above the level that is required for safety. Perhaps if I was advising the Minister of Finance, I would tell him that I have to agree with the Governor of the Central Bank that the policies that should have been pursued this year in the Estimates, would be policies to carry out a fundamental restructuring in certain aspects of the governance while addressing issues about debt. Our debt now, and don't mind the numbers received by the Central Bank Governor, when you add them together, are approaching a 160 per cent of GDP. Debt service now is accounting for 60 cents in every dollar in revenue and explains why Government is having difficulties meeting supplies at essential places. But Sir, I would love every member of this House to read a report that was prepared and published by the Caribbean Development Bank. It is called: Public Sector Debt in the Caribbean - An Agenda For Reduction and Sustainability. And it bears a relevance to all Caribbean countries, but it bears a special relevance for Barbados. It is telling us that the problem with debt in the Caribbean is not so much a problem of growth of Central Government expenditures, but all Caribbean countries to a lesser or greater extent, have their debt being built up by what is happening in their public expenditures and off-budget events and activities.

Jamaica for example once borrowed two billion dollars to fix its financial system, that is why it's debt is so high; St Kitts is because the Government of St Kitts, having assumed the debt of its sugar industry; in our own instance, half a billion dollars of the debt owed by the Government of Barbados is the sugar industry debt, some of it is the debt that was borrowed from the CDB and the Caribbean Development Bank is making the very important

point that just dealing with the primary surpluses and deficits from Central Government are not the key. What must be done in the Caribbean is to address the issue in respect, to the ways to which transfers to state enterprises and the assumption by Government of the losses by state enterprises, are what is driving the public debt.

I recently spoke about this in St Lucia and I must speak it in this House for consistency. The Government spends about 1.2 billion dollars each year in transfers to state enterprises and to give subsidies. Stability can only be brought back to the debt and to the public finances if that amount is reduced to by as much as \$200 million dollars as soon as is practicable. And the CDB tells the Caribbean that it is no point just fixing the Central Government situation and ignoring the statutory boards. It has to be dealt with. And let me say to Barbados and to this House. The biggest thing that Barbadians and parliamentarians can do is to revisit some of the things that were done by some of our national heroes that have left us obligations that we can no longer carry and that in this 50th year of Independence, we must revisit some of the things that Grantley Adams did and that Errol Barrow did in their time because they made sense then or because they did not cost much. Revisit them and change our system of governance. We have to do it. I wished I would have been in a position to tell the Minister and to tell the Government that you have to do it, not because you are seeking popularity but you have to do it because there comes a time when good politics must be good policies. You have to do it. And Sir, I have made the point, I might have lost the Labour Party an election for it, but I would not have come to office misleading the public -- that there is no way we are going to get out of this unless there is privatisation; there is no way of getting out of this without rationalising the relationships of state enterprises; some may have to be amalgamated, some may have to be abolished, but it must be addressed. And all I am asking the government to do is that if you are dealing with it, let there be some balm in Gilead. There must be some balm in Gilead. So you can't just privatise and send home people. There is a lot that can be done to carry out that programme while converting a negative into a positive. What I am saying Sir is that if the Government has to address the issue of state enterprises, I feel that the first thing you should do is to make a database of the people that are going home along with their skills. And some should be afforded access to resources for retraining. The Government should use that database to arrange for those people that have to go home, because the Government has to do the right thing, to have access to Fund Access and the Enterprise Growth Fund to start their own businesses. I feel that the Government should also determine that it will also have affirmative procurement policies such that if people are sent home because you have to rationalise public expenditures, they would have first access to small contracts to sell things to the Government. By these processes Sir, you do what is right, but you bring

some balm. What is happening now quite frankly, is that I think the Government is afraid of addressing this matter, but it must be addressed. And Dr Worrell is at least right on this point - that you cannot deal with the debt alone unless you deal with the reform of public enterprises because it is the public enterprises and their debt and the amount by which you are guaranteeing them that is causing the build-up in debt in countries like Barbados.

That said, Mr. Speaker, I would also have to advise the Minister, if I was advising him, that to the extent that assuming debt by public-owned enterprises, be careful how you are now going to encourage additional public enterprises to make investments that may have to be investments to be assumed as direct debt by the Government. Sir, I would like to believe that Government's plans to build a sugar factory for 500 million dollars has been the subject of a careful feasibility study and can be supported by a business plan. Because otherwise, that 500 million dollars would add to the problems we have right now. I would like to believe Mr. Speaker that the waste to energy project, and I am not concerned about all the issues...but if you are going to build a waste to energy project for 800 million dollars or whatever else, that it would have the subject of a detailed feasibility study in respect to its viability so that we are not going to be adding that to the public debt. When the matter of Sam Lord's came to this House, my intervention in the House was to tell the Parliament that it cannot be financed only by debt, because if you finance a commercial enterprise by debt alone, you reduce its viability and that there had to be some element of equity finance. And if the Chinese want to invest in Sam Lord's don't only let them just lend us money, let them put up some of their money too. Mr. Speaker Sir, I would urge caution in how the country goes about the business of building a dedicated cruise pier because that could add another public enterprise debt in an already debt burdened situation and I would urge that the marina in Bridgetown ... that its viability would have to be established before we agree to deal with it.

I have also said that a sound economy is one in which the Government's financial position is not only manageable, but properly financed. And I must again, Sir, sound a warning, based not on my numbers, but by the Central Bank's numbers Mr. Speaker. The Central Bank is in a position where it must know that the printing of Barbados dollars on a large scale is the fastest way in which you can lead to a devaluation of the dollar. Right now, two dollars is worth one US. But if you keep printing Barbados dollars and your foreign exchange remains the same or falls, effectively you are devaluing each of those new Barbados dollars that you have printed, and every country where you had these issues of the printing of dollars in order to finance a Government's deficit is the way by which the dollar is eventually devalued. I say to this House and I am not seeking to cause any panic, but our

foreign exchange reserves have fallen by over 500 million dollars in the course of the last few years. This is not the time for the Central Bank of Barbados to be printing money to finance a Government deficit. It can't be. Therefore it is a distress to me to hear and read the Central Bank report that during the first three quarters of the financial year, the Central Bank recycled 238 million dollars of commercial bank deposits...what the Central Bank did was to take in deposits from the commercial banks who were not in a position to lend the Government...so it recycled commercial bank deposits. In addition to doing that, the bank contributed a 166 million dollars of its own resources to the funding of the Government. Well Sir, the Central Bank is making a loss and this 166 million dollars could not have come from the profits of the Central Bank. And it might be that we may now have to find money to re-capitalise our Central Bank. The Central Bank must be told by this Parliament that with our reserves falling by half a billion dollars over the course of the last few years that the printing of money by the Central Bank of Barbados would put the stability of this country in peril and that the word must go forward from those of us who are the guardians of this country's future, that this behaviour is unacceptable and that it must not continue. And we must all say that whatever else must be done to stabilise the Government's finances so that it does not have to depend on the printing of money let us agree to do it -- restructure the state enterprises - and don't let us put our stability in peril. The Central Bank is telling us Sir that our stability is being put in peril and this House cannot stand silent and mute, while that vandalism, and I call it vandalism...it is wrong. Sir I was a director of the Central Bank before I became a politician and I know that the Central Bank Act puts all the onus on the Central Bank to maintain stability, and this is wrong and it must stop. And the word must go out from this Parliament that we cannot agree that it can continue. And that is why I am saying that the alternatives that the Government may have to resort to might be difficult and unpopular, but trust me, they are better for the future of Barbados than enabling a Government to have access to printed money to finance its operations. Reform its operation, I agree with him on that point but I can't agree with him that he continues to accommodate the Government by way of printing money.

Sir, I would just like to also state that we have to be very conscious in this House about fending off threats to our future because that is part of what good governance is about. And issues in respect of the challenges to be faced by Barbados by correspondent banking have been raised in this debate, and rightly so. The House may be aware that I recently gave a presentation in Jamaica on this matter and entities in Jamaica have asked to come in over the next few months intermittently to help them as an advocate to the international community to address this issue. It is a very, very serious matter. Simply put, banks are governed by the Basel Accords - an institution in Basel that is responsible

for supervision and regulation of financial institutions. Historically, Basel 1 and Basel 2 address issues in respect of making sure that banks had adequate capital and were properly leveraged in order to make sure that they were sound. Increasingly as well, the rules have been written in respect of what has to be done by banks to mitigate risks to ensure that banks are not made the unwitting conduits through which money laundering and the financing of terrorism become the key. But the Basel 3 has addressed a new issue that can become the biggest problem for the Caribbean. You may recall that in 2008, the world went into recession because of a lack of liquidity in the banking system. The banks had invested in all kinds of things and were not in a position to meet deposits and so on and the banking system started to collapse and as a result the world's economy went into a tailspin so in addition to dealing with capital adequacy and leverage, Basel 3 has required now that the international banking community must adopt new rules for what is called liquidity coverage ratios and it is not difficult for people to understand that if you put a deposit, other people are withdrawing deposits and so there are run-offs and the international community is requiring that banks maintain sufficient liquidity to be able to withstand a 30-day shock of people coming back in for their money. What they have said is that ordinary operational accounts held in deposits in a bank would have a run-off of 25 per cent. That you would perhaps come back for 25 per cent of what you put down, but that the deposits put down for corresponding banks have a 100 per cent chance of people coming back for all of them. And banks therefore are not in a position to make money from those kinds of ratios and banks are now refusing to offer services, not just because of money laundering fears or terrorism financing, but because of profitability, because of the way in which Basel 3 has specified liquidity coverage ratios that make it almost financially impossible for banks to make profits from a money service provider or a Cambio putting money in through a corresponding bank. And that is part of the reason why the listing of risking has taken place and will gather steam. Sir I have started to do some work with the Jamaicans and I have sent them a briefing note and I think the Caribbean has done a sensible thing in sending a prime minister, establishing a prime minister who has to deal with this because as I said earlier, our growth path taken by the Minister of Finance, we would have to move from trade dependent economies which we once were, and were recently debt propelled economies, and we must now become investment driven economies and export driven economies. Anything that would stop the Caribbean from becoming a capital inflow driven economy and an export driven economy, would mean that we would have no future, and this correspondent banking issue therefore strikes at the very development strategy without which we are not going to make it. And so it is good that the leaders of CARICOM have appointed a prime minister to address this by advocacy abroad, but I have also told the people I am working with in Jamaica that I sense the

Caribbean faces what I call a compliance deficit. The Caribbean countries are not members of the FTAF - the Financial Action Task Force - they are not members of the OECD, and in many instances, when the rules governing anti-money laundering and the financing of terrorism are being written, we are not there and often these rules are being refined and redefined. Banks are supposed to follow something called a risk-based analysis to determine if they can accept deposits or not, but these things are constantly being changed. New accounting measures are being introduced and the truth is that the Caribbean countries are not always compliant with all the protocols and provisions in respect of what has to be done to counter money laundering and counter the financing of terrorism in our countries and I just want to use this opportunity to say that it is a good thing that a prime minister has been designated to lead the advocacy abroad, but I believe that it is also necessary that the Council of Ministers of Finance in the Caribbean, the Council of Central Bank Governors and all other people who are in a position to write the rules and regulations in respect of the supervision of the financial sector, must do everything that is necessary, no matter how expensive it is, to make sure that the Caribbean can comply and exhibit zero tolerance to anything that represents money laundering and anything that can be cited as softness in respect to the financing of terrorism.

Sir, the countries in the Caribbean like Belize, where Banks have lost access to correspondent banks abroad...they had been warned that their systems and procedures in respect of money laundering were not appropriate. In the Caribbean there are mutual evaluations...I must say Sir and I am not going to point fingers at anybody, but the Caribbean will not escape if there is the image that the Caribbean is soft on financial crime. We have some interesting and well-written legislation in respect of combatting money laundering and combatting financial crime...but the truth is Sir that the Caribbean does not have a wonderful record in dealing with issues in relation to bringing people swiftly to justice for financial fraud and crimes that might equate to money laundering. In Belize, in Guyana, even in our jurisdiction, the mutual evaluation exercises have pointed to concerns in our protocols in respect of what needs to be done to make our jurisdictions squeaky clean. So I am also saying that part of our problem is that these obligations can be overwhelming in their scope and require from us some institutional responses that we do not have. All I am urging Sir is that in the same way that Caribbean Prime Ministers have put in place a team to deal with the matter abroad, I am also saying that it is necessary for them to make sure that there is no compliance deficit in our supervisory and regulatory arrangements in respect of dealing with matters relating to financial crimes.

Mr. Speaker Sir, I wish the Government well as it seeks to manage our financial affairs in difficult times.

Every speech that I have given recently would have pointed to the fact that the region faces a wider range of threats at this juncture than it has ever faced in the past. I must also stress Sir that some of the things that have to be done by the Government of Barbados and by many of the Governments in the Caribbean, Sir are things that may not necessarily lead to immediate popularity, but are things that must be done because they are in the best interest of the country. And my major disappointment, and I have told the Minister this so I may as well tell the House, is that the minister has to help to supervise over 200 million dollars in adjustments in the money we provide for public enterprises. It has to start. Cutting the BDC by five members of staff is not the solution. The Government will obviously get criticism, but I can assure the Government that if it brought a programme to this Parliament addressing this matter but also seeking to temper the effects at a personal level, I am not going to withhold my support for it because it is exactly what needs to be done at this time.

So Mr. Speaker Sir, may I say to the Minister that Barbados is still in an extremely delicate position. In respect of growth, the patient is still really in intensive care. Growth at 0.3 per cent when it should be really at three per cent, deficits at either four or six per cent when the deficits should be at one per cent; the reserves falling, a 200 million dollar problem in respect of your public enterprises, needs to be addressed. Failure, Minister is not an option. If we fail to address these issues, the only thing that can be predicted with certainty is that we will put Barbados on an unsustainable course. And I close by saying to him, Sir, that the patient is still in intensive care, the patient cannot be cured by asking it to go on a frolic around the Garrison as some of the wish-list expenditures being thought about would suggest that is the answer at this time. Let us make sure that the patient is brought back fully to health. Failure is not an option. I am obliged to you Sir for the opportunity to make this presentation.

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

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member St. Michael South East.

Miss S. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise to lend my voice to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2016/2017. I do so, Madam, against the background that has become customary in this Chamber for the Minister of Finance to lay the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure before the end of each financial year. Madam Deputy Speaker, the sums that we vote here, will represent both the revenue and the expenditure which this Government both to receive and also to expend. Madam, to the average household this is basically a budget. Most people understand it in the context that what we do here today is no different from what they will do in their

ordinary day to day lives whereby they take a look at what they are likely to generate in terms of their revenue in the coming year, look at what they are likely to expend and make a determination in terms of how their particular household or even their business will function.

Madam President, it is therefore critical that the programmes and the policies which this Government has enunciated over the past couple of years and in particular in the course of this debate that we are able to gleam from these financial statements that the expenditure is both reasonable and justified but also that the Government is able to collect the revenue that it has projected.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what is of concern to me is that in other jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth Caribbean there is a trend that exercise entails not only the Ministers of Government being placed under scrutiny but also several of their Permanent Secretaries in the various Ministries to be able to defend the expenditure that each of the Ministries have been allocated.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what we have seen thus far in the course of both today and yesterday is Minister after Minister not even colliding with their respective departments and certainly their respective Ministries. Madam, to the listing public it would almost seem as though despite us being here for the next couple of days that in truth and in fact this is just an ordinary debate. Madam Deputy Speaker, I therefore, say that it is unforgivable that the level of debate in this Chamber in these Estimates have reached the point where those who are listening cannot gleam the importance of what is being debated here. Madam, when I speak of the Commonwealth, I do so against the background and I do feel that in looking at these Estimates it is important that we look at whether or not this administration and certainly going forward that we are in a position to reform the way in which we present these Estimates. Madam, other speakers have indicated that essentially this is pretty much a type of budget. I heard much said both in this debate and in other places that as we approach our 50th anniversary that perhaps, we should reflect and do things differently as if in our 50th year we should not have been doing things differently in our 49th, 48th and 47th year of Independence and certainly going forward into our 51st and our 52nd year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I say so because I take the view that reform does not change or reform should not be based on a Jubilee celebration but it should be based on the fact that we all recognize that this Parliament is run by people who look like each and every one of us and therefore, we have a responsibility to be able to shape the destiny of future generations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate that each year that we have come here to debate the Estimates of

Revenue and Expenditure that I would hear in the presentation yesterday by the Minister of Finance that the Barbados Labour Party seems to not want to get to the Heads, that we seem to want to all do Second Reading speeches. Madam, when we speak of reforming these kinds of Estimates, I think it is important that the listening public should not be led to believe that the Barbados Labour Party does not see the importance of going to the Heads. Indeed, we have taken a position certainly in the last elections that we recognise that we needed to get to the Heads faster but one of the difficulties is that we would only have received notice of what the Heads were I believe 24 hours before the Estimates started. We would also have only received the Estimates having been laid a week prior to the start of this debate yesterday and, as I would have said earlier, the provision in the Standing Orders provide for the Estimates to be laid before the end of the financial year which is March 31st.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I say all of that to say that if this administration was serious about reforming the way in which these Estimates are laid, I would humbly suggest that instead of waiting until the 11th hour to engage the Opposition in a discourse on how to approach the Estimates, perhaps, it is something that we should do far sooner because to convey the impression that we are coming here to waste time yet again is certainly, Madam, yet again another misrepresentation of the way in which the Barbados Labour Party views parliamentary procedure and parliamentary reform. This administration has demonstrated by its actions over the past few years that it is not really concerned about reform. Madam, the fact is that most people do not even appreciate that often times we only find out what we are doing in terms of legislation and debating our Resolutions and Bills, the Monday before we sit for Parliament. While some will say on the one hand that better cannot be done in certain circumstances I do believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, that better can indeed be done because if it is that we look at the systems for which we have certainly been following in the Commonwealth, they have all found ways in which to develop their parliamentary systems in a way that enables both sides to have adequate time to prepare to be able to debate legislation, Resolutions and Bills but also to be able to look in depth at the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure,

Madam President, I note that the Standing Orders of this House provides for select Committees to be held by Honourable Members of Both Sides. I noted that this has now become the exception as opposed to the rule. I say that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because a lot of work could be done on a number of the areas which appear in these Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, perhaps beforetime where questions are asked by Honourable Members of Both Sides regarding the Expenditure under the various Heads. It would also allow a system whereby people in the public, average Barbadians would be able to participate in

our democracy because right now as one of the Honourable Member on This Side, the Honourable Member for St. George North made the point yesterday, oftentimes you do not know what Parliament is debating. Oftentimes nothing is broken down for the average person to appreciate what is in the context of this particular document so, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would certainly want to urge this Honourable Chamber to be able to move expeditiously towards the level of reform that is needed, whether in our 50th year or in our 51st year, but to move towards it with a level of seriousness that not only reflects what we do here today, but certainly would reflect what we do on a daily and an annual basis.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with respect to these Estimates, I would have found it useful if we had the benefit too of an Auditor General's Report. I know that the last Auditor General's Report was laid in this Parliament in 2014. I noted also that we would have benefited from the context of that Auditor General's Report because obviously the Auditor General examines the various ministries, statutory boards and places us, both Member of Parliaments (Mps) and also the general public, in a position to know what is happening in various Government departments and statutory entities.

I noted also, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Auditor General in his last report indicated that he needed about \$4.3 million in order to properly function because a lot of work has now been thrown on the Department given that you have a situation where a number private entities are now being audited by the office however, again to show that this Administration is not serious about examining the internal operations of its own Government it would be clear to me that they have only received \$3.5 million, not \$4.3 as requested, but that in 2016/2017 Estimates that we are debating today, the sum of \$3.7 million has, in fact, been budgeted. The fact remains is that it is still not enough. I say that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I really do believe that if we are serious about governance and if we are serious about really examining the figures that are presented in these Estimates then a greater step has to be taken by this Administration to ensure that the Auditor General Office is given the necessary resources to be able to carry out its job. In fact, the Auditor General has noted that despite highlighting for many years the lack of compliance with statutory requires by state agencies in the annual reports and through correspondence, little has been done. I also reflects, Madam Deputy Speaker, on the standards of good governance which we would expect in the public service.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Administration would want us to believe that revenue in February and March of this year will exceed the projections of previous years and will result in a greater intake than initially projected for 2015/2016. There would also want us to believe that from

April 2015 to January 2016 that they collected \$1.8 billion in revenue which, Madam Deputy Speaker, actually represents a two and a half decline for the same period last year. This Administration would want us to believe by these Estimates that in February and March they will take in \$802 million and that these figures would exceed their own revenue projections. These figures which are \$250 million more than they would have collected in February and March of last year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the other thing that has struck me that this Administration would want us to believe is that they will bring down the deficit to 4.2 per cent of GDP, never mind that the Estimates book states that the deficit will be brought down to 6.3 per cent. I noted that the Governor of the Central Bank of Barbados in the December 2015 report indicated that a deficit of 4 per cent was only attainable by this Administration if it completed the planned divestment of the Barbados National Terminal Oil Company Limited (BNTOCL). Thus far, I have heard nothing from this Administration as it relates to the divestment of that entity and therefore I can only conclude as I am sure other colleagues have done that we would attain a 4 per cent or anywhere close to that in terms of a deficit this year. The proof, Madam Deputy Speaker, is going to be in the figures and certainly, like most Barbadians, I too wait to see what would be the outcome of the deficit.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I turn my attention to the various sectors which I certainly shadow because tourism and international business, as you well know, have been significant drivers of this economy for several years. There has been much said about diversifying this economy and in so doing, it is important that those particular sectors are certainly the ones that generate income to be able to allow us to pay for our social services and to diversify the economy. I agree that the Minister of Tourism has much to boast about because he has presided over tourism figures in decline for the past seven years and we, on This Side, well know that to finally have the figures up by 13.7 per cent is indeed a significant achievement for this island, but arrivals on their, Ma'am, this Barbados Labour Party (BLP) has indicated time and time again is sufficient to be able to beat yourself on the chest. It also requires that we look at the average visitor spend in order to make a proper estimate as to whether the people who are coming to this country are actually spending the money on these shores to redound to the benefit of all Barbadians. In 2007, the average spend was \$2.3 million. In 2015, this has reduced dramatically to \$1.9 million. On the issue of tourism, there has been many disappointments and there has been many pronouncements by this Administration. The Minister of Tourism spoke yesterday and said nothing about the tourism master plan that was touted as being the greatest thing to happen within tourism. He did not only not speak about the tourism master plan, Ma'am, but he did not talk about the 10-point plan that he came to the country almost two years ago and

heralded as again another revitaliser of the tourism industry.

While this Administration would like to laud the fact that they have been able to secure our break ground on the Sam Lord's Castle project, I do not believe that a number of the Barbadians who have lost work and a number of the small contractors who have not been able to secure employment under this Administration over the past few years, will be pleased by the fact that over 60 per cent of the workforce will be going to the Chinese because I do feel that while we have had a relationship with the People's Republic of China over previous years, I do believe that the current climate is such that several of our labourers, in particular, are feeling very harsh economic conditions as a result of the current climate and I do feel that many of them feel a slap in the face, particularly our contractors, by being told by this Administration that one of the reasons why the arrangement was entered into was because Barbadians contractors were not able to complete the job on time. I feel, Ma'am, that again it is another admission by this Administration that they are unable to put the necessary mechanisms in place to ensure that work is completed to time.

I have heard nothing about the Silver Sands Hotel project. Obviously we have seen the subvention to the small hotels remain at the same while several hoteliers remain totally crippled over the last upper years because they have not had any of incentives that large hotels like Sandals have been able to obtain under this Administration and while the Honourable Minister of Tourism would have spoken about everything apart from his Ministry, I would want that maybe in the wrap up that the Minister of Finance would tell us what is happening with Brazil because to the best of my recollection the flights from Brazil still continue not to be able to merit the amount of money this Administration continues to spend in that territory. Right now we are at some \$1.3 million being spent alone on the overseas Brazil Mission. While Ma'am, I do believe that we have to take efforts to spread our wings certainly into the Spanish speaking territories at the same time our efforts cannot be overshadowed by the fact that this Administration is not putting the necessary marketing into ensuring that market is profitable.

Ma'am, I note from these Estimates that revenue from international business is down, another sector upon which we rely to build out all of the other sectors in this economy. The 2014-2015 Estimates showed that \$5 million was received. The projections for 2015-2016 puts us at \$2.7 million, almost half of the revenue that would normally be collected.

There were a number of legislative reforms that this Administration had promised in the 2015 Budget that they indicated were important to economic growth, but when

you look at the list, Ma'am, that was enunciated several of the things have actually not been brought to this Chamber for the passage of legislation.

I note, Ma'am, that from the list that was indicated only, the Corporate and Trust Service Providers Act was passed and one other amendment came to the Companies Bill which dealt with the incorporation of cells companies. Amongst the pieces of legislation which this Administration claimed that it would pass in order to ensure that international business was maintained in this country to a satisfactory level was the Procurement Bill which was promised by this Administration since 2008. You also had the Prevention of Corruption Bill, which it would be great if this Administration could tell us after passing both Houses of Parliament why the Prevention of Corruption Act has not been proclaimed to date. Is it that this Administration has something to hide because the fact remains that unless we are able to put ourselves in a position where the rest of the world believes that we have stamped out corruption at the level of our public officials, several people do not want to invest in this country, and that is the reality, Madam Deputy Speaker.

When this Administration speaks of losses they like to talk a lot about what the Barbados Labour Party spent as though they has not been the Administration for the last seven years. I want to remind them, Ma'am, that when the Auditor General Report was presented in 2012 that invest Barbados was examined and one of the comments that was made by the Invest Barbados at the time indicated that concerns were expressed to the Right Honourable Prime Minister of this country in late 2010 that in the past three years prior they had estimated that close to US\$300 million in potential investment was lost as a result of bureaucratic delays or decisions that chased away investors.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they also noted that more projects on which they had work were still in jeopardy and that about US\$200 million in potential business identified for marketing trips could have already been enjoyed if legislative changes required had been made three year ago on a timely basis. Madam Deputy Speaker, that represents some US\$500 million which I believe did not start under a Barbados Labour Party Administration but in fact was presided over by a Democratic Labour Party Administration, so when we come here to look at these Estimates and I hear Honourable Members on the other side talking about Greenland at a cost of \$100 million which they have gone from \$30 in one debate to now a \$100 million I say to the Honourable Members on the other side that perhaps they should pause for a moment and examine the fact that it is they and not the Barbados Labour Party that would have squandered the opportunities of US\$500 million in revenue to this country that certainly could have helped to pay for a number of the social

services that Barbadians once enjoyed. It is not the Barbados Labour Party, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when you look at the fact of doing business in this country, we are now in jeopardy of competition from our neighbours who are outperforming us in doing business in this country. Honourable Members on the other side can scoff at the various reports that have been presented by the World Bank and they can scoff as much as they want but the reality is each and every one of us know how difficult it is to do business in Barbados nowadays.

For heaven sake, Ma'am, we noted that the Honourable Members on the other side would have appointed none other than the Right Honourable Prime Minister to head the Competitiveness Commission so it is no wonder that nothing has happened as far as that is concerned because we know that the Right Honourable Prime Minister is not a man of many words and we know the Right Honourable Prime Minister is not one to take action readily, so it is therefore not surprising that one of the leading things that this country must rely on which is competitiveness in the global market is failing miserably because we have put it into the hands of the very leader of this country who by his actions has not shown to date that he takes action on anything. It is for that reason, Ma'am, that you would see that a lot of the other policies that this Administration has tried to put in place in relation to both international business and small business have not been working. It is not by chance that the statistics are showing that other territories that are smaller than us are outperforming us in relation to doing business and the ease of doing business.

It is no by chance, Ma'am, that we have received those ratings because the one-stop shop that the learned Ministry of Tourism and International Transport and small business would have spoken about is clearly not working, and even though perhaps best efforts are trying to be being made by Honourable Members of the ministry the fact remains that better can still be done by his ministry.

I note that the Small Business Association continues to still receive a paltry sum. The subsidy remains the same. I do not know how we are supposed to be serious about doing business in this country when the very Association that is vested with the responsibility for so many small business continues to receive a minor subsidy from the Barbados Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that brings me to one other point which has affected business in this country, and I believe it would be the imposition of the 22 per cent VAT on cell phones. Madam Deputy Speaker, this Administration came back at the end of last year in the Budget and announced to this country that it was

introducing an excise tax on cell phones. It couched it in language that gave the impression that once we paid this tax or this tax was deducted by the telecommunications providers that some part of that sum would actually be fuelled towards the education sector towards education grants. Nothing further has been heard on that particular policy. Nothing further was advanced in relation to how much money has now or will be applied in the future towards any type of education grant for the persons who this Administration has so unceremoniously taken from persons who wanted to continue their tuition at the University of the West Indies.

Now, I note that changing it from an excise tax to 22 per cent VAT has meant a reduction of almost half of the revenue that the Government would have projected initially. Initial projections were over \$30 million and now I believe that the Minister of Finance has indicated that his current projections are only around \$14 million.

I also note that when the policy was announced back in the Budget that it did not take effect then until the first of this year, so again I am not sure where the projections are that we are supposed to bring in \$802 million in revenue in February/March are coming from because already on the Government's own Administration admission they have been delinquent in getting the revenue that it set out to collect from back in the Budget in 2015.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I move quickly on to another Head which pertains to the issue of culture because it is clear that if the other sectors are not functioning, tourism and international business are not generating the revenue that we require, that sectors like the cultural industries and the sports sector will also themselves be falling by the wayside in terms of trying to access Government revenue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I note that the Minister of Culture in his presentation yesterday indicated that \$3.1 million in projects had been submitted in relation to the Cultural Industries Development Act. I note that from these Estimates there has been an allocation of \$800 000 towards the Cultural Industries Development Authority.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what surprised me in the presentation yesterday was that the Honourable Minister indicated that up to this point, between himself and the Honourable Minister of Finance, have not been able to figure out how to capitalise the Cultural Industries Fund. This a Fund that much was talked about, much was debated about that this Administration, having spent almost six years before they actually brought the Cultural Industries Development legislation which was left by a Barbados Labour Party Administration in draft, could now then come to this Chamber to say they do not know how to capitalise this Fund, so Ma'am, after going into an election in 2013,

making people believe that they had a facility that would have been put in place for the borrowing of \$50 million in amounts of \$10 million per year for the next five years, starting in 2012, they come to this Honourable Chamber and still have not figured out how to capitalise this.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is nothing in these Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure that speaks to how the Cultural Industries Development Fund is going to be capitalised. While the Arts and Sports Promotion Fund by which by the legislation Government is free to be able to draw money that Fund currently only has \$1.7 million because this Administration over the last few years has depleted the Fund by over \$1 million.

Madam Deputy Speaker, even if you were to go to the Arts and Sports Promotion Fund, there is still not enough money in there to meet the request that the Honourable Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth and it therefore begs the question going down a trajectory where this Administration continues to promise a particular sector that they were going to develop it as a new economic step but have not properly thought out the methodology through which they are going to assist the creative sector.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it does not surprise me because this is also an Administration that while the Honourable Member would speak about how impressed he was about persons in this country who are interested in animation, as if this was some recent discovery, that at the end of the day when the Throne Speech was done back in 2013, the Honourable Member was also one who would have spoken about the film and media commission being introduced by this Administration. Madam Deputy Speaker, no such commission currently exists. The only commissioner I know who was appointed was one related, I believe, to the Honourable Minister who was the Film Commissioner for which there is no post by law to appoint such a film commissioner. But that Ma'am, we have dealt with in previous debates but I make the point that this Administration continues to promise the creative industry sector that it will do things that it does not quite understand how it is going to achieve.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Administration has promised that there would have been the acquisition of the Globe Cinema, that has not happened either. They came in I believe it was one of the budgets and they said that they were going to have various cultural and sporting activities that were supposed to generate income for Barbados. They were going to form alliance with the tourism industry and also with the National Cultural Foundation. Ma'am, nothing has happened to continue to generate any kind of income for the creative sector.

This Administration Ma'am, and I can find nothing in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure to suggest

that they are serious about the creative industries, would have said also back in 2013 that they were going to pursue the inscription of the Barbados Industrial Heritage, and that was the story of sugar and the Scotland District. Yet when you look at these Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure this Administration cannot even deal with the reconstruction that is necessary for the Scotland District but yet again continues to pronounce on things that it is clearly not equipped to deal with.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have had and we work tirelessly in the Barbados Labour Party to ensure that we got the UNESCO inscription but it is this Administration Madam Deputy Speaker, that would have brought that to fruition. But what is interesting Ma'am, is that when I was in the Other Place this Administration would have brought the Honourable Chamber the Preservation of Antiquities and Relics Bill, which again was another complementary pieces of legislation that would have assisted persons who were interested in cultural heritage in this country, and persons who want to invest from outside.

Madam Deputy Speaker, but what has happened? The legislation got shut down in the Senate and to this date, which is almost three years later, we have heard not a whisper from the Honourable Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth nor from any one on the Government side as it relates to this particular piece of legislation.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two minutes left in which to conclude.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to say quickly before I close that I am not satisfied with a lot of what I have found in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. I would prefer an exercise where we are put in a position that Ministers can defend their respective ministries. I would prefer to be in a position where we could say in this Honourable Chamber that, for instance, in St. Michael South East there is nothing in here that I can go to the constituents and say that deals with the allocation of National Housing units, the persons who were promised that they would have had the transfer of units to themselves, after a period of 20 years. There is nothing in here to say that this Administration has accelerated, either by legal process or otherwise the conveyance and transfer of those units to persons in the constituency.

There is nothing in these Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, Ma'am, to give the assurance to the people in St. Michael South East, who live in Pasture Road, in Salters Tenantry Road, that the roads will be fixed by the Minister of Transport and Works. Ma'am, for almost five years I have been articulating, both in the Other Place and in here, for persons in the Lower Burney area to have the road completed. These roads were started under a Barbados

Labour Party Administration but which under this Administration resources were directed elsewhere.

Ma'am, I would like to be in a position to be able to give those assurances to my constituents. I would like to be able to give assurances to the people of this country that these Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure would solve the problems of many of them going to the hospital and not getting the medication that they need. I would like to be able to give assurances to the people of this country that they have a public transport system that when they use that public transport system and get to the hospital that those resources are there, Ma'am. But I am not confident by what I have heard by any of the Honourable Members on the other side. I am not confident that they either believe that what is in these Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure represents a true picture of what is really happening in this country.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your time is up.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Ma'am.

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

Hon. D.O'N INNISS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise of course to join this debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2016 and as it is commonly called, reflect upon the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Government for the upcoming financial year. Of course, much has been said about the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. I think certainly from the Opposition Benches it gives them the opportunity to critique or to criticise the Government in respect of its programmes. It is certainly for us from the Government side to reflect upon what are the activities planned for the year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am certainly one who looks forward to eagerly debating the Heads where we really get into the meat of the matter and unravel what is happening in each Ministry, but so far I should say today we have to continue our Second Reading speeches on these matters before us.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, as the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs has quite rightly pointed out, is principally an estimate of what the Government proposed to spend in the upcoming year. Needless to say, it must be closely linked with our revenue, because simply put, if you do not have the money you certainly cannot do what you wished to do. I think that what has transpired here within the last two days is a meaningful conversation about the state of the national economy, reflecting upon where we differ in the

direction, upon certain causation factors and certain directions in which we have to go.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are a few points which bother me. I caution my friends on the Opposition Benches that you do not oppose for the sake of opposing, you have an opportunity to stand up as mature individuals and as Parliamentary representatives and be consistent in your argument and certainly wherever possible put forward alternatives. The Government's role, of course, is to stand up and to defend itself.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what has been missing, I think, from the Opposition Benches is that level of constructive criticism as to what they believe ought to be transpiring, not just to criticise each department of Government on what we are doing, like what the last speaker on the Opposition Benches did, where the Honourable Member sought to pour water over what we have been doing while not offering any alternatives whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Member for St. James Central, needless to say, was very eloquent in his presentation and there is not much I will critique him. The Honourable Member and I would have started Harrison College in September, 1977. As a matter of fact, we sat in the same class throughout school. I sat in the front while the Honourable Member sat in the back and used to copy off my books, never mind, but the Honourable Member will also remember as a good student of the English Literature that today is what they call the "Ides of March" where you reflect upon the assignation of Julius Caesar. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph would also know about "et tu, Brute?" and the fact that sometimes you seek to betray your leaders. Anyhow, I leave that for the Honourable Members for St. Michael North East and St. James Central to resolve their issues among themselves as they seek to compete in that arena.

Madam Deputy Speaker, though, seriously, what is coming through all the time is a perception that the Government does not have the revenue and we do not have the money to spend. Yet, each one gets up and asks for more and more to be done by the Government. It comes to the point that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter has been stressing - and I agree with him wholeheartedly in some of his comments - that we as a nation have to ask ourselves what is the role of the Government in economic and social development in the 21st Century, and fundamentally when are the things that the State ought to be providing for each of its citizens. Sometimes it is a very difficult conversation to have with a nation because there is a reality you have to face that the State has diminishing reserves which it is called upon to provide for an increasing number of services. I have heard the calls to get back to the point where the State can provide tertiary education at the

level that we were prior to 2013, but I ask the Opposition benches, my friends, in all seriousness, "If you were where the Government is today, would you boldly state to this country that you would pay for the university education of everyone who enters the University of the West Indies (UWI)"? If you were in the Government's position, looking at what has taken place in the transformation of this economy, would you be able to provide free healthcare at the point of delivery and service to all Barbadians ad infinitum? These are serious questions we have to ask ourselves, but when you bash one another and make the point that the State must do this and must do that, while at the same time saying there are diminishing reserves in our coffers, then you send mixed signals.

I am satisfied that there is very much of an enlightened population out there who certainly understand the gravity of these matters and are not prepared to be easily fooled. These years have been difficult years. I represent the St. James South constituency and I am very grateful for the opportunity to have served them over the last couple of years. My constituents have been under immense pressure, and I make no apology in saying that it is primarily the middle class who constitute the larger portion of the constituency. They are the ones who have been carrying the brunt of the tax burden, and quite often not the ones who are receiving the benefits, let us say, from the State apparatus. These are conversations I have to have with my constituents. I have to share their pain. I have to continue to explain the dilemma that we face, and I also have to listen to the alternative perspective that they may bring to bear. Woe betide the parliamentary representative who comes in here and feels that he or she knows it all.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as we go forward and look at the expenditure of the State, quite often we get into some discussion around numbers. We make it a numerical exercise. This Ministry is getting this amount. We are being cut by ten per cent here, increased by 15 per cent there. Quite often, the numbers cannot tell the real story. If I had to look at some of the options, and if I take my Ministry of Industry as an example, one of the concerns I have, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Government's structure is the silo mentality that persists and permeates so much of Government. Quite often within Ministries, you do not get one department having a conversation with another one, and sometimes you do not get one Ministry being acutely aware of what is going on in another Ministry and how they can collaborate. At the level of Ministers, certainly, we meet in Cabinet and we have a broad perspective, we share information and we collaborate and so on. However, sometimes at the official level you do not get that depth of understanding and cooperation. I listened, for example, to those from the Opposition benches today, particularly the Honourable Member for St. George South who, as usual, bashed the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH).

When I look at it, we have an opportunity in Barbados today to have the Ministry of Commerce, for example, working a lot closer with the Ministry of Health. The Member of Parliament (MP) for St. George South, in bashing the hospital, reflected upon who is not getting surgeries and the issues therein and so on, but offered no solution. Madam Deputy Speaker, we still battle in Barbados today the scourge of chronic non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular issues, et cetera. The reality about it is that this is a battle that the Minister of Health, Member of Parliament for Christ Church South, and his team continue to face every day, but there are others who can help.

Our policies regarding what is imported and consumed in this country can make a difference in terms of healthcare outcomes. Today is World Consumer Rights Day. Nobody in this Parliament has been talking about that fact, for example, but what are we saying to our consumers? What information are we giving to our consumers that will help them lead healthier lifestyles? Today the QEH is faced with a situation where there are 203 patients on dialysis within the hospital. I believe there are about 36 patients with end-stage renal failure who are dialysed by Sils Dialysis in Belleville on a daily basis. There are 56 patients who are on hemodialysis. Those who are being dialysed within the QEH are costing taxpayers about \$62 500 per person per year. That is a significant amount of money. For those who are on dialysis at the Sils Dialysis Centre, it is costing taxpayers about \$46 800 per year, and for the 56 patients on hemodialysis at home, it is about \$50 000 per patient per year. These are significant sums of money.

We can stand in this Parliament and have a divide over the QEH and bash it and so on, but the solution lies, Madam Deputy Speaker, on how some of us in other parts of our Ministries and even in our roles as MPs can start to look at what interventions we can bring to bear that would help to alleviate some of these challenges.

When we speak, for example, about the Ministry of Commerce and about paying greater attention to the labelling of food items in Barbados, or when we speak about coming on board and driving down the costs of the healthier foods in Barbados, these represent the eradication of that silo thinking that will have to take place in Government. It cannot be just for the Ministry of Health to find solutions therein. When you start to realise that every intervention is going to drive down the numbers who are likely to go on dialysis, then you start to realise that the intervention lies not just in the Ministry of Health but across the board; particularly when you realise there are about four individuals being added to the list every month for dialysis, and the only way you are going to get treated sometimes is if somebody dies. That is the reality.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we also have to realise that there are other interventions that need to take place across Ministries. The international business and financial services sector and the role of philanthropy is an example. We attract and retain in Barbados very high net worth individuals. I reflect on the QEH since I served in that Ministry for a few years and I have a great interest in what is taking place there, and I think the society needs to not bash the institution so much but recognise that there are interventions that can come from elsewhere.

In terms of these Estimates, for example, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would say to you that we need to have conversations with high net worth individuals in the international business sector about philanthropy for the healthcare sector. Between 2012 and 2015, the QEH earned about \$10.2 million from philanthropy, which has gone a significant way in helping to alleviate some of the challenges therein. You talk about reducing the national health budget but you do not realise that some of the reduction expenditure is picked up by those in philanthropy. A high net worth individual coming into Barbados needs not be frustrated by the Immigration Department. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would be very candid and say that Ministers get a lot of licks. We get a lot of bashing for what takes place within our Ministries at the macro level, but quite often we do not know what is going on behind the scenes, and certainly the Ministry that I hold responsibility for today gets complaints almost every day, not just about departments within our Ministry; but because we are dealing with the international business, commerce, industry and small business sector. We get the complaints about other departments as well, and when I receive them as Minister certainly I draw them to the attention of my colleagues and we try to resolve them.

Mr. Speaker, if the Immigration Department is not consistent in the application of its policies, then we are going to scare investors off. We are going to earn a reputation of being very unfriendly. I am not saying these things to attack any particular department, the reality is sometimes is that even the heads of the departments are not very much aware of what is transpiring at a lower level. When we talk about ratings and rankings that we get from international entities about doing business et cetera, I am not going to dismiss them. I am going to focus on the solution and some of the solutions lie in having consistency. First, having clarity in terms of policy and secondly, having consistency in the application of policy.

Mr. Speaker, you get individuals who apply for work permits and some are told you need an FBI Report. Madam, first you may not be told up front you need it but you make the application and then somebody says you need a FBI Report. You get the FBI Report, which is a thorough report because the Federal Bureau of Investigation does not limit the information within the

borders. You submit that and then you are told that you need a report from another jurisdiction you may have lived in 30 years or 40 years ago. I think we have to have some consistency in terms of the application of these matters going forward, Madam Deputy Speaker, and where the applicant does not feel they are being treated with fairness and equity, there must be the avenue through which you can raise your concerns and have them addressed in a timely fashion.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is something that goes beyond any political Party, perhaps, it is inherent within the system. You feel that if you raise a concern, you are going to be victimized and your file will go on File 13 or it is going to be hidden away in a drawer.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are only 30 of us parliamentarians, there are 280 000 people in this country and it really time that all of us start to realise that we have to put Barbados first. When you reflect upon the Estimates and you bash the Government and the Minister of Finance over revenue expenditure et cetera, until we start to address some of these fundamental dysfunctional structures that we have, we are going to be forever coming in here every March having these kinds of arguments and realise that Barbados is not moving forward.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am satisfied that the solutions to our economic challenges lie not in about taxing or borrowing, it lies in getting an administration right. When I hear quite often of investors who have application sitting in Government departments. For example, the Town and Country Planning, and I have to be candid about these matters. I am not blaming any Minister. I said at the very beginning that as Ministers we are not acutely aware of everything and when I hear these matters I do raise them with the Prime Minister and other ministerial colleagues but the message must go forth because the shoe was on the other foot and maybe the other foot at some point in time but when you have applications before some Government departments and you cannot get a response or an acknowledgement or one department says that it has to be sent to another department and you have to wait six months and 18 months down the line, a project that may very well generate 200 jobs and bring significant foreign exchange into this country is still sitting on somebody's desk and, quite frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the reality that I face. These are not matters that are going to be reflected in financial statements or budgetary statements of expenditure on the Government's side because they hit at the cusp of good administration. I keep saying that regardless of whether it is the Democratic Labour Party or the Barbados Labour Party there is a need for us to continue to restructure our systems.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not saying that public officer have mal intent, that they are wicked or bad. There

are structural deficiencies in the system within which they have to work. Madam, the Chief Town Planner may send a man to the Ministry of Public Works and he has no control over when those officers in Public Works get back to him. He may send the application as is required by law over the EPD but he has no control when they get back to him but meanwhile as these files and applications are floating around Government departments, investors are getting frustrated and the message goes forth that Barbados is not serious about business.

Asides.

Hon. D. INNISS: The Honourable Member St. James North can say all comes back to political leadership and whatnots but, Madam, I am serious about these points because, as have said, the Honourable Member for St. James North, which perhaps just for wishful thinking could be the Prime Minister someday and I hope he would not have to face these issues. Madam, the reality about it is, what do we do?

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe there must be a change in culture and attitude that says all of these matters that come before us are serious matter. Madam Deputy Speaker, let me stress this point. When I speak of investors, I am not speaking of foreign investors alone because some of us have a perception in this Chamber that you only seek to improve the system when it is some expatriate who wants something done in this country.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if we can take care of our own first and foremost, we can then take care of anybody else who comes to these shores. Madam, that is my perspective. I am not saying to do away with all the bureaucracy, do not get me wrong. There is a reason why you must have certain systems in place, certain checks and balances but too much bureaucracy, Of course, becomes then a hindrance for real economic activity to take place in Barbados. Madam, these are not matters we must take lightly. Madam, as have said all along, there are not issues that you pick up easily within the realm of the statements laid before us in terms of the expenditure of Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, some things have changed. You listen and you believe that all is not well. We criticize the Barbados Revenue Authority for example. They are going through a transition now and there are some hindrances and challenges. I do not believe that in today's age that anybody should be standing up in the Pine for four hours or five hours trying to get a driver's licence renewed or trying to register their vehicles. Let me make it abundantly clear that fiasco has caused some individuals not to have their license vehicles on the road. I am not making any excuse for anybody but I have gone there myself and see the fiasco. Madam, on the other hand, today we do not thank the Barbados Revenue Authority for the

fact that most of us can sit at home on our computer system and do our tax filings online. They are using the technology and I would only wish that more Government departments would do that. I have ministerial responsibility the Corporate Affairs Intellectual Property Office. I am not going to bury my head in the sand because there are also issues regarding tardiness in getting some applications processed and approved. There are also issues regarding interpretation of matters of law therein. We do not have a perfect system but we are able a year ago to allow individuals to do online filing and online searches, which is a work in progress but we have started to move in the right direction. You can go through so many Government departments today and realise that we have really moved forward in terms of deployment of the technology in addressing many of these issues.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just wish in the few minutes remaining having given somewhat of a broad brush on these Estimates to hone in on some things that lie within the Ministry of Industry and International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development. The small business sector which is one that we do not normally debate in here but I am expecting that we will have a debate on it very soon because I have said that the National Strategic Plan for micro, small and medium enterprise sector is in the final stage. We had a little delay in getting comments from other stakeholders but I am assured that would soon be going to Cabinet. I have already indicated that I would expect a full debate. Not just to come and lay a document in Parliament but to have a thorough debate about the sector.

I agree with others that it is a sector that we have not done well at measuring, we covered a lot of anecdotal stuff about it, we have not really defined it within the Barbadian context, we have not set systems in place and measure its contribution but yet we talk about the challenges they face. I believe that once this strategic plan is laid out there, and I thank the officers who have worked on it, we are then in a better position to really understand the micro, small and medium enterprise sector within the Barbadian context therefore, to be able to bring to the fore solutions that would certainly help to move the sector forward. Notwithstanding that call for empirical evidence, the reality that we face under the circumstances is that it is a very significant sector. I cannot stand here and tell you that it is 30, 40 or 50 per cent of our sector but what I can say to you is that every economy, developed or developing economy, depends quite a bit on the small, micro and medium enterprise sector to propel it forward and we in Barbados are first going to have respect that sector, not just celebrate the multimillion dollar enterprises around here, but recognise that the artisan who has developed a special skill is in need of support for investment and equipment to help move them to the next level. He is deserving of some support from Government even to the extent of our

contracts that we award - and on that point I noted the call for consideration to be given to contracts from Government to be given to a particular small and medium enterprise sector - well I am satisfied that conversation can continue once we have defined it but what I will say though is that it will have to be given to those who certainly seek to operate in a professional manner and not just because you are small firm you will get a contract from Government and then you do not deliver because at the end of the day it is constituents like mine who are going to have to pay the heavy price for that via taxation whether it is direct or indirect taxation.

There is the need to recognise the roll of technology deployment in helping that sector to achieve their full potential and much is being done about that. Madam Deputy Speaker, there is also the need for us to recognise the issue of financing for the micro, small and medium enterprise sector. I think that every, I do not need empirical evidence per se on this perspective, but all of us, as politicians, who listen to small business people would hear the lament that you cannot get financing but I always say, of course, that you first need to have a good business plan, but the State must not and will not close its mind to restructuring the financial institutions under our remit to ensure that they are directed towards helping that micro, small and medium enterprise sector attain the level of financing necessary themselves and grow out. We will not make the mistakes of the previous development bank but certainly recognise that the State has a role to play in helping to secure low cost financing.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Finance and the Central Bank of Barbados recently launched a \$70 million credit guarantee scheme and I encourage those entrepreneurs who are serious about doing business to take advantage of it. Up to 80 per cent of your financing can be guaranteed through that Central Bank of Barbados scheme and I believe that most of our commercial banks are on board and I urge that members public, generally speaking, take advantage of that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the other area, of course, is industry and last week, I had the opportunity during the debate on the amendment to the Barbados Investment Development Act, CAP 340, to speak quite a bit on that matter. I do not need to go over much of the issues except that our Estimates this year, once you unravel what is behind there, is that we intend to drive forward on a couple of engines, 1) to improve on our fossil exports of goods and service for Barbados. We keep on talking about the challenges on the revenue side and talk about the borrowing and the taxation, et cetera. I have been very consistent, Madam Deputy Speaker, in saying that Barbados must earn its way out of this deep and prolong economic circumstances that has been rather negative in some respect and by earning its way, it means that much of

what we produce in Barbados must find its way into an export market. It means that greater focus must be placed on the quality of goods and services we produce in Barbados. Get them export ready, get them to international standards and get up and get out there in the OECS, into the US and Canada, wherever, with more of our Barbadian goods and services. It means that we must really fully embrace e-commerce. I am still a little bit disappointed that even though we are deemed number three in the Western Hemisphere for access and technology and internet penetration, electronic-commerce has not taken off at the rate in which I thought it should take off in Barbados. If you look around this Parliament today most people would probably take out their cellular phone and go on www.amazon.com and buy good produced in China or other parts of the world use their value for exchange and buy, I am not objecting to that because I use it occasionally but we need to get more Barbadian entrepreneurs using that electronic platform to advertise their goods and services to sell and to engage in international trade. It also means that our banks in Barbados must be nimble and flexible enough to work with them, not to impose the heavy fees that sometimes become a deterrent or not to provide the whole sleuth of bureaucracy that could certainly turn them off. Madam Deputy Speaker, that is one area and fundamentally is the issue of increase of exports of goods and services from Barbados and that is something that we can do and will continue to do because we know it would help create a more sustainable economy going forward.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have, as I said last week, and I will say again ...

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have two minutes left.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have to forge linkages between the agricultural sector and the industrial sector as part of the agro-businesses sector. On the area of international business I noted the comment that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East and I take them with all the sincerity in which they were given and indeed the abundance of ignorance from whence she speak, ignorance in the general sense of the term, Madam Deputy Speaker, meaning lack of knowledge, but the reality about it is that even this morning we launched the ISM meaning the International Stock Market thanks to the Barbados Security Exchange, something to celebrate. It is another way in which we re-elevate Barbados and raise Barbados on the international arena as a place through which you can do your trading and to provide that platform for that to take place.

We recently did the Incorporated Cell Company legislation and there is much more that is happening in the international business sector. Tomorrow the Central Bank

of Barbados would have their seminar at which some of these matters will continue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing let me say that there is a lot more we have to do. The Estimates as we have here is about a 400-page document that certainly seeks to capture what the Government purposes to expend head by head over the next financial year but I am afraid that if we do not get back to some basics and start to really and frontly address some of the structural deficiencies in our system of administration, if we do not look more at accountability, if you do not start to think or act outside of the box in many respect we are going to find ourselves coming in her bashing one another and the economy will slug along. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 6:00 o'clock this evening.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I beg to second that, Ma'am.

The question that the Sitting be now suspended until 6:00 o'clock was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken we were on Order No. 21 and with that we shall return. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

ORDER No. 21 (RESUMED)

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister basically sought to give the impression that things in Barbados were well enough and that we really do not have that much cause for worry, but all of the available evidence suggests the complete opposite because the fact is that despite every measure introduced by the Minister of Finance Barbados is still on the brink. I am forced to conclude, Mr. Speaker, that even if it is that this Government truly understands the magnitude of the problem that faces this country, then they simply do not know what to do about it.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has continued every single year to tax the people of this country into oblivion. The Minister of Finance has decreased their spending power continuously and reduced their disposal income and yet he collected less revenues. The Minister of Finance has kept wages increases on pause and laid off

over 3 000 persons. The Minister of Finance has borrowed beyond anyone's wildest imagination. The Minister of Finance has granted concession, Mr. Speaker, to Sandals who the Government seems to have thought would have been the saviour of this country. Almost \$ 500 000 000 in concessions were granted to Sandals so far and yet all of these wrong turns and wrong moves have taken this country nowhere and now, Mr. Speaker, the actual consequences are there for all to see.

Sir, rather than give the island's tourism marketing agency the funds that it needs to first of all pay off its debts and then properly market the island, it in fact has ended up where we now see that our tourism is in a sad state. Mr. Speaker, we end up basically with our tourism now taking what we get. You just have to look at the very first page of the Central Bank's December 2015 Report which tells the story adequately in relation to our tourism because there it says that long-stay arrivals were up last year by 14 per cent but tourism receipts grew by 5 per cent. For the Minister of Tourism and International Transport and the Right Honourable Prime Minister and I am sure many others on that side, that is success. After eight years of allowing the most important sector in this country to stay at the bottom of the table the Minister and his colleagues do not apologise for the lost years but pat themselves on the back for seeing an increase in numbers of arrivals who spend relatively little.

Mr. Speaker, it really was not hard for the Minister of Tourism and International Transport to just sit back and watch a private sector entity on its own, without any assistance from Government at all, engage in securing a fairly vibrant cruise tourism sector coming to this country and generating significant numbers so that the Minister can piggyback on that and get a number of tourists who come here and spend one or two days before going on the cruise or one or two days after the cruise ends and then say that is success. It really was not hard for the Minister to sit back and get lucky by the fact that a large percentage of international tourists have now decided to shift away from terrorism hot-spots and have decided to come and travel and take vacations to countries that they consider to be safe. If the Honourable Member would just go and check the site TravelMole they would see details of the surveys that were done which tourists have decided that they are avoiding tourism hot-spots. I congratulate the Minister for being lucky but it did not take for him to do anything and he did nothing. It was not hard for the Minister to take up \$60 million, and this is the Minister's own admission, and channelled it to guaranteeing airlines in relation to them coming to Barbados, so you get the JetBlue type brand.

When you approach your tourism like that, Mr. Speaker, not only are the benefits short term but you have pretty much to take what you get because in Barbados there is place for all profiles of tourists but when you approach

your generation of tourism numbers in that way the most tourists that you are going to get will not be able to sustain the profitability of the country or of the tourism sector, and that is what has happened now and the chickens have come home to roost because it is a fact that tourism receipts despite a 14 per cent increase have only grown by 5 per cent, which has not even caused our Gross Domestic Product to grow by 1 single per cent. Mr. Speaker, when you consider that every other sector has declined, it means that it is a complete nonsense to talk about any growth whatsoever in this economy. It is total fabrication to say that there was any growth at all. Sir, even if there was, it would certainly fit in the margin of error which is still in this particular case zero.

In getting back to the Minister's failed policies, despite all of the borrowings of this Government our reserves have fallen by over \$500 000 000 last year when compared to 2009, a fact the Governor of the Central Bank would like to play down, but it is a serious issue. Further. Mr. Speaker, the entire premise on which the Minister of Finance's last Budget was based has collapsed because on that occasion the Minister of Finance said that he was going to take, and he did take, \$200 million out of the pockets of Barbadians in his tax measures that he announced in the Budget and when the folly of that was raised he sought to justify it by saying do not worry, that was going to be counterbalanced by the fact that we were going to have a large set of capital inflows coming into this country. That is what the Minister of Finance on that occasion particularly in relation to tourism.

The Minister of Finance listed these projects and not one of these projects has started and that is why we saw the Governor of the Central Bank being forced to report that in fact the net long-term inflows were lower than 2014 and that in particular in relation to the tourism sector, the financial inflows for tourism related projects were lower in 2015 than in 2014 by \$85 million, which was a bad year.

Mr. Speaker, these are the projects the Minister of Finance listed, none of which have even started: Four Seasons was going to restart again, it has not started. Starwood and Banyon Tree were to have started. Pickering and Regent were supposed to have started. Sugar Point Cruise Pier was to have started, but that was a madman project anyhow so I am not sorry that one has not started. Pure Beach Resort and Spa, Merricks Resort and Sam Lord's Castle were to have started. That is what the Minister of Finance premised his Budget presentation on last year, on the commencement of some, if not all, of those projects, and not one of them got off the ground.

Mr. Speaker, the way Government operations are being financed is another horror story because as you have heard and you would have read and picked up reading between the lines, the Government has not resorted to

getting the Central Bank to print money to lend to Government, another horror story.

We in this country now have a debt problem, something that the Minister of Finance does not want to acknowledge. We have a debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio of 160 per cent and a debt to revenue ratio of 60 per cent, a serious debt problem which does not bother the Minister of Finance because he is comforted by the

approach now being used by the Governor of the Central Bank, who has now created this new concept called “net public sector debt”, an invention of the Central Bank Governor that only masks the issue of the debt and the magnitude of the debt that Barbados has, Mr. Speaker. These are merely some of the failed policies of this administration, and it contrasts really very sharply with what this Government inherited. I must say that in the course of preparing my notes for this presentation today, I actually stumbled by accident. I was going to the book shelf and in trying to pull out one thing, something else came out; this document. I looked at it, and it actually read “Review of the Economy for 2007”. Mr. Speaker, I just read the very first sentence in it, just the very first, to show what this Government got from us, what they had to work with. The very first sentence reads: “The Barbadian economy expanded for the sixth consecutive year in 2007, recording an estimated growth rate of 4.3 per cent.” It did not expand in 2007 because of Cricket World Cup, when you said that was a bumper year, but expanded for the sixth consecutive year, recording an estimated growth rate of 4.3 per cent. That is what this Government has had, Sir, and that is what this Government has squandered.

We need to get back to those days, but my concern is that, far from trying to take us back to those days, this Government is determined to wreck the economy further. When you look at these Estimates at a glance, and not so much the 2016-2017 Estimates but the 2017-2018 Estimates which are also contained in this document, you have a Government which, first of all, has exhausted all of its capacity to tax, because this Government could not seriously think about imposing any more taxes on anybody. It has used an internal devaluation and has refused to grant any wage increases. It has already borrowed through the skies so it cannot borrow anymore or certainly not for much longer. It is experiencing a catastrophic decline in its foreign exchange reserves. Economic growth is non-existent, and it is limping along on a half-leg of one of the revenue-earning sectors of this country, namely tourism, Sir. A half-leg of the tourism sector is what this Government is limping along on. Yet, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the 2017-2018 Estimates here, you see that this Government is planning to go on an election spending rampage to wreck an economy that is already on the verge of disaster, as it always does, Mr. Speaker. That is the record of this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just move on to deal with a few other issues today, and I want to start by looking at the Sandals project, because one thing this Government can pat itself on the back for is that it has really managed to ensure the consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few people in this country. It has really managed to make Goliaths out of some entities that have come into this country. Honestly, it is what I want to look at because a whole lot has been given to Sandals and the country has got relatively little in return. I want to begin, Mr. Speaker, by calling for the agreement between the Government of Barbados and Sandals. I want to see the agreement that they entered into, because the agreement exists and Barbadians should see it. It is absurd; not only the sweetheart deals that Sandals has been handed, but it also absurd the way in which Sandals has been behaving in this country. It is clear that Sandals is a state within a state, and I am calling for a study to be conducted to see the full impact of the operations of Sandals on the country as a whole and also, more particularly, on the businesses in the immediate environs surrounding Sandals and businesses generally that Sandals deals with in this country. Mr. Speaker, it is important that we get to the bottom of this because in the Turks and Caicos Islands -- I am basing this now on the order granted to Sandals and the initial letter that was sent out to Sandals setting out the concessions that were granted -- almost identical concessions were granted to Sandals in the Turks and Caicos and many other places as well. However, Mr. Speaker, the Turks and Caicos now finds itself in a serious controversy because no less a person than the former Premier of Turks and Caicos is now before the court on charges of corruption in relation to payments improperly received from Sandals. Not only the former premier, but also the minister of finance and another brother were involved in the same company that improperly received payments from Sandals. Sandals has issued a statement confirming that the payments were made, but they want to say they were made by an individual and they did not know what the individual was doing.

In Barbados, I cannot tell you that the Right Honourable Prime Minister signed the letter initially. Initially, a letter was written to Sandals telling them the concessions they were going to get. It was not signed by the Prime Minister, I can say that. It was not signed by the Minister of Tourism either, although both of them have consistently defended the concessions granted to Sandals. It was signed by the Minister of Finance; the one that went to Sandals, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, it is but right that we should see a copy of the agreement that was entered into between the Government of Barbados and Sandals so that we can know what we might be in for. Mr. Speaker, Sandals has extraordinary powers and it is determined to dominate every single little thing.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have not quite said it yet but you are getting very close to casting certain aspersions on functionaries of this Government.

Mr. R.ST.C. TOPPIN: I intend no such thing.

MR. SPEAKER: You are getting very close, and my advice to you would be to move on before you run afoul of the rules of the House.

Mr. R.ST.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on. I was just stating the facts. I am moving on, but I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that sandals has been dominating every single thing in this country. If you operate a service like, say, jet-skis or watersports, Sandals has a watersports company, owns equipment that will serve their guests, and we even see the disgraceful presence of a Sandals catamaran in the Careenage right there, Mr. Speaker. If Sandals does not own equipment to get into the business itself, then it goes to operators, either of watersports or restaurants, and it tells them that they can send guests to them but only if you, the operator, are prepared to charge some economic rate that Sandals determines for you; a rate that is either economical or will only take you to maybe break-even point. The entities that agree - and some do, Mr. Speaker - get the money not from the guests but they get the money from Sandals. Sandals will charge the guests a certain amount and take out a pittance and send it down to an operator of whatever services, Mr. Speaker. This is happening in Barbados as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our Independence.

The power of reach of Sandals is so strong, Mr. Speaker, that people, even businesspeople, seem too intimidated to say anything even in their own defence. The Government's lips are sealed too. Sandals can carry out construction in St. Lawrence Gap right next to another hotel, Turtle Beach. It can disrupt the operations of the hotel in the heart of the winter season, after saying they were not going to conduct the operations at that time, and nothing is said, and certainly nothing is done about it, Mr. Speaker. Sandals can build groynes in the sea and the Coastal Zone Management people do nothing about it, or say nothing about it. Sandals was granted permission, Mr. Speaker, and I am talking now in terms of the people in Barbados because we talk so much about greening and the environmentalists in Barbados and people who are into aesthetics, we talk so much about greening and so on but Sandals was granted permission to construct, and they did construct in a residential and a tourism belt, a massive warehouse and water storage facility that is totally out of sync with all the surroundings, so you have commercial activity now in relation to Sandals on both sides of the road.

Mr. Speaker, Sandals has 14 restaurants while most all-inclusive hotels have two or three, so that you can eat

every day at Sandals, in a different restaurant, with different cuisine, without having to go out to eat anywhere else. Sir, at the same time not one single local tour operator could go onto Sandals premises to try to solicit business to carry somebody for a taxi ride or on a tour anywhere. Nobody can go inside, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Tourism said, it is an all-inclusive but it is an all-inclusive with a big difference. Mr. Speaker, the other all-inclusives we had, one being Almond Beach Village, people were able to go out and they used to go out. Sir, for example, the Fisherman's Pub used to be filled, people would mingle, but, Sir we have Sandals bringing into Barbados what I would call a sort of an 'offshore' tourist who does not mix with the average Barbadian. Sir, who in here has gone anywhere yet since Sandals was in operation in Barbados, where tourists were present and interacted and talked with any one of those tourists and found that any one of them at all was staying at Sandals Hotel? Who? Not one of us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will go as so far as to say that the Sandals model is totally out of sync with the tourist industry that has operated in Barbados over the years. It may appear in other places where people are afraid to go out but that is not so in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, Sandals has been rewarded for this behaviour by being allowed to purchase additional land to construct another 280 rooms in addition to the 200 rooms it presently has, on a piece of property where water flows through it, Sir, into the stream in St. Lawrence and out to the sea, so they are going to be constructing on that area, and again the Coastal Zone Management people are being silent, not one word is being said by anybody.

Mr. Speaker, when Sandals is finished with this expansion in 2017, that will be 480 rooms up there. When it is finished with the one in Almond, it is going to be another 400-odd rooms. Sir, Sandals may well have 800-odd rooms under its control, which is going to create a brutally unfair advantage to a player who has been given a wash of concessions at a time when no other operator in Barbados, none, has as yet been granted the concessions promised and I dare say, Mr. Speaker, will not be granted by this Government, despite the rhetoric. They are not going to get them, this Government is just stringing them along.

Mr. Speaker, in the 50th Anniversary of our Independence we have Sandals the state within a state, a veritable animal farm where all are equal, but one is more equal than the others. Sir, Sandals has done nothing in this country to build a tourism industry, it has not, they have

not built the tourism industry. Even the owner of Sandal treated Barbados with contempt years ago, down by the same Paradise property by refusing to open that property. He also pulled out and has come back in, but on his terms, and all of this is being done at a time when...

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: The Minister in front of me just spoke about the need to recognise the value of microenterprises, small business people and entrepreneurs. Why is it that it is so hard for them to get any assistance from this Government? Why is it so hard while Sandals could walk into Barbados and run roughshod over this country, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, I believe that the time has come when, as I said, that Barbadians need to see a copy of the agreement that the Government has signed with Sandals.

I must confess, Mr. Speaker, it is the most tightly guarded agreement. Normally, somewhere along the line you would be driving behind a truck and something would fall off and you would get a little insight, but this is one time it seems as though there was only one copy of the document and do not care what happens, you just cannot find any truck to drive behind that anything could drop off, but you should not have to be driving behind trucks, because agreements entered into like this, when a company could be granted a half-billion dollars in concession so far, it is only right that Barbadians should see the content of the Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn briefly to the issue of Sam Lord's Castle because the \$55 million in relation to that has been dealt with. I just want to revisit that as quickly as I can because the Honourable Chamber has already had a lot of details so I just want to fill in a few of the spaces. Sir, \$55 million were borrowed by the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., from the National Insurance Scheme to go towards the purchase of Almond by Neil and Massy, a new structure was to have been built by some Chinese and then the hotel constructed would have been leased to Sandals -- well, Beaches, the same thing -- for them to run.

Mr. Speaker, the agreement was that the \$55 million borrowed was to have been repaid by January 31, 2016. That arrangement was called off when Sandals refused to let the Chinese build anything for them. Butch Stewart said he did not want any Chinese doing any building for him, that he would buy the property instead and build what he wanted to build. Sir, the property was bought and the money paid over and the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., therefore got back the money that it had invested into the project and that \$55 million should have been paid back into the National Insurance Department on or before

January 31, but that money has never been repaid Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that money was never repaid because in May 2015, without any reference whatsoever, without any discussion whatsoever with the National Insurance Board, the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., managed to get the Cabinet to agree, without any discussion at all with the National Insurance Department, that the same \$55 million, rather than being repaid, would have gone directly to the Sam Lord's Castle Project.

Mr. Speaker, now, for Cabinet to have decided that it was an act of supreme... it was unlawful. Sir, Cabinet has no authority whatsoever to determine what should happen with funds relating or belonging to the National Insurance Department, it has no authority whatsoever.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North were ordered to be expunged from the Record by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you seem to be doing this on purpose. The next time that it happens, I am going to ask you to sit down and discontinue your speech. You know there is a difference between illegal and unlawful?

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, they were complicit in unlawful behaviour, that is a fact, because the National Insurance Department should not have gotten into this in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, what is even worse is that the National Insurance Department only knew that Cabinet had made that decision about four days before 31st January this year. Mr. Speaker, the National Insurance Department is hopping mad about it, they want their money back. The impression was given in here yesterday that everything was discussed, that letters were passed, that Letters of Comfort were issued after total participation, that is not so, Mr. Speaker, the National Insurance Department was out of the loop all the time, until four days before. They were aware that Almond was sold and that money was paid and they were asking for it but, the BTI decided rather than it being repaid to them they were going to go to Cabinet and they went to Cabinet who really should know better. It is true that they are not many experience people out there in Cabinet.

Hon... R. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. It is not true to say that the National Insurance Scheme was only made aware four days before it was due. There is correspondence that the Honourable Member St. Michael North has seen which shows that discussions were taking place. It is the truth and this business of attacking officers at organisation that cannot defend themselves in here is

wrong. I can understand his plight right now. His belly is hurting him because of well tourism is doing. He can attack me but he should stay away from the officer at the BTI. Sir, earlier, he spoke about CZMU not knowing what was going on but that is wrong because they cannot defend themselves. Sir, a town planning application and CZMU commented on that application. You cannot say they were not involved and that they were involved and they were ignored. You must not do that because these people cannot defend themselves. The Honourable Member should know better.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member please take your seat. The Member has a right to free speech. There are rules which set down how you should attack if you want a particular organization or member, but once you stay within those rules there is a not much that the Chair can do. We can only hope that Members are careful enough not to do it.

Honourable Member please continue. Your time has expired so please wind up.

Mr. R. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, by letter dated January 27, 2016, four days before the 31st the BTI wrote to the National Insurance Department to a Mr. Ian Carrington. The date of the letter is January 27th, and it says:

“Dear Mr. Carrington:

Roll over a \$55 million National Insurance Scheme, NIS Bond, further to discussions with the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs regarding the matter at caption and as directed by him”, the Minister of Finance, the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. is now formally requesting a rollover of the bond for 18 months, which is due on January 31, 2016. The basis of this rollover as part of the attached letter which was sent to the Minister, a copy of which is hereto attached.

Your anticipated favourable response is greatly appreciated.”

Mr. Speaker, I am indebted to you.

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

Hon. R.D. JONES: Thank you very much.

I wish to join this debate at this juncture in support of the Appropriation Bill which was clearly set out and articulated by the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Member for the constituency of St. Michael North West. I wish to speak specifically to broad issues as they affect education. I wish to state from the outset we recognise that

there are still challenges within the Barbadian Economy as there are challenges in nearly every economy of the world. In 2007 and 2008 was a singular act when we had the collapse of the financial system of the world. We are still trying as a world to work our way through the many changes and challenges which have been brought about by that collapse. Therefore, within the context of those severe challenges and difficulties, we have had to undergo much restructuring of the Barbadian economy and there is still much work to be done. We know that debt is particularly burdensome at is time, but the debt we have was not brought about irrational behaviour, neither was it brought about by whimsical action of the priest. We have tried to maintain the social services in this country as they impact on the 285 000 or citizens of Barbados.

In light of that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and innovation has as at its disposal for the coming financial year \$484 613 459 to meet the demands of providing education, science, technology and innovation services to those we serve. This is over 70 000 plus students at the nursery, primary and secondary levels, and another 12 000 or so students at the tertiary level. You will find, Mr. Speaker, for teacher training we have approximately \$6 million dollars. I just outlined these and then say what is expected of those agencies over the next years.

Basic educational development which will deal with special schools, primary and nursery education, maintenance of schools in both the domestic and summer programme, nursery education, et cetera, \$132 652 254. We then have the provisions for secondary education to the tune of \$131 million, and change, tertiary education, around \$132 million, special services, \$32 million, and, of course, a small provision for HIV/AIDS, the continuing emphasis on HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said in this House by one or two speakers from the other side, and it tends to give the impression that not a lot is going on in education in Barbados. I wish to say at the outset this is not truth. It is far from that. A comment was made earlier, and I could not understand, in relation to the school meals presented to our children. The School Meals Department this year will have about \$22 million or so to pay workers and to provide the various meals for our children over the course of the three terms. Based on the comments made where it was said that there was a lot of bread being given to our students, I asked for the provision of the school meals menu. The menu is calibrated, I will just share this with the House, if needs be. The menu is broken down over the five days per week, so you have week 1, week 6 and week 11 carrying the same menu; Week 2, week 7 and week 12 carrying the same menu; week 3, week 8 and week 13 carrying the same menu across from Monday to Friday; week 4, week 9 and week 14 carrying the same menu; and week 5 and week 10

carrying the same menu. This would be the menu for week 2, week 7 and week 12, just as an example to share with the Honourable House, Monday: macaroni and cheese, mixed vegetables and a fruit, melon in this instance; Tuesday: grilled bologna, tennis bun, lettuce and peaches.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: It is not baloney, bologna, whatever they call it.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: It is juicy.

Wednesday: Cod fish category, lettuce and cucumber salad and banana cake. Up to this point and time, Mr. Speaker, there is no bread. The first bread is on Thursday in week 2, week 7 and week 12 which would be a savoury corned beef, salt roll, lettuce and orange and on Friday for week 2, week 7 and week 12, shepherd's pie but done with potato from the lands of our farmers, diced carrots and pineapple slices, just to prove the point because you hear a lot of things being spotted in this House. On the Monday of week 3, week 8 and week 13, savoury corned beef, pasta elbows, peas and corn, and apple. On the Tuesday of those weeks, fried fish, salt rolls, tomato slices and banana. On the Wednesday, chicken weiners with the hotdog rolls, of course, and orange halves. Thursday of those weeks 3, 8 and 13 cheesy macaroni peas and carrots and coconut bread. On the Friday of those weeks as well 3, 8 and 13, chicken pelau, Coles slaw and fruit slices. I therefore do not understand, Mr. Speaker, how Members could get into this House and talk about all bread. That is what was stated, not my words. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East talked about all bread and followed by the Honourable Member, who should know better, because she had direct supervision when she served as Parliamentary Secretary for the School Meals Department and she still gets a copy of the menu. I do not know what she does with it but she still gets a copy of the menu, so let us put that to rest. There are nutritional meals brought to our children and, in fact, one knows that the School Meals Department has worked with the Nutrition Centre and they are qualified people in there who prepare the meals to reach our children so I want to put that to rest. These meals as provided at essentially free because you pay, I believe, a dollar per week.

I have heard the Honourable Member who shadows the Ministry of Education speak to many issues to which she has some level of ignorance. I wish to state that since 2014 when we took the decision to ask students to make a contribution of 20 per cent to their tuition cost of their education that the Ministry of Education along with the Ministry of Finance in responding to some challenges which were present among some students that we put in

place some support structures in the form of bursaries, scholarships, et cetera. In the year, over 600 students benefitted from that exercise to the tune of nearly \$3 million as voted in this House of Assembly. In fact, some students who were part time at the time, were able in early September to receive a second trench of that payment. Currently with \$2.5 million we have allocated so far, for the first semester, 321 students benefitted from that exercise and for the second semester there will be nearly 400+ students who have been benefitting and will continue to benefit from that exercise. In the year coming 2016/2017 within a matter of three weeks, so that we are ahead with the new financial year, the last one was for this current financial year within a matter of three weeks, you will have an ad going out to cover all first year students coming into the University of the West Indies (UWI) and based on the needs that \$2.5 million will also be covering between 600 to 800 students. I want to make that absolutely clear. I know that persons like to score political points but we have to be reasonable and sensible as you seek to score those various political points. There are many persons who have benefitted so far and will continue to benefit from this existing scheme.

The Honourable Member for St. Thomas knows that we have the Financial Assistance Grant which is around \$600 000 which goes to students as well at the University of the West Indies (UWI), the Barbados Community College (BCC), the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP), et cetera, as well as the Enabling Grant of \$2 000 for each student domestically or if you are studying overseas, which goes to final year students to help them if they are doing a dissertation, a thesis, whatever. That would bring that figure of assistance to around some \$700 000 to \$800 000 that is given out every year to deserving students. That has been going on for a long time. It is not a new creation. These are the facts as they relate to these particular matters. They are there. Nobody changes them. They assist the people of Barbados. There are students who, not only get their tuition fees paid, but also get the University fees which would be for their ID card, or the amenities fees are also paid so they are going to have zero payment to the University of the West Indies (UWI). I want to make the point but I also want to share because it is all well and good to get into the gray partisan political exercise and jump up in the air and you do that because you are not wearing any shoes, you are naked essentially. When you wear the shoes, you know the pressures which you face in managing an economy where there are challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share with this House. I support the University of the West Indies. I went to the University of the West Indies and did reasonably well. I went there at the time of the Honourable Member for St. James Central who spent more time in the quadrangle quarrelling with people, that is what he did.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Yes, an all paid for by the people of Barbados, and therefore persons like the Honourable Member should be making a direct contribution to the University of the West Indies because he did three Degrees all paid for by the taxpayers of Barbados.

In 1998/1999 the Government was paying \$48 103 414 in both economic costs and tuition fees to the University of the West Indies. At one point during this cycle the Government of Barbados was providing \$162 million in the most difficult of times to the University of the West Indies made up of tuition fees and economic costs, \$126 plus \$36 million. Mr. Speaker, that is not a mere scratch on the surface of the finances provided to the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation or provided by the State. What we are paying now to the University of the West Indies amounts to about \$117 million without tuition fees - remember I give you the figures that cover everything - and every year we come back to make the same point. When I came to this House in 2003 the Government of the day was providing two-thirds of the funds to the University of the West Indies in one financial year because the year of Government financing and the university year are different, and in the second tranche you cover then the final third and the same thing is done here, so you recognise in about \$71 million and then the residual to over our commitment to the University of the West Indies, but you still have this harbouring. When I came in here in 2003 that was what it was, that is how it rolled out and continues to be roll out the same way. There is no surprise in that particular matter, Mr. Speaker.

The other point, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the number of persons who might have been impacted by the change in the financial arrangements. I have heard figures like 4 000 and 6 000. It seems as though they go to bed, they have a dream, they get up and they call a number. These things can be obtained from the University of the West Indies rather than trying to confuse the population of Barbados with all kinds of things.

I will just share with the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, a few statistics. In 2002-2003 academic year, there were 4 363 students in both the graduate and the undergraduate programme at Cave Hill, bearing in mind this does not take into consideration funds paid to Mona, St. Augustine's or any of the other related institutions within the ambit of the University of the West Indies. At 2008-2009, it was 7 781, and by 2012/2013 that grew to 8 776 both graduate and undergraduate students.

The financing of tuition fees by students with some support by the Government saw a decline in the first year of 20 per cent which represent some 1 771 students, not 4

000 as the Honourable Member for St. James North continues to spout across the place, so the numbers then would have been 6 863 both undergraduate and graduates. This year, and you would have heard the figures from the Principal and Pro Vice Chancellor, you have had 6 065, which gives you a cumulative two-year decline of just around 29 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, so far for the new academic year coming which would start at the end of August this year, the numbers are appreciably up. This experience is almost similar to the experience of Jamaica way back when this was introduced, so you know that there is going to be a two or three-year hiatus as persons work out their priorities and get their finances in place, so I expect that these numbers would be up over the course of the next financial year particularly with the major impact of the \$2.5 million between the 600-800 students going in to the University of the West Indies and a continuation of the support for those how have received it this year, so in fact next year you would be dispensing \$5 million to cover those students. These are the facts there are not rocket science.

Mr. Speaker, I come to teachers training; Erdiston Teachers' Training College is going through some reformation. We have now reached the stage where persons would be trained before they start to teach. Over the years we have done substantial training of persons in the primary, nursery and secondary schools and therefore the Bachelors of Education Primary will start in September of this year. Last year we started the Diploma in Leadership for persons who want to be principals or those who already have been appointed principals or other managers within the system.

We are now taking Erdiston Teachers' Training College as well through substantial infrastructural change. The block where the Honourable Member for St. Thomas lived in when she was a student between 1980 to 1982 is now being turned into two major classrooms and would be called the DePeiza Block after an outstanding tutor. That is now being renovated. You would have the southern block, the long block, into four classrooms and that would be called the Dorothy King Block. The block to the western side would be turned into a small theatre, offices and one teaching room to be called the Wood Block. All of that work is taking place. Fencing is going up and car parks are being done all like now, well not now because persons would have been gone home, but over the course of the last two and three weeks that work has started and you are having two enhanced car parks being put in place to deal with some infrastructural issues that we had to make sue that Erdiston Teachers' Training College is equipped infrastructurally as well as it equipment to deal with the professional needs of teachers.

The library is going through renovations under the Skills for the Future Programme. The listed building there

should soon be going out to tender for persons to rehabilitate that building with had some fire damage a few years ago. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member who shadows the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Innovation also spoke to the whole notion that there is no strategic plan or cost on these things, that there is nothing happening in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Innovation.

Mr. Speaker, I have Strategic Plan, 2014-2020...

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: That is why you run down the rabbit's hole all the time, we are making some new initiatives, we are making some readjustments. When this is completed, with the readjustments it will be given to Cabinet and laid in the House of Assembly.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I want to further go on, we have done a major consultation on higher education as an economic sector. This also represents, just like how culture is doing, we are looking to make culture a major economic sector, we are looking at higher education as a way of bringing more money into this country and in truth and fact, dealing with an enhanced product at the higher education or tertiary level. In fact, you have an assessment of the real and potential impact on education services on the economy of Barbados. You have as well higher education as an economic sector, it was done through the Human Resource and Development Strategy in education and therefore this too, once it goes before Cabinet, will also be laid in the Honourable House of Assembly.

We have also looked at enhancing the infrastructure of all tertiary level institutions, outside of the University of the West Indies because of its different arrangement, enhancing infrastructure, increasing access. This looks at the complex in the north, it looks at the Hospitality Institute, it sets out the cost, et cetera. The Hope Agricultural Training Institute, that 145 acre that is owned by the State, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Innovation working with the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, the Barbados Community College, as well as to help in the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications in Agriculture and the related areas, along with those secondary schools within the next year should have at least five brand new buildings at the Hope Agricultural Institute and the rolling out of that facility to enhance our food security. You will also have within that a very small canning facility, not only buildings for training or for residency but also greenhouses, et cetera for agriculture training at the tertiary and secondary levels.

Mr. Speaker, we have done basically all the work on that and that will be funded through a grant from the People's Republic of China, that will be linked in and tied in and will not cause any problems, I believe, with existing agricultural interests and pursuits with the food security enterprise put on by the University of the West Indies. The more persons we have involved in food security the better for the Barbadian economy, the better to serve our people. We should not depend, as we do, on the vast number of items and products that we have to import.

Mr. Speaker, I want to report as well that working along with the Maria Holder Trust the school at Gall Hill is to be completed by mid-April, that school is just going through the finishing touches. The school at Oldbury/Gemswick, the block work on that is moving ahead apace, that means that by the end of this year we should have two brand new nursery schools, one at Gall Hill No.2 and one at Oldbury/Gemswick.

Mr. Speaker, I expect that the one at Durants, Holders Hill will commence as well. we have to look to see where we can build out now what was to be at Government Hill, because of the needs Barbados Water Authority the lands previously identified has now to be used for a reservoir so there will be six nursery schools and I expect that either four or five of them to be completed.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes left in which to conclude.

Hon. R. D. JONES: So that you will have in that general location the Milton Lynch, Christ Church Girls' School, Christ Church Foundation and now that new nursery school, covering right across the various areas of education. Mr. Speaker, that is happening.

Mr. Speaker, the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications, all of our schools are moving towards providing that qualification. The schools that have gone on board so far in the last three to four years would have been the Darryl Jordan, previously called the St. Lucy Secondary, Alleyne School, St. James Secondary, St. Leonard's, Princess Margaret, Springer Memorial. There are about nine of them so far. All of them are coming on board. In fact, last year several of the schools actually wrote the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications. As you know, the Caribbean Examination Council certifies Caribbean Vocational Qualifications Level 1 and several of our students have received the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications in the various competencies in the various areas. That is going to expand even further in this assessment season.

Mr. Speaker, you will also have that the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence was written by schools such as Queen College, Foundation, Deighton

Griffith, et cetera. This is the first iteration and one would expect that more would also write that particular assessment this year. That started about three years ago, the first writing was last year, the second writing of that qualification would be done this year. All of that is happening in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Innovation. Mr. Speaker, I know that much more needs to happen but you cannot run up a hill by just panting, you have to take your time, pace yourself until you get to the top of that hill.

Mr. Speaker, there is also a fallacy in relation to the schools in Barbados and that is borne out by some parents who do not like school “A” or school “B”, et cetera and I believe that educators know how to allocate students, even though it is done through an examining process, so you eliminate the human being and you allow parents to make choices for their children. Sometimes not all the choices are the wisest choices that you have.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to share a bit of statistics in relation to performance of schools generally. We have statistics going back as far as 1993. They go back further but I will use 1993 right up until the last examining period. You will find that children in fourth forms in many schools write at least two subjects, Mathematics and English.

Mr. Speaker, we have the percentage of students from 1993 passing four or more subjects from one sitting. You have schools of course like Harrison College, Queen College, Combermere, St. Michael School. In 1993 Harrison College recorded about 98 per cent, with four or more passes; Queen’s College recorded 90 per cent, four or more passes at one sitting; Combermere recorded 79 per cent, at four or more sitting; St. Michael School recorded 66 per cent, at four or more sitting, and right down until there were schools not scoring four or more.

I want to leap forward from 1993 to around, let us use 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister, you ought to be winding up now.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Queen’s College 100 per cent, four or more at one sitting. I am winding up. Harrison College 100 per cent, St. Michael School 98 per cent, Combermere 93 per cent, Alexandra 79 per cent, four or more at one sitting. You have every single school now in Barbados: Lodge 73 per cent and four or more at one sitting, St. George Secondary 27 per cent of the cohort at four or more at one sitting, down to schools with 17 per cent. In other words, you move from schools at zero per cent right up, so there is in fact enhanced performance. All of these statistics are there and I would encourage Members who want the information not to simply go through the “guesstimate” trying to be partisan. As I said, I

am the most approachable person in the world. You can just come and ask, and if they are available you will have them. I am not sure, Mr. Speaker, that the Honourable Member for St. James North understands what is put before him, and invariably he will talk the same thing.

MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute. This is a Point of Order, but your time has expired so when you are finished I will take the point. He is rising on a Point of Order. Yes, Honourable Member.

Mr. E.G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. Last year, that Honourable Member, Minister of Education, said at this same time that he was going to make available to the Opposition papers which he read from relating to education policy. That was exactly one year ago. He has not made those papers available to any Member of the Opposition within that time, so when he gets in here now and says that he is approachable and he will make papers available to the Opposition, and any Member can come to him and he will give them papers, that is misleading the House, Mr. Speaker. He did not do it a year ago.

MR. SPEAKER: No Point of Order from the Member. Please take your seat.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I give my fullest support to the efforts of the representative for St. Michael North West and the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, and I support this Appropriation Bill, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew.

Mr. GEORGE W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that I would want the record of this House to reflect something that was totally incorrect. Yesterday, shortly before the adjournment, the Leader of the House purported to indicate from his comments, shortly before the Suspension of the House, that I would not be present in the presence of the Leader of the Opposition when she gave her speech. The tone of his comment would tend to suggest that I had spoken to him and that I would not be here. Mr. Speaker, I have been going through the debates of 30 and 40 years ago in this House and it amazes me how certain things get into the record. I must say, I believe that you did not hear. You normally hear asides, but there are certain things that are said when the Member is standing that you do not seem to hear. I do not know if it is your left or right ear, but you probably did not hear that.

MR. SPEAKER: Both ears.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, and I must say that I am not saying that there is any bias, but normally you hear very well in your left ear because your left ear is the

side of the Opposition, but at the Government side it seems something is wrong with your ear.

MR. SPEAKER: It was said that there was bias before, so that does not bother me. You move on.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: I take it very seriously because the record should reflect that those statements were incorrect, and I would like with your permission that those remarks by the Leader of the House be withdrawn from the record, be struck from the record.

MR. SPEAKER: No, that is not happening. Did you just rise on a Point of Order?

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: No, I am saying that they be struck from the record. I have not started to speak yet.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, you should start to speak. I do not know of any precedent for that, and I am not striking it from the record. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: I am not surprised but I just want the record to reflect my opposition to what has been said, and your usual bias where the Opposition is concerned. You hear in the left ear only.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute. I think you have gone far enough.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: No, no, no. I have not gone far enough because of your failure to rule. You just told me to stand up.

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not want to, as we say in ordinary parlance, get into anything with you. I do not know what bias you are talking about. I think it is unfortunate that you should accuse me of it but I will let it pass. I think it is unparliamentary, it is regrettable and it should not be done. My understanding is that you should rise in your seat when the offence or whatever it is, when one of the orders is being breached, and complain about it. Nobody rose in their speech to complain about anything that was said, and furthermore, I really do not know how you could know what is in the Member's mind and how you tell me you thought he said this and you thought he said that. Therefore, I will ignore the comment about my bias and let us move on, but I am not going to revisit yesterday and have anything struck from the record.

Mr. G.W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, what I have said is in the record anyway. Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the response from the Leader of the Opposition yesterday. I believe that she has given a full response, and we on this side are very satisfied with the

response that she has given and there is no need for me to go over the details of what she has said. Certainly, for the Members who are always speaking about a division, I can recall in this House where Members on that side were not only not speaking to one another but were openly cursing one another. I could say that up to this day, because I have lunch on a regular basis with Members on that side, and there are some Members who from way back do not even speak to some Members who are presently in the House. We do not have any problems with a division here, and I think I should make that very clear, whatever impression the Leader of the House might have wanted to make.

Mr. Speaker, the Estimates Debate which was delivered in this House was delivered in somewhat of a hushed tone. It was a departure from the usual effervescence of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. I remember at one stage when he was delivering his presentation, I told the Member for St. Joseph that that does not sound like the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West because it sounded like somebody had written his speech. It sounded like the Governor of the Central Bank. Immediately after, he commented that he did not write the speech, that he is reading from a speech which was prepared for him by the Civil Service. If I did not hear him say that, I would tend to feel that there was some arrogance in his presentation, especially seeing that it would not appear as though he wanted to take any advice from anyone, but knowing him as I do -- because I would count him as a personal friend of mine -- I would just view it as a childish comment. Later in his speech, Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat disappointed when he attacked certain personnel from the Royal Bank of Canada. I think those comments and that attack were very serious.

The Prime Minister stood in his seat and I believe the Prime Minister would have spoken to him since then. They are very serious threats and Mr. David McWilliams who he referred to and the lady from the Royal Bank they were giving him advice and this is about three years now that she was saying that the Barbados economy should be restructured. Mr. David McWilliams, the Irish representative indicated that Barbados should look at a possible devaluation and predicted that a credit even in Barbados was coming soon. This reminded of some years ago when somebody was talking about a tsunami somewhere in Asia and everybody was saying tsunami. Sir, even the word 'tsunami' sound like if it were foolishness but you know the experience with a tsunami. I would hope that a more careful look be taken at the caution that comes from these international economists instead of pouring scorn. Sir, what scares me is that the Minister did not stop there. He went on to threaten the lady, the Chief Economic from Trinidad. Sir, it reminded me too of a former Prime Minister too I think of Guyana.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what was the threat.

Mr. G. PAYNE: Sir, I am coming to the words that were used.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please do because it is a very serious thing to accuse the Minister of threatening somebody.

Mr. G. PAYNE: The language that was used is similar to the language that was used by a former Prime Minister of Guyana, Mr. Forbes Burnham to persons that did not agree with him who came to the country. Sir, as a matter of fact, there is Minister of Government in Barbados who told me of an incident that he had where he wanted to leave and because of some incident with somebody in Government, he was stopped by security, and it is the same language: "Do not come 'bout' here every year talking rubbish, creating contempt and confusion in this economy, put up or shut up". Sir, that is a threat. No Government Minister should come in this House ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just one minute. I personally do not remember those words used but I am going to call for a short suspension and let me ask for the record, so that I can satisfy myself that threat was made.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 7.45 p.m.

Hon. R. JONES: I beg to second that.

The question that the House be suspended until 7.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member this Sitting is resumed. For the advance of doubt and given the accusation that a Member would have threaten someone I thought that out of an abundance of caution that I should get the record and to put everything into context I will read the appropriate portions. This is the speech of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West:

"I understand what this is all about, Mr. Speaker, but I make this point and I think that the gentleman, Mr. Browne, spoke about the conditions under which Government may want to restructure its debt because that is the other sexy thing that is going around, restructure this and restructure that. Do you know they never told you what particular things to restructure and how to do the

restructuring? They do not make the difference between restructuring and refinancing but they just go and say, oh restructure the debt because it sounds pretty. What I am saying this morning, Mr. Speaker, from the Floor of this Honourable House, that if anybody in here when the people from the Royal Bank, whose chief economist came to Barbados and say that Barbados should restructure two years in a row, if they believe that is the case, I am saying to them, meet me on Monday at Government Headquarters at 10 o'clock and walk with the schedule of loans on investments in terms of Government Paper that you have in Barbados, Government Sovereign Paper, meet me and tell me which ones you want to cut, which ones you want to extend the maturities, which interest rates you want lower and we will have a conversation. That is my view on that. Do not come around here every year talking that rubbish if you are not prepared to put your money where your mouth is. Do not come around here every year trying to create confusion in this economy by giving people the impression that I said it. Put up or shut up and I am saying that as the Minister of Finance of Barbados because it is rubbish to be doing that constantly every year and trying to give people the impression that you have some secret way or some special way of getting things done in Barbados. If you want to do it, come."

That is the relevant section. That does not sound like a threat to me but the Honourable Member interpreted it as that, I am not going to go behind that, I believe because we have freedom of speech you are entitled to so interpret it. Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: I go further, Mr. Speaker, I read an article in the Sunday Sun, I know that you cannot read the newspapers in here but the Honourable Member accused the same individuals of scare mongering. Why I say this is because it is a very serious accusation and the type of accusation and the type of language we would not expect a Minister of Finance of a country like Barbados with such a high reputation to make and, as I said, I am surprised that the Prime Minister has not summoned him to apologise because those comments ... I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central referred to certain comments that has been made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North and as Minister of Tourism and I used to be the Minister of Tourism and I know how sensitive a minister of tourism because there are certain ... Sensitive not as an individual but in terms of the tourism product especially when it comes to security and by now we have the additional problems of water because if you have a water problem and you have a security problem in any country you tend to try to protect the product but, Mr. Speaker, the comment is serious when you consider this intemperate language and you reflect. Do you recall what happened to Jamaica in the 1970s? In Jamaica in the 1970s this is the same type of language that was used by Michael Manley as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and you

know what happened. Mr. Speaker, it led to the commercial banks turning on Jamaica and you know what happened, the rest is history. Jamaica fell into the IMF hands and I am making the comments that I am making, it is within that context because I know what it was like in the 1970s in Jamaica. I am surprised that these comments went unnoticed by Members of the Government Benches and it is that, I believe, the Members did not realise the seriousness of them but these are the type of people that I deal with in my work. I have received, and you could believe it or not, I have received about 500 e-mails, letters and texts from my clients since this comment was made by the Minister of Finance.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: The Members on That Side are not serious, they are laughing but this is a serious matter.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please, let us have some order please.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: The only person out there who is not laughing is the Minister of Tourism. They are laughing but this is serious and I think the Minister of Finance cannot speak to financial institutions in that way. This is a Minister of Finance that has presided over the firing of Moody's and I know that the other Members of That Side know that. He has presided over the firing of Moody's. I do not know if it is because Moody's gave a bad report and I really would like to see the IMF Report for 2015. I am not saying that the report indicated that he is not fit to be Minister of Finance, I believe that he was somewhat childish as I said earlier. I know him well and I do not think he is an arrogant individual but it is unfortunate that those comments were made. I have the difficulty now with those 500 e-mails and letters, notwithstanding the fact that I am on This Side to temper some of the reflections created by this comment but then again, I am not so sure that he would be hurt too much by these allegations or by any allegations of incompetence but then again some people are hurt more by allegations of incompetence than allegations of corruption and this is not a case of corruption.

Mr. Speaker, this goes to the grain of what informs the policies of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) Cabinet. They cannot take any criticism whatsoever.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: For the same reason that you withdrew www.naked.com, do you remember? Mr. Speaker, the ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please, please. The asides are getting too loud and Honourable Member please address the Chair.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Their failure to even accept opinions that are inconsistent with their own thinking, is reflected in their policies at this particular point in time. If I may look at the question of certain decisions that have been taken by them in my own constituency their failure to consult... I was reading a Nation Newspaper only last week in which I read an article and I could not believe what I was reading. It was an article written by lady who had indicated that she was somewhat shattered by the decision of the Government to close the Belleplaine Police Station. When I was called I did not know anything about it, and I read the article. Mr. Speaker, it was a letter which was so well written that I believe that I should make it a document of the House. It was written by a lady by the name of Christian Toppin.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, is that a copy of the letter or was that carried in the newspaper?

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: This is a copy of the letter which was written by the lady, Mr. Speaker, which I will make a document of the House. It was copied not only to me but also to Attorney-General. This letter makes one wonders whether or not the Government is serious when it comes to taking on or dealing with different opinions from the other side of the fence.

Mr. Speaker, when we were in Government we used to have consultations. There were consultations before the fact so that if we were thinking about closing a police station we would have the consultations before but now you have situations where the Government will decide to close a police station and then you would see it in the newspaper for the first time and then they would have a town hall meeting after the decision is taken.

Belleplaine is an important civic centre in this part of the island in which essential social facilities and key businesses are located. The closure of the police station will downgrade the status of this growing community immeasurably. It is a shortsighted decision that is inconsistent with the investment that the Government of Barbados is making in promoting the development in St. Andrew. Mr. Speaker, as I said I will make this a document of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I will go a little further, there is the amalgamation of the Chalky Mount School. We have had a situation in St. Andrew where at one point in time there were about six schools. There are problems in terms of transportation and the road network and decisions are being taken without having the pulse of the people in the constituency. A decision was taken to close the Chalky

Mount Primary School, having closed the St. Saviour's School and with no consultation but then after the decision made you have the Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation making certain commitments with respect to transportation. It is alright to say that if you close a school that it would be a savings because the school is very small. It would have been better to find alternative accommodation in Chalky Mount or to have done repairs to the school if only on a phased basis, but you have a situation where the Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation goes to St. Andrew and made commitments to the people in St. Andrew that transportation would be provided, there would be a shuttle bus but no shuttle buses. You now have young students five to 11 year-olds having to travel to Bridgetown because of the failure or the inefficiency of the shuttle system and they are getting to school at midday and children have to do the Common Entrance Examination, that is a fact.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: It is a fact, Mr. Minister. The only reason why I do not have a letter that I could make a document of the House is that I spent a lot of time with about 100 persons from the constituency who called me on this same incident. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph could bear me out on that because you are dealing with persons from Bissex, Less Beholden, Cambridge, Hopewell, Parks, St. Saviours who all want to do a petition and I had to tell them not to worry about the petition because they are not going to do anything, that I am going to mention it in the House. As I said, this is in keeping with the way how the Minister of Finance has treated other opinions. This is not the Minister of Finance alone. This is part of the way how the Democratic Labour Party have been doing things.

Mr. Speaker, the next area is White Hill. I spoke to White Hill last year and having spoken to White Hill... This is a serious matter and I am glad that the Minister of the Environment and Drainage is 100 per cent with me on that. He told me so, I do not know if he changed his tune but he definitely feels that the Minister of Transport and Works does not know what he is doing. Those were his exact words, he could get up now and... He told me that the Minister of Transport and Works does not know what he is doing.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I understand that he is excited about hearing his own voice in here but the truth is we have never had a conversation at all, so it is untrue to say that about him.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member unfortunately I was not there, I really do not know, it is something that I cannot rule on, so I cannot rule on it. Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of conversation with the Honourable Member. He ran against me in St. Andrew, he lost his deposit, we have been in close contact and he told me that he copied all of my policies in St. Andrew in his new constituency and he credit me for him winning the constituency so I do not understand how he could come into this House and say that he does not speak to me, I cannot see it, but anyhow, as you say, Mr. Speaker, let us proceed.

Mr. Speaker, after I spoke on this matter the Minister of Transport and Works to his credit, because we can all make mistakes, admitted that he made a mistake when he went down White Hill and said that the road is abandoned. He admitted that to me. Am I wrong, Mr. Minister? He admitted that to me on his next visit and I was very pleased because the residents were very, very glad to see that at long last something was being done, but it was just a smokescreen. They came down there and pelt down the marl and everything and disappeared. I understand, I do not know how true it is, that a technician in the ministry, and I do not want to cast aspersions or as the former Honourable Member for St. Michael East would say aspirations on anybody in this House, that the material is being sent but it is not going to White Hill, and I hope the Minister would investigate that. Nothing has been done since then. There again you had an arrangement for a shuttle and nothing has been done. The difficulty with this matter and the seriousness of this matter is such that if the road to the bottom is broken, it would mean that those people will be landlocked because they would not be able to get out to the east nor the west. I think it is a little somewhat wrong for us when we are looking at allocating certain funds to certain constituencies to try to have an equal distribution over all the constituencies when it comes to road works and road maintenance because if we look at it in that light, and you are allocating the equal maintenance and equal moneys over a period of time to all 30 constituencies, well, then the people of St. Andrew should say that if you are looking at roads in that light, you should think in terms of the other Government infrastructure and it is fairly obvious that a lot more happens in the St. Michael constituencies and the Christ Church constituencies and sometimes there are certain projects going on, while the allocation in St. Andrew is zero.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that if some attention is paid to the maintenance of the roads in St. Andrew, as was done when I was Minister of Transport and Works we would not have a problem at all. Mr. Speaker, we had the intervention of the Soil Conservation Department and this is why I would like the Government to tell us what is the status of

the Scotland District Authority. It seems as though the Government has decided that it has nothing to do with the Scotland District Authority because of the fact that this is a Barbados Labour Party thing. But the Scotland District Authority would have been able to take care of this.

Mr. Speaker, you have your workmen at the Ministry of Public Works and Transport telling you that they cannot get the cooperation of members at the Soil Conservation Commission and vice-versa. Mr. Speaker, the left hand is not talking to the right hand, and that is the big problem, that is the problem in St. Andrew.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes left in which to conclude.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I hope you took out the time...

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes I did, that time was taken out.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, that is the problem in St. Andrew. Sir, the other thing is that you have a situation where a number of persons were supposed to be relocated. Now this relocation thing is something that I take very seriously. When we were in Government we acquired enough lands that could relocate the whole of White Hill. This is before the present Minister's time. I believe that the Minister of Transport and Works, the former Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development did not realise the purpose of that allocation and they sold the land to other persons. Sir, this is the reason that we have the problem in White Hill, because there was enough land to relocate the people in White Hill.

Mr. Speaker, not only that, there was a policy which went back, way back during the late Right Excellency Errol Walton Barrow time where if a person had to be relocated and they were renting and were tenants under the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, they had a right to a lot in the new allocation under that Act. If they owned the property they had a right to the land free of cost. Sir, I personally supervised over 40 lots that were done in that way. There are a number of persons who have been allocated under that system who have not as yet gotten their conveyances and I would like to ask the Minister to look into it.

Mr. Speaker, time would not permit me to go into the other matters that I would like to mention but I would like to say that I wanted to spend some time on CLICO International Life Limited but that I do not have the time. The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, by his own silence, is showing that he has no sympathy for those people who had policies in CLICO International Life Limited that have matured and those people who were

receiving pensions, where those pensions have been stopped.

The Honourable Member came in here with new legislation to make it appear as though all is well with CLICO International Life Limited but the persons who have been receiving pensions and whose pensions have been stopped have not been taken care of in the new dispensation. All the new dispensation has done is to provide a few jobs for the boys, because when you look at the new company which has been set up and the moneys that are being paid to the Chief Executive Officer, I mean, it is even more than the Minister's salary, including the perks and things like that. Sir, I think it would have probably been better if some system could be arranged whereby those people who were receiving pensions, you could have set up a unit within the National Insurance Department, where those persons receiving pensions could have gone and allocations could have been made to the National Insurance Scheme and those persons could have gone and continue to receive their pensions; those persons who pensions would have matured would have been able to ask about them.

Mr. Speaker, but this silence on the part of the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs is baffling. I wonder whether or not the former Right Honourable Prime Minister did speak to him, it is baffling and it is unfair to the policyholders in CLICO International Life Limited. I mean, I am pleased to see what has been done with respect to British American Assurance Life Limited but I think that we have to revisit, we have to make sure that those policyholders in CLICO International Life Limited and those persons who were receiving their pensions are taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, I have employees of my own and we have a pension with SAGICOR and I would hate to think that at the end of the day that having up a pension... I have a secretary who has been with me now for 40 years - not that I am that old, I started early - but 40 years and a pension has been paid up for her. When she reaches 65 or 70 years, not a cent.

Sir, that has happened with respect to CLICO International Life Limited. That is at the core of the problems with CLICO International Life Limited, but I would hope that this Government... I mean, I know that you only have a few more months -- but I would hope that you do not let the directors of CLICO International Life Limited go off the hook. I mean, you do not have to worry, in Bangladesh you have some people who have committed some grievances some years before and a new young Government came in and they made the legislation retroactive and a few people were executed for the injustices. I would like you to warn those individuals, I know they are pals of some of you, that you cannot

guarantee. I do not think the Right Honourable Prime Minister however any parts that he has could guarantee that somebody's neck might not be popped 20 years from now for some of the injustices that have taken place. Sir, I mean, this is serious, when you look at it, it is serious, it is worse than a Ponzi scheme.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please wrap up.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, those individuals should not be allowed to walk around, when you as a Government you have the buttons to justice in this country. I am obliged to you, Sir.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House be now suspended, to be resumed at 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday 16th March, 2016.

Hon. R.D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question was put to the Honourable the House and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. Speaker suspended the Sitting accordingly.

End of Day 2, March 15, 2016

CONTENTS

RESUMPTION

Mr. D. G. Sutherland, 1, 3, 4; Mrs. M-J. M. Thompson, 5; Lt. Col. J. D. Bostic, 6, 9; Hon. S. D. Blackett, 9, 11, 12, 13; Miss C. Y. Forde, 13, 15, 17; Mr. J. Paul, 19, 21.

RESUMPTION

Mr. K. D. Symmonds, 22, 26, 27; Hon. J.D.E. Boyce, 27, 30; Mr. T. A. Prescod, 31, 32, 33, 34; Senator P. M. T. Todd, 31; The Right Honourable O.S. Arthur, 34; Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw, 39, 44; Hon. D.o'n Inniss, 44, 47, 49.

RESUMPTION

Mr. R. St.C. Toppin, 49, 52, 53, 54; Hon... R. Sealy, 53; Hon. R. D. Jones, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58; Mr. E.G. Hinkson, 58; Mr. G. W. Payne, 58, 59, 60.

RESUMPTION

Mr. G. W. Payne, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64; Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe, 62.

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

ARTHUR, The Right Honourable O.S.
BLACKETT, Hon. S. D. (St. Michael Central)
BOSTIC, Lt. Col. J. D.
BOYCE, Hon. J.D.E. (Christ Church South)
BRADSHAW, Miss S. J. O. (St. Michael South East)
BRATHWAITE, Hon. A.D. (St. Philip South)
FORDE, Miss C. Y. (St. Thomas)
HINKSON, Mr. E.G. (St. James North)
INNISS, Hon. D.O'N (St. James South)
JONES, Hon. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)
LOWE, Dr. the Hon. D. S. (Christ Church East)
PAUL, Mr. J. (St. Michael West Central)
PAYNE, Mr. G. W. (St. Andrew)
PRESCOD, Mr. T. A. (St. Michael East)
SEALY, Hon... R.
SUTHERLAND, Mr. D. G. (St. George South)
SYMMONDS, Mr. K. D. (St. James Central)
THOMPSON, Mrs. M-J. M. (St. John)
TODD, Senator P. M. T.
TOPPIN, Mr. R. St.C. (St. Michael North)

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while 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. Masthead and date. No sitting date was found in the text of the source; the date is taken from the file name. Please confirm.

Q3. Opening. The source opens with the lines ‘Tuesday, MARCH 15, 2016’ and ‘Seq. 1’ and goes straight to the resumption of the debate; there is no PRESENT list or prayers, as this is the continuation of a sitting suspended the previous evening. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 21, Mr. T. A. Prescod. During Mr. T. A. Prescod’s speech, the reply to the Speaker’s ruling on ‘deliberate misrepresentation’ (‘No, I said it is not a deliberate misrepresentation...’) carries the label ‘Senator P. M. T. TODD’, although it appears to be Mr. Prescod’s own reply. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 21, Mr. D. A. Sutherland. The Member for St. George South is labelled ‘Mr. DWIGHT A. SUTHERLAND’, ‘Mr. D. SUTHERLAND’ and ‘Mr. D. G. SUTHERLAND’ in the same speech. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 21, Mr. R. St.C. Toppin, point of order. The point of order on the National Insurance Department is labelled ‘Hon... R. SEALY’, and the letter Mr. Toppin quotes refers to a ‘\$55 million’ NIS Bond. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Resumption after lunch. The Speaker’s words on resumption (‘When the Suspension was taken, we were on Order 21...’) are typed without a speaker label. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Order No. 21, Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw twice addresses ‘Madam President’ while the Deputy Speaker was in the Chair. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on the morning of Tuesday, 15th March, 2016 on Order No. 21, the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2016 and the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2016/2017, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair. Mr. D. A. Sutherland, the Member for St. George South and Opposition spokesman on health, labour, social security and human resource management, said the Estimates did nothing for the ‘good society’ in the 50th year of Independence and raised a 3.5 per cent wage increase promised to Grantley Adams International Airport workers in 2010. Mrs. M-J. M. Thompson supported the Estimates, saying that VAT at 17.5 per cent had not reduced collections and that the deficit had been reduced. Lt. Col. J. D. Bostic said he would judge the Estimates by policy rather than figures, and closed on urban development.

Hon. S. D. Blackett said the Estimates showed the country had turned the corner and announced a two-day fair for the constituency councils programme. Miss C. Y. Forde contrasted the 6 per cent unemployment of 2008 with the present and called for a separate facility for young drug offenders. Mr. J. Paul supported the Estimates and called for resources for entrepreneurs. The Sitting was suspended for lunch until 2.00 p.m.

In the afternoon Mr. K. D. Symmonds said the country was set on the wrong course and noted a 15 per cent rise in expenditure while statutory corporations went unreformed. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, the Minister of Health and Member for Christ Church South, spoke on his constituency, tourism and the HIV/AIDS programme, and the Speaker asked him to withdraw ‘untruths’. Mr. T. A. Prescod cited the Barbados Economic and Social Report 2014, showing 2 580 deaths in 2014 against 2 276 in 2013, and raised planning matters.

The Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur, speaking as Member for St. Peter, said he would have supported the Budget as Chairman of the Government’s Economic Council had the matter been appropriately pursued. He set out growth of between minus four per cent and 0.8 per cent a year since 2008 against the three per cent he thought necessary, cited an IMF finding on the Central Bank’s growth figures, warned that reserves had fallen from 1.4 billion dollars in 2008, and urged that the 1.2 billion dollars a year in transfers to state enterprises be cut by \$200 million. He also raised correspondent banking. Madam Deputy Speaker then took the Chair; Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw called for reform of the Estimates process and greater use of select committees, and Hon. D. O’N. Inniss supported the Estimates and spoke of linking agriculture with industry. The Sitting was suspended until 6.00 p.m.

On resumption Mr. R. St.C. Toppin said Barbados was still ‘on the brink’ and read a letter of January 27, 2016 from the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. asking the National Insurance Department to roll over a \$55 million bond due on January 31; Hon. R. Sealy rose on a point of order, and certain remarks by Mr. Toppin were ordered expunged. Hon. R. D. Jones, Minister of Education, spoke on higher education as an economic sector and examination results, and Mr. E. G. Hinkson’s point of order was not accepted.

Mr. G. W. Payne objected to remarks of the Leader of the House the previous day and asked that they be struck

from the record, which the Speaker refused; when he accused a Minister of a threat, the House was suspended until 7.45 p.m. so the Speaker could obtain the record. The Speaker then read the passage from the speech of the Member for St. Michael North West and said it did not sound like a threat to him. Mr. Payne went on to criticise the closure of the Belleplaine police station, laying a constituent’s letter, and Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe rose on a point of order. On the motion of Hon. J. D. E. Boyce the House was suspended until 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 16th March, 2016.